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TOWARDS A SOCIOLOGY OF SIN

by

John C. D'Mello

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## VITA

The author, John C. D'Mello, born January 27, 1947, in Bombay, India, is the son of Eunice and Archibald D'Mello.

His elementary and secondary education was completed at St. Xavier's High School where he was awarded the Gold Medal for academic excellence. In 1968 on completion of five years of seminary formation at St. Pius College, Bombay, India, he was awarded a Vatican Scholarship. Proceeding to Rome he received his Baccalaureate in Theology in 1970 and his Licentiate in Theology in 1972 from Universita Urbaniana, Rome, Italy. In 1973 he entered the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, India and graduated in 1975 with an M.A. in Social Work with a First Class Distinction, winning the Shield for the Best Student.

Until 1978 he served as a Parish Priest and School Counsellor in Bombay, India. In 1979, he was appointed professor of Sociology and Philosophy at the Diocesan Seminary, Bombay, India. In 1983 he came to Loyola University, Chicago to pursue his doctoral studies. While at Loyola he was a graduate research assistant from 1983-1985. From 1985-1987 he was a part-time lecturer in Sociology and Statistical Consultant at Academic Computing Services.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

During the time I worked with a tribal group in the interior of India, I noticed that they had the custom of trial marriage - young boys and girls mixed around freely and intimately with each other. After a period of courtship, if things worked out well between the couple, they would offer themselves publicly for marriage and the parents and the community would approve. They practised this custom innocently and never felt it to be wrong or sinful.

As an Instructor in Christian doctrine, I had the reluctant task of informing them that this custom was morally wrong. Somehow I felt very uneasy about this task (an unease I did not feel, for instance, when I spoke to them about cheating or the practice of wife-beating). My reluctance stemmed from the fact that I felt that I was imposing on them my own alien cultural norms and I wondered whether I had the right to thrust notions of sin and conscience on their innocent style of life.

Further, whenever a moral discussion of free social mixing was brought up, not only did I feel that they were most disinterested, but I also felt that they seemed to be

laughing inwardly at me all the while (something I did not notice when the subject of lying or honesty was brought up). There was no doubt in their minds that the custom of premarital intercourse and contraception was neither deviant, nor pathological, nor sinful.

Puzzled somewhat by this "apparent lack of conscience" on their part, was I to conclude that these tribals were simply hard-hearted or was I to conclude that the notion of sin ought to be re-examined? I inclined towards the latter and when I read some of the sociological theories on morality, I was only confirmed in my conviction. Just as the notion of deviance went through change and transformation, so also the notion of sin reflected changes in the structural and cultural forces of society. For too long now had sin been studied in "splendid theological isolation"; to become more meaningful, it would have to be seen within the broader framework of history and society.

Having been brought up Catholic in a society that is surrounded by Hinduism, some of the questions that ran through my mind were of a comparative nature:

- Why does Catholicism stress some types of sins and Hinduism, others? For instance, why does Catholicism emphasize sexual sins while Hinduism not do so? Does Hinduism, in turn, focus on sins against truth and why?
- Is the notion of sin in Catholicism different from the notion of sin in Hinduism? Has Catholicism developed a

personal-individualistic sense of sin, while Hinduism a more impersonal though societal sense of sin?

- If this is true, what socio-historical forces brought this about? What factors brought about these unique formulations of sin?

The purposes of my study, then, are first, to determine the social and structural factors that gave rise to the unique elaboration of sin in Catholicism in the historical past and at the same time what social and structural factors gave rise to the unique understanding of sin in Hinduism. Second, to find out what are the conceptions of sin that Hindus and Catholics hold today and why and what types of sins do Catholics lay stress on and what kinds of sins do the Hindus emphasize? What factors currently shape a Hindu's or a Catholic's way of thinking about sin?

My study will be divided into two parts. The first part is a historical study and will go back into history to uncover the socio-cultural forces that gave rise to the notions of sin in Hinduism and Catholicism. The second part is a contemporary survey of how Hindus and Catholics currently view sin. While the historical part will illumine the social underpinnings of the present concept of sin, the contemporary survey will confirm the findings of the historical study.

### The Nature of this Study

Most studies on sin have been theological in nature and content. These studies assume that the notion of sin is a universal concept or category found in all societies at all times. Theologians assume that the notion of sin is absolute, that the moral law is found in the "fleshy tablets of everyone's heart" (II Corinthians,3.3). Catholic theologians in particular believe that the moral law was implanted in the hearts of all men and women by God, and therefore all men and women from a very young age have grown up with a sense of sin. This is the natural law notion of sin, emphasized very much in the Catholic church, according to which sin goes against the very urgings and tendency of human nature (Sidgwick 1931, p.145). Thus, murder, adultery and homosexuality are sins which are considered inherently wrong at all times and all places without any exceptions. The notion of sin, in most Catholic theology, is considered absolute and unchangeable.

Contrary to this notion, a sociological approach to understanding sin holds that the concept of sin, just like the concept of deviance, is culturally bound and relative. The notion of sin depends very much on the social and cultural characteristics of the community and on the arrangement and distribution of power in a particular society.

This study is sociological in nature. It looks for

the sociological factors shaping the notion of sin in the past and in the present. This study is also comparative; it compares the notion of sin in Catholicism with the notion of sin in Hinduism. While there have been many historical studies describing the concept of sin in Catholicism, or sin in Hinduism, there have been hardly any studies comparing the concept of sin in these two religions.

These two traditions were chosen because they promise a vast scope for comparative study. Their notions of 'sin' or 'wrongdoing' are almost polarized (Spratt 1966; Thakur 1969). Further, Hinduism hails from the group of immanent religions while Christianity can be considered as representing the tradition of transcendent religions (Berger 1981). Lastly, these two traditions were chosen because of my own familiarity with them.

The concept of sin is an area of study often eschewed by modern sociology. Stanford Lyman calls it a 'rara avis' in sociology. Evil or sin is a term that is rarely found in a modern sociology text. "It seems to be too great, too impersonal and too absurd to be a serious topic for sociological concern. Its very omnipresence, grossness and grotesqueries defy and transcend the sociological imagination" (Lyman 1978, p.1).

Given the minimal treatment of the concept of sin in the literature, I would like to begin by reviewing the various sociological theories that explain how the different

structures of society influence the ideas of morality. Hopefully, in the process, I will lay the foundations for answering the questions about sin raised above.

### SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MORALITY

The sociology of morality has shown a few relevant approaches that can be taken toward understanding how a particular tradition of morality came into being:

- a. The morphological approach: This approach takes into account the morphological variables, notably the structure of the religious community and its special circumstances.
- b. The stratification approach: This considers the different strata in society and their positions in the power structure.
- c. The historical-cultural approach: This includes the above two factors and takes into account as well the cultural and historical variables that play a part in the definition of moral behavior.

#### THE MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH

Durkheim was among the first sociologists to claim that the form and type of morality is generally determined by the form and structure of that community. In his renowned book, Division of Labor, he states:

History has irrefutably demonstrated that the morality of each people is directly related to the social

structure of the people practising it. The connection is so intimate, one can infer the nature of that society, the elements of its structure, and the way it is organized. Tell me the marriage patterns, the morals dominating family life, and I will tell you the principal characteristics of its organization. In a word, each social type has the morality necessary to it, just as each biological type has a nervous system that enables it to sustain itself. A moral system is built up by the same society whose structure is thus faithfully reflected in it." (Durkheim 1961)

Following this Durkheimian understanding, we would expect that those societies that are small and well integrated, whose members are homogenously knit together, would develop a single, rigid, uniform code of morality. This was the case of the early Jewish tribes. It is in this manner that the strong personalistic emphasis on sin in the moral codes of the early Jewish community can be understood.

Societies that are more spread-out and agrarian, that are bound to the land, that depend for their life and sustenance on the vagaries of nature, the seasons and the laws of the universe, tend to develop attitudes that are less rigid, more general and characterized by harmony or disharmony with nature. This I would call a cosmic understanding of morality and this was the case of the Hindus in early Vedic times.

Societies, on the other hand, that are large and amorphous, a heterogenous mix of different races and cultures, that are made up of several independent kingdoms, will develop a morality that is secular, iuridical and



conscious of the common good. This was the case of Hammurabi's law codes in Mesopotamia and this was the case also of the later Hindu law codes, after the break-up of the Maurya dynasty. Before that time there was no fixed code at all in India. What was considered morally right in the northern part of India, may have been considered morally wrong in the southern part of India and a uniform moral code, sufficiently secular to integrate all peoples, was considered appropriate.

Following the same line of thinking, Kai Erikson demonstrated how a close relationship exists between a community's boundaries and the kinds of deviation it defined. Every human community, according to him, has its own boundaries, its own unique identity, and so its own way of defining styles of deviant behaviour. In his words:

Societies which place a high premium on ownership of property, for example, are likely to experience a greater volume of theft than those which do not. Societies which emphasize political orthodoxy are apt to discover and punish more sedition than their less touchy neighbors. This is because any community which feels jeopardized by a particular form of behaviour will impose more severe sanctions against it and devote more time and energy to the task of rooting it out. (Erikson 1966, p.19-20)

Erikson went on to document very systematically how the New England Puritan community, historically defined its moral boundaries according to its own perceived fears. The Puritan Community, a splinter of Anglicanism, had fled

England because of persecution for its unorthodox ideas. Now, in America, it feared that the same process of fragmentation was taking place within its own community. Groups were beginning to clamor for individualist orientations. Because they feared losing religious unity, the Puritan fathers clamped down very harshly on Anne Hutchinson, on the Quakers and on the Salem Witches, and outlawed all of them, because these groups were apparently threatening to raise the spectre of independence and autonomy. In this manner, the Puritan community maintained its undivided integrity.

Erikson's insight provides a pointer to the analysis of the morality of early Christianity. One can appreciate why these early Judeo-Christian communities developed such a strong sense of orthodoxy. The members of that community were very keen to mark off, segregate themselves from the rest of society. They wished to exaggerate their differences and hence anyone within the community who showed the slightest trait of heresy, of unorthodox notions, was sharply ostracized. In fact, the more the Judeo-Christian communities were persecuted, the more they developed their notion of heresy and sins against the faith. This is the reason why there was such a long list of heresies in the early history of the Church (McSorley 1961). This will be discussed more fully in Chapter Two.

Summing up, I might say that there is great value in

exploring the morphology of a religious community in order to understand its definition and strength of response to what is right and what is wrong. To understand its concept of sin, the social structure of that community as a totality must be taken into consideration and especially its position vis-a-vis the larger society in which it finds itself.

One criticism of this approach is that it is not complete. Quite often, it is not enough to consider merely the morphological structure of the religious community. One has also to dig into the deeper, underlying causes of the particular morphology. Why, for instance, did some societies develop two distinct, and sometimes contradictory, notions of sins? In fact, there were periods in the history of India when the understanding of sin could scarcely be described as homogeneous. In order to get at these explanations, not only must the whole structure be looked at, but also the separate, internal strata of the religious community.

#### THE STRATIFICATION APPROACH

The second approach, called the stratification approach stresses the idea that morality is specific to a particular stratum or economic group in society and to the specific needs and interests of that group.

In The Social Psychology of World Religions, Max Weber observes that agriculturalists, whose lives are bound to the

land and nature, display a general propensity for the personification of God in nature and for weather rituals (Gerth and Mills 1946, p. 283). This insight helps us to understand why the Vedic<sup>1</sup> notion of sin was pantheistic and nature-oriented and many of its rituals were centered around the sun-god,<sup>2</sup> the rain-god and the soma-plant.

Weber further tells us that economically and politically advantaged groups tend to favor a religion that justifies their good fortune. Such groups "assign to religion the primary function of legitimizing their own life pattern and situation in the world" (Gerth and Mills 1946, p.271). Weber's idea explains how the Brahmins, the highest caste in India, legitimated their high status, when they enacted their law codes around the birth of the Common Era. Accordingly, the morality of such groups would be "hierarchy maintaining" and is generally irenic in its nature.

Bureaucrats are generally carriers of a "sober rationalism" disdaining salvation needs and all irrational

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'god' is deliberately spelt with a small 'g' to distinguish it from the Christian notion of God, which is quite distinct from the Hindu 'god.' The Hindus had many terms for God and for god. Thus, Bhagwan, Ishwar, Brahman are all terms for God (with a capital G), whereas Indra, Soma, Rudra, Savitri are all devas or gods (with a small g). The word deva is best translated by 'divine manifestation'.

<sup>2</sup> The Vedic period is the early period of Indian history, approximately 1300-800 BCE, the time when the earliest books were written, the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.

religion, while at the same time recognizing its utility as a means of mass control. This morality characteristic of this group is extremely 'legalistic' and casuistic. I will use this theoretical principle to explain the attitude and mentality of the Catholic clergy who wrote the Summas and Confessional Manuals of the late Middle Ages.

Petty bourgeois strata, while displaying a variety of religious tendencies, are generally inclined by their economic way of life to embrace rational, ethical, inner-worldly religious ideas. A classic example of this is the asceticism and inner-worldliness of Jainism, a reactionary sect in ancient India, ably supported by the urban merchants and traders, which fostered the values of non-violence and truth (Weber 1958, pp.193-200). How exactly this came about in India is discussed in Chapter Four.

Thus there is an "elective affinity" between stratification groups and religious or moral views. Weber maintains that each of the world religions had been decisively developed by specific strata: "Confucianism by the Chinese literati; Buddhism by contemplative, mendicant monks; Hinduism by a hereditary caste of cultured literati; Islam by warriors; Christianity by itinerant artisan journeymen" (Robertson 1970, p.161).

Of equal renown is Weber's thesis on "relative deprivation". Weber argued that lower middle class groups (relatively disadvantaged groups) were particularly

productive of new religious traditions. The most underprivileged individuals in a society were typically more likely to concern themselves with immediate, material issues of survival; while upper class individuals were especially concerned with religious legitimations of their position, exhibiting a detached kind of religiosity, subscribing to 'theodicies of good fortune' (Robertson 1970,p.158).

Weber uses this 'theory of relative deprivation' to explain the beginnings of Christianity. Christianity is really an offshoot of Judaism and so Weber's thesis is that Christianity was embraced not by the very lowest class of Jews, but by the lower middle strata - viz. the itinerant artisans and merchants. Once they embraced it, they were the ones who spread the new religion all over Europe and Asia Minor.

Weber underscored the point that the lower middle or artisan class is particularly disposed to propagate and embrace religions of salvation, with a strong rational-ethical basis. The 'sense of honor' of such disprivileged strata 'rests on some concealed promise for the future'. 'What they cannot claim to BE, they replace by the worth of that which they will one day BECOME...' They are much more inclined towards religious ideas that promise future compensation for present unhappiness. Although the type and means of compensation may assume endless variations, all such conceptions involve "reward for one's own good deeds

and punishment for the unrighteousness of others" (Weber 1963, p.106).

This Weberian intuition gives us the perfect clue to understanding the burgeoning of the bhakti movement in India, a lower middle class movement in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries spearheaded by singers and poets, who were tailors, and potters, cobblers and shopkeepers (Raghavan 1965, 14-15).

The lower middle classes, sharing some attributes with one class and some attributes with another, tend to be more marginal to the forces which determine the major features of the society. This very marginality ( relative deprivation with respect to the 'topdog' and relative advantage with respect to the 'underdog') produces the perception of a disproportion between effort and reward. It is in these terms that an ethic of compensation - of reward in an after-life - has historically been the special predilection of the lower middle class (Robertson 1970,p.159).

Weber also uses his stratification theory to explain the predominance and prevalence of certain religious ideas and moralities for long stretches of time. He theorizes that in a society manifesting a caste or a feudal system of social stratification, there is a high degree of consistency in the experiences and expectations of individuals located in different positions within the system. These are relatively 'tight' systems with a series of well defined,

vertically separated social layers. In these types of society, like feudal Western Europe or caste India, the ethico-religious rationale tends to legitimate the state of affairs - as did the Great-Chain-of-Being motif in medieval Europe (Robertson 1970, p. 160). This is why the private system of penance remained current for so long in Western Europe and the caste notion of sin reigned for so long in India (over ten centuries).

A contemporary of Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, focussing mainly on European society of the 16th Century, developed useful insights on the relationship between Churches and sects (Troeltsch 1949). Troeltsch researched Protestant sects that broke off at the time of the Reformation. In that period religious collectivities could be accurately described as churchly or sectarian; that is, for or against the established order. Introducing his famous Church-sect and mysticism typology he enables us to understand why initially Protestant sects, which were against the established Church, assumed a very rigoristic morality. It is their sectarian and reformist origins, which explain why they wished to be 'morally pure' and why they tenaciously held on to the Augustinian idea that "human nature is essentially corrupt."

The same principle of Troeltsch's - To be sectarian means to be moralistic - illumines for us a phenomenon that happened almost two millenia earlier. Around 600 BCE,



Buddhism and Jainism, breaking off from mainstream Hinduism, developed very moralistic and ascetic values, emphasizing truth and non-violence, rather than Brahmin ritualism, and thereby reforming Hinduism in the process.

Karl Marx introduced the notion of power into the stratification approach. His idea that religion and morality are a reflection of social class can be interpreted in two ways. Marx's own words, from "The German Ideology" were as follows:

The production of men's ideas, thinking, their spiritual intercourse, here appear as the direct efflux of their material condition. The same applies to spiritual production as represented in the language of politics, laws, morals, religion, metaphysics etc of a people (From The German Ideology, chp. 1., in Bocock and Thompson 1985, p. 12).

The straightforward way of interpreting the above words is that since 'the ideas of each era are the ideas of the ruling class' there is just one morality for the whole of society. It is in this sense that the religious interpretation of the richer classes has become the opium of the poorer classes.

It is this Marxist interpretation (similar to that of Weber cited earlier) which sheds light on how the Brahmin class in India was able to promulgate a caste-based or hierarchy-maintaining notion of sin for several centuries, enabling them to maintain their high status for so long. This Marxist interpretation can also explain how, in the

Middle Ages, the celibate Catholic clergy, who wielded enormous power, was able to impose its sexual morality on the common people.

Catholic Liberation Theologians, taking their lead from Marx's own studies on Christianity in the Middle Ages, have discussed the Church's morality of politics and violence. Gustavo Gutierrez, for instance, shows how the long history of benefits that accrued to the Catholic Church because of its partnership with the State, since the days of the Holy Roman Empire, has consistently led the Church to believe that the State will always be its ally. Gutierrez sees the Church's stance of political non-interference and its defense of private property as a direct result of this friendly partnership with the State (Gutierrez 1970).

In a similar manner, Juan Luis Segundo (Segundo 1976) and Sebastian Kappen (Kappen 1977), make a pungent critique of the Catholic Church's position on violence. They discuss how a morality of passivity, humility, meekness, reconciliation, love, peace, forgiveness, "turning the other cheek" crept into the Church because of its own "vested interests" in maintaining the status quo. Based on the struggles of the poor in their own respective countries, Segundo and Kappen reinterpret the Biblical verses. They understand the Beatitudes, not as a palliative, but as a battle cry for rallying around the poor; they see the violence of Jesus in his cleansing of the temple; and

interpret his attacks on the Pharisees as signs of God's anger. The Liberation Theologians have tried to bring to light the idea that morality has been shaped by material interests. It is time they urge to "write a new morality".

The Marxist principle that morality is shaped by vested interests becomes my key to understanding how Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin is a suitable political philosophy to explain away the evils and corruption of the State. Likewise this same principle illustrates how early Christianity changed its views on war and soldiering depending on whether it was an ally or enemy of the State.

Another interpretation of the ideas of Marx, put forward by Engels, is that religion is class-specific. Each distinctive class will possess an ideology (and therefore a morality), which is a direct expression of its class interest. Thus, in every era, there will be at least two separate ideologies, corresponding to each class position: one for the superordinate and one for the subordinate (Turner 1983).

Gramsci followed this second interpretation and spoke of morality at two levels. At the level of the clergy or hierarchy there is an elite, intellectualist understanding of morality and at the level of the laity there is a popular understanding of morality, mixed with commonsense, superstition, bits of rationality and bits of magic. (Gramsci 1971, p. 328)

For Gramsci, even an institution like the Catholic Church could attain only a surface unity.

Every religion, even Catholicism (indeed Catholicism more than any, precisely because of its efforts to retain a 'surface' unity and avoid splintering into national churches and social stratifications) is in reality a multiplicity of distinct and often contradictory religions: there is one catholicism for the peasants, one for the petit bourgeois and town workers, one for women and one for intellectuals which is itself variegated and disconnected. Common sense is influenced not only by the crudest and least elaborated forms of these sundry Catholicisms, but even previous religions have had an influence and remain components of common sense to this day (Gramsci 1971, p.419-420).

Summing up, I might state that authors have lumped the Weberian and Marxist positions under one term "The Interest Theory." The great advantage of the Interest Theory is its rooting of cultural idea-systems (and morality) in the solid ground of eco-political structure. The motivations of those who draw up the moral system are structured through the prism of their social class and their position in the power structure. The interest theory points out that ideas are weapons and that an excellent way to institutionalize a particular view of morality is to capture political power and enforce it.

Before I conclude and move on to the next approach, it is worthwhile to note that this approach has been criticized by Clifford Geertz. In his article, Ideology as a Cultural

system, he states:

If interest theory has not now the hegemony it once had, it is not so much because it has been proved wrong as because its theoretical apparatus turned out to be too rudimentary to cope with the complexity of the interaction among socio-political, psychological and cultural factors it uncovered. Rather like Newtonian mechanics, it has not been so much displaced by subsequent developments as absorbed into them (Geertz 1985, p.76).

Geertz, I believe, makes a very valid point. The interest theory or stratification approach does not take sufficient cognizance of the interaction that takes place among the ideologies of the different strata. For instance, in India, the Brahmin writers compiling the Law Codes, could not simply enforce a single-minded definition of sin that only protected their own class; if they wished the Codes to be universally accepted they had also to take account of definitions of sin which protected family life and the public good.

In Catholicism too, in the Middle Ages, the private system of penance was not a simple uniform imposition by the powerful clergy with the idea of controlling the spiritual life of their parishioners; it was more a combination of two or three factors together - it was a reaction to the earlier rigorous system of communal penance and an accommodation to the new converts or 'barbarians.'

## THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL APPROACH

The most comprehensive approach is the Historical-cultural approach. It combines a consideration of the morphological, stratificational and historico-cultural structures in their interaction with each other and in their influence on the notions of sin and morality.

According to this view, any complex of religious doctrines is seen as a part of culture that is multi-layered, sedimented and negotiated. To analyse a religious doctrine viewed in this way, one would have to draw on several disciplines, (sociology of religion, sociology of deviance, theology, comparative religion), several methods, historical as well as empirical, (secondary sources as well as primary sources of data) and a sociological paradigm that does not rely on one, single approach.

The historical-cultural approach has been referred to as the archaeological approach (Thompson 1986, pp.98-124) suggesting that it is necessary to excavate different layers of culture, which are in a sense discontinuous. Previous cultural studies frequently lapsed into a deductivist approach, which views the parts of culture as explicable and decodable as parts of a whole, totality or system. According to this deductivist approach, it is enough to find the principle that binds the whole, the code that unlocks the system, and all the elements can be explained. This was the approach of Hegel and of certain types of Marxism, and

all those who set out to analyse culture with a 'total history' approach. Foucault, who departed from this 'total history' approach of Hegel and Marx, substituted his own 'general history' approach. The contrast between these two approaches is best described by Sheridan:

Total history drew all phenomena around a single centre - the principle, meaning, spirit, world - view, overall form of a society or civilization. The same form of historicity operated on economic, social, political and religious beliefs and practices, subjecting them to the same type of transformation and dividing up the temporal succession of events into great periods, each possessing its own principle of cohesion. General history on the other hand, speaks of series, segmentations, limits, differences of level, time-lags, anachronistic survivals, possible types of relation. It is not simply a juxtaposition of different histories or series - economic, political, cultural etc. - nor the search for analogies or coincidences between them. The task proposed by general history is to determine what forms of relations may legitimately be made between them (Sheridan 1980, p.92).

Foucault excavated certain cultural formations (discursive formations), such as nineteenth century psychopathology. He deconstructed the history of this science showing how a unifying discourse came to be formed. In so doing, he produced some fascinating insights as to how a whole cluster of institutions, practices and ways of thinking came about in a particular period.

Foucault resists the temptation to subsume these formative or constituting properties under a single, causal or essential principle. It is for this reason that in works

like Birth of the Clinic (Foucault 1975) he rejected attempts to link the various discursive and non-discursive practices by reference to the mode of production. The value of Foucault's contribution does not lie in offering a single, theoretical resolution to problems. Its main value is in showing the fruitfulness of an archaeological method that drives us back again and again to uncovering the layers of culture, their specific interrelations, and the political processes, both micro and macro, that produce their ideological outcome.

The word 'sexuality' as we understand it today seems quite simple and unequivocal. But, in reality, it hides a whole series of discourses, several layers of discursive formulations. According to Foucault (1980), since the 16th century, there has been a proliferation of discourses about sexuality and as he uncovers each layer of discourse, he reveals how behind each discourse there was a power struggle to control the body and the mind.

The discourse about sin, for example, reveals the power of the clergy in the Middle Ages to exercise control over lay people through the institution of the confessional. The discourse of psychology and psychiatry reveals the power of the professional to control the sexuality of sexual perverts and deviants (homosexuals, tranvestites, paederasts, paedophiles, sadists and masochists). The discourse about child sexuality reveals the power of the



parents and teachers to control the sexuality of children.

The uniqueness of this approach then consists in looking upon a cultural complex (in this case the history of sexuality) - as multilayered.

### The Concept of Sedimented Culture

When explaining the religious mentality of a group or community, it is not enough to consider the structural qualities of the group, their socio-economic status, their internal cohesiveness, their geographical location, etc., but it is equally relevant to take into account the religious history of the community. Just as the structural qualities explain their mentality at one particular point in time, the religious and cultural history seeks to explain factors in their mentality over a long period of time.

An example from sociology might make the historical-cultural approach clearer. The 'bog Irish' are the lower-economic Irish immigrants in London who live in little ghettos of their own. When the Catholic hierarchy of England relaxed the laws of fasting and abstinence in Lent, the bog Irish were extremely upset. Mary Douglas sought to explain their religious turmoil by the internal organization of their communities. The bog Irish culture is closely integrated, very cohesive, very family and community-oriented and somewhat closed in, and in this respect very different from the urban, more liberal, anonymous and

individualistic culture of the rest of the Londoners (Douglas 1982, pp.3-4). This explanation, though valuable, is not enough. The meaning of the law of fasting and abstinence for Catholics has to be understood. This is a law that has come down from the first four centuries, right from the beginnngs of the Catholic Church and has been translated into the very 'lifestream' of the Catholic Irish. The law has been handed down from generation to generation and orally taught from grandparent to parent to children, and this right from the days that they were in Ireland itself, before they even migrated to England.

In this example of the bog Irish we see the limitations of the single-explanation structural approach and the advantages of the historical, multi-factored approach.

Different sociologists viewed the layers of culture differently. Durkheim had five such levels and Gurvitch elaborated them into ten levels (Thompson 1986,p.109). My own approach follows Giddens, for whom culture is conceptualized as layered in two senses - the "diachronic" (referring to superimposition of layers over time) and the "synchronic" (referring to different kinds of layers) (Giddens 1979, p. 110).

Historical excavation however is only one aspect of this approach. A second strand of this approach is what I call the principle of Cultural Interaction, culled from the

thoughts of Gramsci, (mentioned earlier with regard to the stratification approach). Gramsci's discussion of the relationships between elite philosophies and spontaneous philosophies, between official Catholicism and popular Catholicism, are helpful in indicating ways of theorizing about the connections between them. Gramsci argues that between the ideas of the dominant classes and the ideas of the subordinated classes there is a constant struggle, a constant negotiation, and the final result is a compromise or synthesis between the two. Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and consensus are instructive because they refer to an on-going and continuing process, to an "always contested terrain of culture." This is, in short, his principle of cultural or negotiated interaction (Mouffe 1981, p.231).

This Gramscian perspective avoids the error of 'economistic' Marxism, which suggests that the relationship between economy, class and culture is a mechanical and one-way process and refuses to understand that spontaneous culture or popular religion can be simply and unilaterally assimilated by the dominant or hegemonic culture. The two way nature of Gramsci's process suggests that the subordinate classes did not passively acquiesce to the efforts of the dominant class to exercise cultural leadership and win consent to their authority. Gramsci believes that in assenting to dominant conceptions and norms, the subordinate classes also work on and negotiate

them.

The advantage of the Gramscian stress on negotiation is that it avoids some of the deficiencies of theories of culture which put a one-sided emphasis on either the social control or the social expression functions of culture. Social control theories tend to regard all cultural processes in terms of the manipulative efforts of the dominant class to exercise moral leadership and dominance over the subordinate classes. By contrast social expression theories explain culture in terms of its function as a social expression of the experience and way of life of a class.

Gramsci's perspective allows for a view of popular culture and popular morality as a terrain of negotiation and exchange between classes and groups. Furthermore, popular notions of religion and sin have some of the characteristics that Gramsci describes as constituting the 'spontaneous philosophy' and common-sense of the people, traces of past struggles and of elements that were once prominent.

So far the explanation of this approach has been rather abstract. Paul Willis gives a good example of a study that has some elements of the Gramscian perspective (Willis 1977). Willis describes how one particular school in Hammertown, England produces two kinds of boys: the ear'holes (conformists who hailed from the upper middle classes) and the lads (alienated working class kids).

Willis shows how the upper middle class mentality of the administrative and teaching staff could not be simply forced down the throats of the lads. In their own way, the lads resisted this mentality, embodied in the school system and shaped their own counter culture. The culture of the lads was expressed through forms of humor, boyish pranks and a whole style of language. Their counter culture was thus the final outcome of their resistance to the 'molding' given them by the upper class staff. Not only Willis, but several of the English Marxist historians, have rightly insisted that lower class culture or morality is more the expression of 'a whole way of conflict' than of a simple 'assimilation of the upper class style of life'.

William Christian also uses the historical-cultural approach (Christian 1974) in his description of the religious life of Catholics in the Nansa valley of Northern Spain in the 1960s. The author describes the coexistence of three levels of religion even within a relatively homogenous community. The oldest layer probably antedates Christianity and manifests itself in the shrines which influence specific areas and correspond to a local sense of identity. These shrines help to deal with concrete problems, soliciting human energy for divine purposes and divine energy for human purposes. The next layer deriving from the impulses of the Counter-Reformation is characterized by a sense of sin and purgatory and includes general devotions, such as the Sacred

Heart and the Rosary, the objective of which is personal salvation. The latest layer, the product of new intellectual trends, derived from the initiative of young priests attempting to instill a theology which taught people to find God in one another rather than through intermediaries. The various layers are relatively discontinuous and incoherent, despite the efforts of a professional intellectual group, the clergy, to produce an integrated and coherent symbol system.

Summarizing the historical-cultural approach one can say:

1. It offers a multi-layered understanding of culture, rather than an understanding of culture as one homogenous whole.
2. It uses a materialist interpretation and holds that material interests (the economic, political and social complex) do influence the cultural, religious realm. Therefore, it believes in at least two levels of cultural ideas - the cultural ideas of the powerful groups and the cultural ideas of the subordinate groups.
3. It rejects the dominant ideology/dominant culture thesis. The ideology of the weaker groups is not simply assimilated into the ideology of the more powerful groups; instead, weaker groups resist and negotiate the dominant ideology/culture, and the result is a multi-layered religious and cultural system.

4. This approach would therefore combine historical methods, empirical methods, comparative and multi-disciplinary methods.
5. This approach stands within the Marxist tradition, but draws on elements taken from Durkheim and Weber, as well as from authors like Foucault and Gramsci.

### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In the first part of my study I apply this historical-cultural approach to a particular, concrete context, viz., to the Catholic and Hindu traditions of sin. I plunge into history and trace the socio-political reasons that determine the definitions of sin in the Catholic and Hindu religious traditions. Specifically I look for morphological and stratificational factors in their interaction with historical-cultural forces and observe how these together play a part in giving Christianity and Hinduism their unique and peculiar formulations of sin.

The methodology consists in pinpointing the main features of sin in Catholicism and Hinduism - essentially, the types of sins that were emphasized and the unique conceptions accentuated - and explaining these features by means of the community structure, the power relationships and their interaction with other historical-cultural forces.

For this part of the study I used secondary sources, consisting of:

1. Historical books describing the history and the notion of sin and penance in the Catholic and Hindu tradition: Gelin, Riga, Anciaux, Poschmann, Lea, Burkower, Motry, Lecky, Harnack, Basham, Sharma, the penitentials, the catalogs of sin, the summas and confessional manuals, the Sacred Books of the East, the Dharma sutras, the Dharma shastras, the Code of Manu, Yajnavalkya and the other law books in Hinduism.
2. Books of social history, that is, books describing the social and cultural background of those particular periods in history. I use authors like Herr, Lecky, Westermarck, Brinton, Taylor, Chaudhuri, Thapar, Kosambi, Eliade, Max Mueller, Noonan, and others.

The first part of my study is not a simple history of ideas, but a social history of ideas. My aim is not to see how the ideas of sin developed in a chronological and progressive manner, but to inquire into the factors that shaped the definitions of sin. I attempt to locate the material factors and interests that gave rise to the peculiar emphasis and different conceptions of sin.

### A Social History Approach

Social history is different from other historical approaches. Some historians explain concepts or ideas by referring them to other concepts or ideas. The social



historian however must go further. He or she must explain concepts or ideas by empirical referents. While the former is called an ideological approach, the latter is called a sociological approach. Two examples will make the difference clear.

One can explain, for instance, the fact that the Israelites developed a very sharp, personal consciousness of sin, while the Babylonians developed an impersonal, secular sense of sin in two ways:

An ideological historian would say that the personalistic notion of sin arose from the concept of 'Covenant with God' which the Israelites uniquely possessed. Sin was considered as a rupture of this covenant and thereby a rupture of the personal relationship with God. Thus, the personal notion of sin is explained by being referred to the earlier concept of the covenant. Since the Babylonians did not have any concept of the covenant in their religion, their notion of God and sin was not therefore personal. This is one answer given by most ideological histories of theology.

The social historian's approach to answering the same question would be to consider the socio-economic structure of the two communities. Israel had a tribal structure, whereas Babylon had an urban structure. In a tribal structure sin (or breaking of the tribal code) is of greater significance and importance because the community is

smaller, unified and more integrated. Whereas, in an urban structure, there is a lot of anonymity, diversity and flexibility. Rule breaking is not so sharply seen as in a smaller tightly knit community. Hence the notion of sin is not so strong and personalistic. This latter answer is the one given by social historians.

Likewise, when explaining the reasons why Christianity labelled violence and war as sinful, the ideological approach would be to go back to the Fathers of the Church, study what they had to say about the subject and trace a continuity in their statements about violence and war. Social history however is different. It would look for whether violence and war were always considered a sin in history or not, then it would try to discover the material, empirical reasons why they were designated sins in one period and not sinful in another.

Social history is also different from a 'purely' historical approach. Pure history<sup>3</sup> takes into account different factors and reasons for explaining a concept without associating them with a sociological theory. Explanations and reasons are presented for what they are

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<sup>3</sup> Karl Rahner in his *Theological Investigations* spoke of two types of history: 'Geschicht' or a mere chronology of events and 'Historie' or Interpretative history, when the events are given an interpretation according to the mind of the author (Rahner 1961, p.112). I would go a step further and say that there is also 'social history', when the events are given an interpretation taken from sociological theory.

without relating them to an organized sociological hypothesis. Thus, Lecky (1869) and Lea (1896) for instance, have garnered a vast number of historical facts and statements that do explain events, but these facts are not unified into a sociological theory.

Lastly, my social history also has a comparative perspective. I am looking at the Catholic and Hindu historical traditions and comparing and contrasting different views of sin and the differing social formations that gave rise to them in two very disparate cultures.

The second part of my study is empirical, but still comparative. In this part of my study, I compare and contrast what present-day samples of Hindus and Catholics think about sin. I choose samples of Hindus and Catholics from the city of Bombay with the aim of finding out if there are major differences in their ways of thinking about sin and what these differences are. Further, I verify whether the major sociological factors that determined the unique forms of the Catholic and Hindu religious tradition in the past - the community structure, the relationships of power, other historical-cultural factors - are still valid in the contemporary thinking of Hindus and Catholics.

Chapters Two and Three will trace the social history of the Catholic notion of sin. Chapters Four and Five will trace the social history of the Hindu notion of sin. In Chapters Six and Seven I will discuss the results of the

empirical survey. The survey will test the results of my historical study and examine whether Hindus and Catholics differ in their thinking about sin and whether the same social factors that were responsible for the differences in the past are still responsible for differences today. Chapter Eight will be devoted to summing up the results of this two part study and end with predictions for the future.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC NOTION OF SIN

#### PART ONE

In doing a social history of sin, it is not necessary to review chronologically the entire period of history. It is enough to be selective and pick out those periods which had a salient impact on the notion of sin. In the first part of this social history I deal with the pre-Christian or Jewish period, the centuries of persecution and the period just after the Constantinian edict. In the second part of my social history, I highlight the Middle Ages and their impact on the Catholic notion of sin.

#### THE JEWISH HERITAGE : A PERSONALISTIC NOTION OF SIN

Since Christianity was really a breakaway sect of Judaism (Herr 1986,p.12), the concept of sin in Christianity has its roots in Judaism. To get a clear picture of the pageant of Christian morality, a knowledge of Hebrew ethics is indispensable (Harkness 1954, p.87). The Hebrew scriptures have had a profound influence upon the moral development of the entire occidental/Christian world mainly because of the incorporation of the Old Testament into the

Christian Bible and its acceptance as an inspired body of doctrine. For many centuries everything from Genesis through Revelation was regarded as the unequivocal and infallible Word of God, spoken with the authority of "Thus saith the Lord". Even the ethical teachings of Jesus are firmly imbedded in a Hebrew setting.

In this section I propose to briefly review Hebrew morality in the pre-Christian era and trace its origins to the morphology of the early Hebrew communities. I will do this by contrasting Hebrew morality and community structure with that of its neighbors, Babylon and Egypt.

When one looks at Hebrew moral codes one finds that they were, to a great extent, influenced by the tradition of Israel's neighbors, Babylon and Egypt. Egyptian influences have been traced to the "Wisdom of Amenemope", an Egyptian compilation of adages and shrewd moral injunctions (Breasted 1933; Botterweck 1977, pp. 70-71) and to the Negative Confession preserved in the Book of the Dead (E.A. Wallis Budge 1960, p. 258ff; also Harkness 1954, p. 55-56). Babylonian influences have been traced to the Code of Hammurabi and to other incantation texts (Harkness 1954, p. 80). From the above examples it is very clear that Hebrew moral codes borrowed considerably from the codes of their culturally more advanced neighbors. Since there was so much influence, one would expect that the Hebrews would have a consciousness of sin that was more or less similar to that

of their neighbors. Nevertheless, what we find is that the Hebrews developed a far more pronounced and acute consciousness of sin. I propose to seek the explanation for this difference in the morphological structure of Hebrew society, which was very different from Babylonian and Egyptian society. Before I do this however, I shall outline the characteristics of Hebrew morality stressing its differences from Babylonian and Egyptian morality.

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HEBREW MORALITY AND BABYLONIAN/EGYPTIAN

Hebrew literature had an extraordinarily large vocabulary and terminology relating to sin. Different words are used for the concept of sin in early Judaism of which three are most common:

- i. Hata, which means, to miss the mark, to miss the target, to violate a norm or the law of God. Examples of this use are Proverbs 19:2 or Gen. 20:9, the sin of Abimelech against Abraham.
- ii. Pesa, which designates sins of man offending man, or man offending the king. Examples are 1 Kg 12:19 (Israel rebelled against the house of David) or Is 1:2.
- iii. Awon which signifies mainly offenses against God and includes the connotation of guilt that goes with it. Examples are Lev 5:1 or Ezek 14:10. (Gelin 1964, p.17; Lyonnet 1974, p.13).

Then there are several words used less often: marad, bagad, and marah, all of which express infidelity; commonly used is the word 'ma'al', meaning to act without concern for one's obligations and to defraud (Gelin 1964, p.18).

Later Judaism, using the Greek language, as it is reflected in the Septuagint, developed the discourse even further and explicated some more words:

- Hamartia (to sin)
- Anomia (lawlessness)
- Asebes (impious) and
- Rasa or Resha (the wicked)

Babylonian and Egyptian literature on the other hand did not develop such a specialized vocabulary. Although, they did have a term for "what was sinful" and "ritually impure" and often another word for "what was forbidden", most of their discourse concerned what was lawful and unlawful, what was social etiquette and what was not socially desirable (Van der Toorn 1985, pp.27-28; Harkness 1954, p.79).

A second characteristic of Hebrew moral literature, which differentiates it from Babylon and Egypt, is the emphasis on the numerous catalogs or lists of sins. Below is a small sample of them (Gelin 1964, pp.19-20).

- |                 |                |                            |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Ex. 20, 2-17 | and Dt. 5,6-18 | The Decalogue              |
| 2. Ps. 14       |                | A tora of 10 prescriptions |
| 3. Ez. 33,25f   |                | Catalogues of 6 terms      |



4.	Ez. 18,5-9	Catalogues of 12 terms
5.	Dt. 27, 15-26	Dodecalogue of the levites
6.	Amos 4, 1-3 ; 5,10-12 ; 6, 1-7	Oppression of the poor
7.	Os 2,4-7 10-15 ; 4,11-14	Contamination of cult
8.	Is 22, 8-11 ; 30, 1-5.15f	Sins against animals
9.	Prov. 30, 11-34 and Prov. 6, 16-19	Pedagogical list
10.	Lev.4,2.27	Sins of ignorance
11.	Ps. 18,13 ; 90,8	Hidden sins
12.	Ps. 24,7	Forgotten sins

Though Babylonian and Egyptian religions also had lists of sins, these were very few in number and were parts of incantations or were found amidst a welter of magical formulas (Harkness 1954, p.78). In Judaism the catalog of sins played a more significant role in the life of the people. Many of these lists were read out by the priests at all the important liturgical feasts, at the beginning of the new year and at the feast of tabernacles and the priestly class used them time and again to reinforce moral codes (Botterweck 1977, pp.65-67).

A third specifically Hebrew characteristic is the understanding of sin as a personal offence against God. In Egypt and Babylon, the notion of sin was understood either as ritual impurity or as a disturbance of social harmony and the law codes were enacted so that peace might be maintained in the community and so that individual rights might not be violated. In Israel alone, sin appears as a drama played out between two persons, God and man; the notion of sin came to be understood as the breaking off of a personal relationship with God. Sin assumes a religious

dimension and the idea of sin is seen as the obverse of the idea of God. To sin means to disobey God, to perform an act of violence against the divinity and to revolt against God, and the moral codes came to be seen more and more as an expression of God's will (Gelin 1964, pp.11-21).

This specific Israelite understanding of sin is apparent in the unique style of the "Preamble" or opening section of the "Ten Commandments", which is the only part, which is clearly and distinctly Israelite (Botterweck 1977, p.64). The Ten Commandments are the moral law 'par excellence' of the Hebrews, yet the body of the Ten Commandments is not uniquely Israelite. For its content it drew heavily from Babylonian case laws<sup>1</sup> and for its 'second person imperative' format, it drew from Egyptian moral maxims.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew ten commandments have such strong similarities with the much-earlier and more complex code of Hammurabi that there seems no doubt that the former is a modified version of the latter. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is paralleled by 'filial respect' in Babylon. "Thou shalt not kill" has a similar interdiction of homicide in Mesopotamia. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" has its corresponding taboo in Mesopotamia. The "Thou shalt not steal" commandment of Israel is almost too simple for Mesopotamia's elaborate judicial system set up to defend private property. And finally, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor..." corresponds to the string of prohibitions, slander, false accusations, hypocrisy that Mesopotamian law codes forbid and punish (K.Van der Toorn 1985, pp.13-20).

<sup>2</sup> In the moral maxims of the time of Ramses II we find two series of ten ; every maxim begins with "do not", "thou shalt not." For example:  
do not covet the goods of a small man, and do not hunger for his bread. Do not falsely fix the hand-

The only thing that is clearly unique about the Israelite decalogue (Ten Commandments) is its opening paragraph, which contains the self-proclamation of God, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt that place of slavery." This self-presentation of God, this declaration is radically different in form from the body of ethical precepts which follow and is definitely a later addition. While the self-declaration is in the first person, the ethical precepts are all in the second or third person. The connection is therefore derived and it seems to be the interpolation of the priestly class, whose purpose was to link the concept of sin with the notion of an offence against a personal God (Botterweck 1977, p.65).

If one understands the 'corporate personality'<sup>3</sup> of a tribal culture, it becomes easy to see how the self-proclamation of God when joined to a "do not.., thou shalt not..." format can be understood as God speaking to his people and the law becomes the expression of God's will for his people.

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scales, do not use false weights, do not reduce the parts of the corn-measure. Do not laugh at a blind man and do not mock at a dwarf, do not bring the lame one's purpose to disgrace (Botterweck 1977, p.72).

<sup>3</sup> The corporate personality exists when the whole people or tribe is understood as one single individual. From a juridical point of view, a unilineal kinship group - such as a tribe - counts as a single person at law. To outsiders, all members of such a group are, juridically speaking, identical (De Geus 1976, p.132).

A fourth characteristic of the Israelite notion of sin is that the concept of personal offence to God was made indelible in the Hebrew mentality through exemplary histories (Gelin 1964, p.1; Lyonnet 1970, p.16). These were stories of the sinful deeds of the Hebrew's ancestors recounted from generation to generation - through a process of oral tradition - and thus firmly embedded in the minds and hearts of every Jew. In a tribal culture, oral history is extremely important and an excellent pedagogical method for socializing the young. The purpose of these exemplary histories, written up by the priestly class,<sup>4</sup> was to reinforce the notion of sin as a rupture of that personal relationship with God.

Thus, the story of the sin of Adam and Eve in Gen. 3 is portrayed as disobedience to God. The sin of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11,1-9) is shown as a mocking defiance of the will of God. The sins of Noah's contemporaries are seen as an insult to God's friendship. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19,1-11) are viewed as an open flouting of God's expressed desire, the sin of Onan (Genesis 38,7-10) as a flagrant negligence of God's law and the sin of David

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<sup>4</sup> Although the different narrative strands that make up the Pentateuch section of the Bible have been called by different names, Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly and Deuteronomist, biblical scholars are generally agreed that their authors all hailed from the priestly or Levite class (Harkness 1954, pp.100-101; Eugene Maly, 1968, pp.3-4).

against Uriah (II Samuel 12) as a personal injury and hurt to God. The sin of idolatry of the whole people of Israel as infidelity to God (Hosea chps.1-3;11). It is through these exemplary histories that the Israelite understood every breaking of the law as sinful because it was a deep affront and personal injury to the heart of God himself.

Egyptian and Babylonian literature also had stories of the evil deeds of their ancestors, but they were seldom placed in the context of a personal relationship with God (Noonan 1984, pp.3-14). In fact, many of the exemplary histories mentioned above are not specifically Israelite. They were part of the ancient lore prevalent in the Middle East. Thus, in the tower temples of the Sumerians lie the beginnings of the story of the Tower of Babel (Harkness 1954, p.63) and in the Epic of Gilgamesh lie the origins of the story of Noah's Ark (Harkness 1954, p.75). The specifically Israelite flavor however consisted in modifying these stories and viewing them in terms of destroying that personal dialogue and relationship with God.

The final major difference between Hebrew morality and the Babylonian/Egyptian is in the area of sexuality. The Egyptians were far more tolerant in their sexual attitudes. Preserved among the illustrations in various early tombs of nobles are portraits of their inhabitants looking with considerable pleasure on youthful, near-nude dancing girls and musicians. The same acceptance of sex

appears in the temple paintings where the gods are depicted in various sex acts (Bullough 1976, p.58).

What restrictions existed on sexual activities, such as the condemnation of female adultery, were justified as necessary for preserving public order (Bullough 1976, p.58). Homosexuality, though not unlawful,<sup>5</sup> was viewed with public disfavor.

Another big difference from the Hebrews was that the Egyptians had no taboo against incest. Right from the Pharaoh down to the peasants, it was common for brothers to marry sisters in order to keep the property in the family. All landed property descended in the female line from mother to daughter. It is in this context that we are to understand Cleopatra and her many marriages (Graham-Murray 1966, p.36). In the Greek-Egyptian city of Arsinoe, it has been estimated that two-thirds of the marriages recorded during the second century were between brothers and sisters (Erman 1966, p.180).

Babylonian religion too has been described by authors as non-moral (Harkness 1954, p.84). Sex was accepted as a fact of life with no need for disguise (Bullough 1976, p.55). Babylonian society looked indulgently on a man's casual sex relations with an unmarried woman (Graham-Murray 1966, p.14). In spite of the laws prohibiting specific forms

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<sup>5</sup> As is clear from the story of Seth and Horus (Gwynn Griffiths 1969).

of sexual intercourse, as between man and animals, the only condemnatory attitude in the potency incantations is toward ritual uncleanness and not toward any sexual act.

Some aspects of Babylonian religion were certainly deleterious to morals. The gods were self-centered ; they engaged in sexual union which, by the substitution of priest for God, became a basis for temple prostitution (Graham-Murray 1966, p.25; Harkness 1954, p.76). Prostitution in Babylon was accepted and widely practiced (Bullough 1976, p.53; Driver and Miles 1955).

The Babylonians were devoutly aware of the gods, but they had never heard of morals (Graham-Murray 1966,p.22). Pleasure-loving and guilt free, they were not sex-obsessed like the Hebrew prophets (Graham-Murray 1966,p.27).

Judaism, by contrast, seemed almost repressive in its sexual codes. The Hebrew law codes placed a negative value on sexual behaviour outside of the marital bed and considered the primary purpose of sex to be procreation, best exemplified in the Biblical injunction, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis I, p.28).

Precisely because of its small numbers and constant battling against opponents, Israel was particularly conscious of dying out as a tribe. Her existence was made precarious by Canaanite tribes, invading peoples and a

perilous relationship with the then super powers.<sup>6</sup> The Israelite dream, from the time of Abraham, was that their descendants multiply like the stars and anyone who threatened the realization of that dream by refusing to procreate or by assimilating with enemy tribes was ostracized.

The story of Onan (Genesis 38,7-10) has often been regarded as a prohibition against masturbation, though the act described is coitus interruptus; Onan however seems to have been punished not merely for wasting his seed, but for his refusal to obey the levirate requirement that he take his brother's wife as his own and thus carry on the progeny (Bullough 1976, p.78).

Crossdressing, both male and female, was condemned.<sup>7</sup> The prohibition however was not so much against the sexual overtones in transvestism as against the pagan practices in which the goddess Atargatis was worshipped by men and women dressed in the clothing of the opposite sex (S.R. Driver 1951, pp.250-51).

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<sup>6</sup> Israel had a long list of enemies. Her major enemies were: Assyrians, Babylonians, Arameans, Ugarit, Phoenicians, Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites, Philistines and the Egyptians. The lesser enemies were: The Hittites, Jebusites, Midianites, Amorites, Amalekites, Kenites, the Medes (Hunt 1968, p.210).

<sup>7</sup> " The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 22,5).



Rape (Genesis 34,1-31) and adultery (Dt.22,22) were punishable and incest was considered one of the crimes a Jew was not to commit even under threat of death (Leviticus 10,17 and 21,11), as is evident from the case of Tamar and Amnon, children of David (II Samuel, 13,1-39).

It seems logical that sexual acts between two males would be condemned, for a man was both wasting his seed and committing a ritual impurity, but the Jewish reaction to homosexuality is more severe than simple condemnation; it was death as indicated by the story of Sodom (Genesis 19, 1-11). This severe punishment was meant primarily to distance themselves from the cult prostitution of the pagans (Deuteronomy 23,17 and Leviticus 18,22; 21,13).

This desire to be distinct and separate reveals the underlying reason for the strict sexual codes. It has been suggested that the period following the return from the exile (500 BCE) was the period of greatest sexual repression. When Judaism seemed threatened, when Jews both individually and as a group, were insecure, their sexual attitudes were the most repressive. When there was a greater feeling of security, attitudes were more tolerant. During the post-exilic period, for example, many Jews regarded assimilation as a threat. One way of preventing this was to establish rigid barriers between believers and non-believers, to distinguish sexually between what a Jew did and what a non-Jew did, and to obstruct the path of any

intermingling through intermarriage (Bullough 1976, p.75). For a woman any sexual encounter with a man who is not of her own people is 'whoredom'; for a man any marriage with a woman not belonging to the people was considered an invalid marriage and the woman was looked upon as a concubine (De Geus 1976, p.148).

Given this tradition, the stringent laws pertaining to marriage and sexuality in the Hebrew moral codes are much more understandable.

#### FACTORS UNDERLYING THE STRONG ISRAELITE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN

The above descriptions have shown that though there is such a strong similarity and osmosis between the moral codes of Mesopotamia/Egypt and the moral codes of ancient Israel, the people of Israel still developed a distinctive and far stronger consciousness of sin than their neighbors. The questions then that pose themselves are these: How is it that the books of the Old Testament mention the word sin so often, whereas in Babylonian and Egyptian literature the mention of sin is far less frequent? How is it that Israel alone developed a notion of sin as a personal injury to God? And finally, how is it that the Israelites developed such a strong and repressive code of sexual morality?

The answer, it appears, lies in their respective socio-economic structures. Israel of the Old Testament had a tribal structure, whereas Mesopotamia and Egypt had an

urban structure. It is the tribal culture which explains the stronger consciousness of sin, the personal nature of the concept and the more repressive sexual codes of Israel (Van der Toorn 1985, pp.3-5).

Before this thesis can be explained, one must first understand a few aspects of tribal society.

First, in the anthropological sequence, tribal nomadism - as was typical of early Israel - is not prior to the agricultural mode of life, but rather an offshoot of it (Hoebel 1972, pp.195-223). The sequence is now held to have been that food gathering came before food producing. From gathering wild grain, agriculture developed. In the Middle East, this primitive agriculture was very soon accompanied by the keeping and breeding of sheep, goats and donkeys - pastoral nomadism (Jawad 1965). Thus, the Israelites, who kept flocks and herded cattle, are to be regarded as pastoral nomads. Historically pastoral nomadism developed along the dry margins of rainfall cultivation (De Geus 1976, pp.128-129).

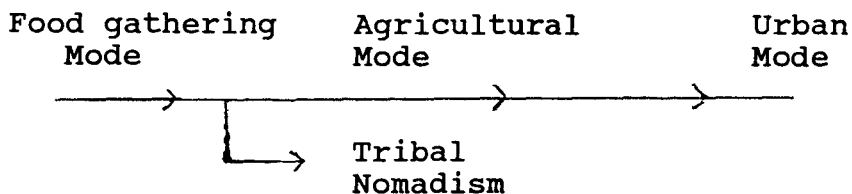


Diagram I

If this sequence is accepted, then it is very clear that the development of tribalism follows a very different route from the development of urban life. It is now seen more and more clearly that far from being a preliminary step towards the formation of a city-state, the tribe constitutes a considerable obstacle to its formation (Moscati 1961, pp.55-65). It may be pointed out that of those peoples originally organized in tribes, the only ones who proceeded to form real states, were those who succeeded in breaking up their tribal organization. The concept of tribe is not primarily a political, but in the first place a juridical and in the second place, an economic and social concept. Tribal structures are exceptionally tough and incredibly difficult to break down. It has been trenchantly stated, "Tribal nomadism is an evolutionary cul-de-sac" (Fried 1968, p.17). Thus, because of their separate routes of development, tribal codes will be vastly different from urban law codes.

A second issue is that, tribal hierarchy is patriarchal and naturally favorable to a male-oriented sexuality. The smallest social unit in ancient Israel was the "bet'ab". This concept comprises a family of three generations, consisting of grandparents, parents and children and also includes the horizontal addition of various mostly unmarried uncles, aunts, cousins (Porter

1967, p.7). The best rendering of the Hebrew expression 'Father's house' is: 'extended family'. The distinctive mark of an extended family is not a fairly large number of relations living together, but that the authority in the "bet'ab" belongs to the Father. And this is upheld by the right of primogeniture, a clear indication of a strictly patriarchal society (De Geus 1976, pp.128-129).

A third aspect of tribal society is that since the bet'ab however is not a viable economic unit, different bet'ab's come together to form a clan. The clan or 'mispha' was the chief economic unit in Israel. Each clan lived in a townlet. However for security purposes, different clans came together and formed a tribe. Thus the formation of a tribe resulted from a reaction to an outside enemy. However, the tribe served other functions as well. It was an endogamous group and the expression of a blood-relationship. More than that, it was the Israelite's way of orientating himself in the world. The whole genealogical system served to maintain the idea of the people as one large, closed family (De Geus 1976, pp.146-147). Put simply, the tribe had a distinctive culture that marked it off from other tribes (Hoebel 1972, p.704). Thus, the tribal structure is very different from an urban structure which is relatively more open, individualistic, anonymous and non-cohesive.

One might argue that Israel did eventually develop a functional complexity and differentiation characteristic of

an urbanized society with a market economy and on the other hand, that Mesopotamia and Egypt did evolve from a tribal stage. However, the evolution of Mesopotamia and Egypt towards urbanization and social stratification took place before the creation of its great literary works and its moral codes. In Egypt, creation stories were written when the king was already in power and for this reason the king was often referred to as God.<sup>8</sup> The creation stories of Mesopotamia hardly deal with the genesis of the animals, whose existence is mostly taken for granted (The Babylonian Genesis, Heidel 1963). The old Babylonian 'Epic of Gilgamesh' celebrates the city life of Enkidu, who is severed from the barbarian life in the steppe. Throughout Mesopotamia's history there runs a strong current of contempt for the nomads living on the fringes of the cities (Edzard 1981, p.38). The urban social setting of Mesopotamia, so unlike Israel, favored social mobility, competition, the rise of individualism and concomitant nationalism.

In contrast to Babylon and Egypt, in Israelite society tribal allegiance kept in check for a long time the desire for individual expansion, though things did change after the institution of the monarchy. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah showed that in the post-exilic period clan loyalism remained

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<sup>8</sup> see the 'Memphite Theology' in J.A. Wilson, The Burden of Egypt, p. 60 and quoted by Harkness 1954, p.51.

an important factor (Cf. Ezra 2; 8,1-14; Neh.7,6-72;11). Eventually the institution of kingship did come to Judah and Israel, but it was a relatively late development and only occurred after all the tribes had broken down.

Reflecting its urban structure, Mesopotamia's religion was a receptive form of polytheism, "an open system..... a kaleidoscopic repertoire of divinities who personify various aspects of reality" (Buccellati 1981, p.36). These gods, like humans, were subject to spite, lust and rage. Each one of them tried to realize his own aims, sometimes to the detriment of his colleagues. With regard to mankind, their interests ran largely parallel. The manifold requests for divine intercession show that also towards man the gods had no complete unity of purpose.

For the ordinary Babylonian, the pantheon, much like the royal administration, remained a remote reality that could hardly command his piety. The religious sentiment of the Babylonian individual focussed on his personal gods, his divine creators and protectors (Jacobsen 1976, chp. 5). They were supposed to secure his success and to plead his cause with the higher deities. Thus the social individualism was paralleled by a religious individualism (Van der Toorn 1985, p.4).

The plurality of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian religion is poles apart from the monotheism of Israel, the Israel of the Old Testament. In Israel, the Lord was a

jealous God who claimed the exclusive adoration of both the individual and the nation. His plans and commands could not be thwarted by dissentient colleagues. Since all the other deities had faded into insignificance, the Israelite had no longer an excuse to shirk the obligation of obedience to the one God remaining.

Although one should not oversimplify the contrast between Babylon/Egypt and Israel, as though a mass of contradictory demands was opposed to an unequivocal and monolithic will, the difference remains decisive. In Egypt and Babylon, God's precepts were not always clear; they were flexible and with time and circumstance the content of these precepts might change. In the Hebrew Old Testament, on the other hand, the sentiment always prevails that the commandments are fixed and absolute and meant to enlighten man in his moral predicament.

For the Mesopotamian, "wisdom lay in maintaining a 'low profile'...threading one's way cautiously and quietly through the morass of life...attracting the gods' attention as little as possible."<sup>9</sup> The receptivity of the open pantheon was matched by a religious tolerance and flexibility, capable of absorbing very diverse beliefs and practices.

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<sup>9</sup> J. J. Finkelstein, The Ox that Gored, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for promoting useful knowledge. 71/2; Philadelphia 1981, 11a and quoted in Van der Toorn, 1985,p.5.



Israel's faith on the contrary demanded ardor. The religious sentiment was not dispersed but concentrated in the worship of one acknowledged Lord. The tribal claims to exclusiveness commanded religious intolerance and inflexibility in morals and sexuality (Van der Toorn 1985, p.5).

This early orientation to sin, accrued from its tribal days, was retained by Israel all through its history. There were times when certain aspects were played down or certain other aspects played up, but essentially certain elements came to stay as part of Israel's moral baggage: the notion of a personal offence against God with its accompanying guilt; the predominance of sin in all forms of religious behaviour; and thirdly, a patriarchal sexuality with its very strict sexual codes.

In the period of the prophets all these elements were reinforced, but because of the disparate social classes, special emphasis was placed on sins of injustice. In the time of Jesus, ritualism had assumed supreme importance having risen with the power of the high priests. Reacting to this situation, Jesus stressed the "sins of the heart" (Lyonnet 1970, pp.34-35). St. Paul and the early Christian community, thinking that the end of the world was near, continued this preoccupation with sin and proposed an even more rigorous sexual morality. Eventually, when Christianity broke away from Judaism, it carried with it much of the

former's heritage : a strong consciousness of sin, a personalistic flavor and a stringent sexual code.

The purpose of this section was to show that Christianity's personalistic understanding of sin and its emphasis on sexual codes has its roots in its Hebrew background and tribal culture. Thus, the morphological variable is helpful in understanding this particular formulation of sin.

The period after the death of Christ, the first three centuries of the Common Era, gave rise to another development in the Christian understanding of sin - its strong emphasis against heresies and sins of faith. The morphological variable is again helpful in understanding how this took place, even though in this case, the morphological variable is seen interacting with other cultural and historical variables.

#### **THE PERSECUTION YEARS: SINS AGAINST FAITH**

Another important stage in the development of the Christian notion of sin was the period of the persecutions, i.e., the first three centuries of the Common Era, when the Christian communities experienced violent persecutions from the Roman emperors. At one level the Roman persecutions served to segregate and isolate the Christian communities from their Jewish and pagan neighbors, thereby heightening their sense of identity, sharpening their moral boundaries

and accentuating their purity of doctrine. At another level the persecutions made the Christians morally and doctrinally righteous and they themselves began to persecute and chastise their fellow brethren who showed the slightest deviation in matters of faith and doctrine.

It is no wonder then that during the first three centuries the major sins in the community were the sins against faith or belief; more specifically, the heresies and the apostasies. A large part of the energy of the early church was spent in combating these heresies and in dealing with disputes about apostates.

Kai Erikson's insight, as provided in his book, "Wayward Puritans", enables us to appreciate why these Christian communities developed such a strong notion of the sins against faith. In his book, Erikson demonstrates how the Puritan community because of their own experience of persecution, exaggerated the importance of doctrinal purity and delineated very sharply their differences from other groups. In the process they ostracized anyone within the community who showed the slightest trait of heresy or unorthodox notions.

Something similar happened to the Christian communities of the first three centuries. The more they were persecuted, the more they sharpened their own moral boundaries and began to label deviants as heretics and apostates. While in the apostolic church (the first 80

years of the Common Era) the three most important sins as enunciated by St. Paul were: murder, adultery/fornication and idolatry, (Acts of the Apostle 15,28-29), by the end of the third century, the most important sin came to be idolatry. Over the period of two hundred and fifty years, the sin of idolatry was expanded in meaning and idolaters now included heretics, apostates, lapsed Catholics and even those who held beliefs that were only microscopically deviant from the orthodox position.

This is one reason why there was such a long list of heresies in the first three centuries of the Church's history. According to Joseph McSorley's An Outline History of the Church by Centuries, there were about 17 or 18 main heresies in the first five hundred years and just 4 or 5 in the next five hundred years, not counting revivals of earlier heresies.

## THE HERESIES

After the initial persecutions of Nero (in the year 64) and Domitian (in the year 95), when the Church was still feeling out its sense of identity and was absolutely wary of any division or schism, the first heresy to spring up in the second century was that of Gnosticism around 112 CE.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Gnosticism was a movement or sect that believed in two types of Christianity, one for the multitudes and one for the initiated, who have all the secret knowledge. The most important Gnostics were Valentinus, Basilides, Carpocrates and Marcion. The Christians studiously tried to

Then after the famous Rescript<sup>11</sup> of Trajan to Pliny, when Christians were not actively persecuted but were still in danger of their lives, the heresies that became prominent were, Adoptionism in the first part of the second century<sup>12</sup> and Montanism (circa 156 CE).<sup>13</sup>

Thereafter, as the persecutions mounted under Marcus Aurelius (circa 180 CE) and Septimus Severus (circa 202 CE) and reached a high point under Decius (251 CE), who undertook to destroy Christianity, the list of heresies also grew in number. There was Modalism (circa 220 CE),<sup>14</sup>

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dissociate themselves from the followers of Carpocrates who were accused by the Romans of having secret meetings wherein sexual orgies and licentious relationships took place (Eusebius, 1966 edition, iv. 7).

<sup>11</sup> In 112 CE, Pliny, governor of Bithynia, wrote to Trajan asking how he should deal with the Christians, who were becoming so numerous that temples were being abandoned and old usages were being disturbed. He received this reply: No search need be made for Christians but if accused openly they were to be punished unless they gave up their faith.

<sup>12</sup> Adoptionism was the view originated by Theodotus of Byzantium that Jesus was simply a human being, especially favored or "adopted" as the Son of God.

<sup>13</sup> A sect started by Montanus of Phrygia who denied the possibility of forgiveness of serious sins. One of the serious sins was denial of one's faith when persecuted.

<sup>14</sup> Modalists believed that God manifested himself under three modes, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They were also called Sabellians after their chief leader and in the East were named Patripassianists.

Hippolytism (circa 235 CE),<sup>15</sup> the question of the lapsed Catholics, (circa 251 CE)<sup>16</sup> and Novatianism (c. 255 CE).<sup>17</sup>

The Roman emperors Gallus and Valerian continued the persecutions of the Christians, but the peak of violence was reached under Diocletian in 302 CE. Around that time the church had to contend with many more heresies: Manichaeism (circa 275 CE)<sup>18</sup> and at the beginning of the fourth century, Donatism (circa 311 CE),<sup>19</sup> Meletianism (circa 306 CE),<sup>20</sup> and immediately after the persecutions ceased, Arianism (circa

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<sup>15</sup> Hippolytus originated a short lived schism when he proclaimed a more rigorous penitential discipline and disagreed with Pope Callistus.

<sup>16</sup> The lapsed Christians (also called 'lapsi') consisted of the large number of Christians, including bishops, who had abjured their faith rather than face torture or death (Herr 1986, p. 36).

<sup>17</sup> A schism organized by Novatus, who set himself up as anti-pope and proclaimed the rigorous rule that those who had lapsed from the faith during the persecution had committed an unpardonable sin and could never be restored to the church.

<sup>18</sup> Manichaeism, essentially a religious dualism, started by Mani around 242 CE, explains the struggle between good and evil by two opposing deities, God and Satan.

<sup>19</sup> Donatism is a schism which grew up in Carthage, North Africa, over the question of whether "traditores" could validly consecrate. Traditores, were members of the hierarchy, who gave the Sacred Books over to be profaned by pagans.

<sup>20</sup> Meletus, Bishop of Lycopolis, headed a schism about the year 306 CE apparently in the hope of supplanting Peter of Alexandria.

315 CE),<sup>21</sup> Apollinarianism,<sup>22</sup> Macedonianism,<sup>23</sup> and Priscillianism.<sup>24</sup>

When one looks at these heresies more closely, one finds that they can be divided into two categories. The first concerns those who gave up the faith - the so-called lapsed Christians or apostates. The second category involves those who defined the faith differently, viz., those who held views that were slightly deviant from the orthodox Church, and who had a tendency to become schismatic.

### The Lapsed Catholics

During the reigns of Decius and Diocletian all Christian places of worship and sacred books were ordered destroyed, and every Christian was commanded to offer sacrifice to pagan gods and to obtain a certificate from

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<sup>21</sup> Arianism, one of the biggest heresies in the Church, which took its name from Arius, priest of Alexandria, crystallized a theological debate over the question: Is God the Son the perfect equal of God the Father? It was discussed at the Council of Nicaea in 325.

<sup>22</sup> Apollinarianism, the theory that Christ had a human body and a sensitive but not rational soul was advanced by Apollinarius, the Younger. It was finally condemned at the Roman Council in 381 CE.

<sup>23</sup> In Macedonianism, some bishops, named after their leader, Bishop Macedonius of Constantinople argued that, like the Second Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit too is inferior to the First Person.

<sup>24</sup> Priscillianism, a form of Manichaeism, fostered by Priscillian, bishop of Avila.

local authorities stating that he or she had done so. Those who refused were subjected to the most excruciating tortures before being executed (Herr 1986, p.38).

As a result, a large number of Christians, mostly common folk, but including many bishops, abjured their faith when faced with the very real and immediate alternative of being burned alive or being eaten by wild animals. Other Christians attempted to save both their lives and their souls by purchasing a certificate without actually offering sacrifice. As might be expected a black market in these certificates was soon established (Herr 1986, p.38).

Thus, many Christians fell away either by openly and freely sacrificing to the pagan gods (*sacrificati quasi sponte*) or by doing so under violence (*sacrificati quasi violentia*), or by obtaining a false statement saying that they had done so (*libellatici*) (Riga 1962, p.88). All these were included under the title of 'lapsi' and were excommunicated from the Christian community. There was a fourth category called "traditor", i.e a member of the hierarchy who gave the Sacred Books over to be profaned by the pagans (McSorley 1961, p.97). These too were chastised severely by having their faculties suspended.

We obtain some idea of the severity of the Church's chastisement from the cases of three ordinary Christians Ninus, Clementianus and Florus, who lapsed only after prolonged prison and torture, and yet had to make three



years of penance before being reconciled to the Church (Lea 1896,I).

The large number of apostates was such a burning question for the Church at the time that several of the doctrinal heresies arose over how to deal with them. Some groups took an extreme position and held that those who abandoned the faith during the persecutions should never be readmitted to communion. This was the position of the Novatians and that is why they were cut off from the Christians; and this was also one of the issues over which the Montanists disagreed and separated from the Christian community (Lecky 1869, p.479).

Likewise, the schism of the Donatists, arose over the question of the 'traditor'. Donatus, a bishop of Africa, declared that the validity of a sacrament depends on the spiritual condition of the minister. Specifically, he held that all those who were "traditores" during the persecution could not validly confer sacraments. Since Bishop Felix was a traditor, he could not validly confer sacraments and hence his consecration of bishop Caecilian of Carthage was not valid. Hence Donatus and his followers refused to be under the jurisdiction of Felix or Caecilian and seceded, becoming a separate group (McSorley 1961, p.97).

### Doctrinal Deviations

The other category of heresies were those tiny

deviations from the faith, or slightly nuanced distinctions of difference from the orthodox position. To twentieth century Christians, the distinctions made by the Arians, Macedonians, Priscillians and Apollinarians seem almost hair-splitting and negligible, nevertheless, they were labelled 'heretical'. To a community that strove to survive amidst persecution, to a community that was struggling to maintain its identity, to a community that was trying to establish itself in the face of secular organizations, it was exceedingly important to stake out moral and doctrinal boundaries, and one way of doing this was by labelling errant members as deviant and heretical. That is the main reason behind the excommunications of the apostates and heretics. To put it succinctly, where faith was threatened, sins against the faith had to be more strongly emphasized.

According to the historian Lecky, "There has never existed a community which exhibited a more unflinching opposition to sin... or a community which displayed more clearly an intolerance with regard to deviations from orthodox belief" (Lecky 1869, p.450).

Already in the second century, it was the rule that the orthodox Christian should hold no conversation, should interchange none of the ordinary courtesies of life, with the excommunicated or heretic. St. Cyprian wrote his treatise to maintain that it is no more possible to be saved beyond the limits of the Church, than it was during the

deluge beyond the limits of the ark; that martyrdom itself has no power to efface the guilt of schism (Cyprian, *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, and quoted in Lecky 1869, p.452). Even in the arena, the Catholic martyrs withdrew from the Montanists, lest they should be mingled with the heretics in death (Eusebius, edition 1966, v.16). At a later period Augustine relates that when he was a Manichean, his mother for a time refused even to eat at the same table with her erring child (Augustine, *Confessions* iii, 11).

It is for these historical and morphological reasons that sins against belief or sin against faith, became an important part of the Church's agenda of morality. By taking such a severe stance against lapsed and heretical members, the Church in the first few centuries tried to foster and enforce its sense of unity and identity. However, the Church had one more institution which played an important role in sharpening its boundaries and giving it a sense of control, namely, the institution of canonical or public penance.

#### AN INSTITUTION OF CONTROL

The early Christian community treated its serious sins (of which heresy and apostasy were the main ones) with such importance that they could be redeemable only by severe public penance. This rigorist position of the early Church became enshrined in an institution called the 'canonical

form of penance'. Even Augustine says of it: "This kind of penance is painful" (Augustine, Confessions, bk. 4, chp. 6)

Canonical penance was divided into three stages:<sup>25</sup>

- a. Confession: the penitent must accuse himself or herself of sin.
- b. Excommunication: the penitent is not allowed to receive communion; this excommunication is imposed by the bishop.
- c. Satisfaction: the penitent must fulfil the penance imposed and till that time be placed in a special class of people called the "ordo poenitentium" i.e. the group of those who were performing some penance imposed by the church (Riga 1962, pp.94-96).

During the lengthened periods prescribed for penance the head was kept shaven, or in the case of women it was veiled, the vestments were of sack cloth sprinkled with ashes, baths were forbidden and abstinence from wine and

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<sup>25</sup> Other traditions speak of five stages. The first was fletus or weeping, in which the penitent stood outside the church, lamenting his sins and begging the prayers of the faithful as they entered; the second was auditio or hearing, when he was admitted to the porch among the catechumens and heard the sermon, but went out before the prayers; the third was substratio, lying down or kneeling during the prayers uttered for his benefit; the fourth was consistentia or congregatio in which he remained with the faithful during the mysteries, but was not allowed to partake; and after this stage was duly performed he was finally admitted to the Eucharist after the ceremony of reconciliation by the episcopal imposition of hands (CSEL, Gregory Thaumaturg. Epist. Canon. c. xi, dated 267 CE).

meat were strictly enjoined - as St. Jerome tells us, "the filthier a penitent is the more beautiful is he" (Lea 1896 vol.I, p. 28; CSEL,S.Hieron. Epist. LIV c.7 ad Furiam). The time was to be passed in maceration, fasting, vigils, prayers and weeping - the penitent, as St. Ambrose tells us, must be as one dead, with no care for the things of life (Lea 1896 vol.I,p.28; CSEL, A. Ambros. de Lapsu Virginis # 35).

In fact, he or she was forbidden to engage in secular pursuits; if he/she threw off penitential garments and returned to the world, they were cut off from all association with the faithful and was segregated with such strictness that anyone eating with them was deprived of communion (Mansi, Concil. Turonici ann. 460 c.VIII). Whenever the faithful were gathered together in church the penitents were grouped apart in their hideous squalor, were not allowed to the Eucharist, and were brought forward to be prayed for and received the imposition of hands - in short, their humiliation was utilized to the utmost as a spectacle and a warning for the benefit of the congregation (Sozomen 1945, vii, p.16). In view of the fragility of youth, it was recommended that penance should not be imposed on those of immature age; and, as complete separation between husband and wife was enforced, the consent of the innocent spouse was necessary before the sinful one could be admitted to penitence (Mansi, Concil. Agathens. ann. 506 c. xv). Trade

if not absolutely forbidden to the penitent, was at most grudgingly allowed. Sometimes the effect of penance was indelible; no one who had undergone it was allowed to resume the profession of arms or to partake of wine and meat if fish and vegetables were accessible. Pope Siricius absolutely forbade marriage to reconciled penitents and the Council of Arles in 443, in cases of infraction of this rule, expelled from the Church not only the offender but the newly-wedded spouse. The Church thus held at a high price restoration to its communion.

It is from these early days that the Church has maintained its firm or rigorist position on all matters of doctrine. It is through its traditions of excommunication and the sacrament of penance that sins against the first commandment or sins against belief, have become an important part of the religious thinking of its members. Under the phrase "Thou shalt not worship false gods" have been included all kinds of idolatry, apostasy, and heresy, falling away from Church practice, doctrinal error, departures from the official teaching of the Church, and the holding of unorthodox views. Catholics have always held it wrong or sinful to hold opinions contrary to those of the Pope. The average Catholic has been socialized to consider it very strongly sinful to miss Mass on Sundays, to doubt the existence of God, to curse or swear against God, to fail to abstain from meat on Fridays in Lent and to question or

disagree with the teachings of the Church.

In this respect the Catholics have been very similar to the small Protestant sects which, since the sixteenth century, have equated doctrinal and moral vigour. The moral appraisal of society has been the keynote of these sects. In Victorian England, the religious moralism took the form of an ostensible stress on sexual propriety and in more modern societies, it took the form of heavily emphasizing the moral evils of tobacco and alcohol (Robertson 1970, p.188).

Thus, the morphological variable once again, this time in the form of the special circumstances the community was experiencing, has helped to understand the strong emphasis of Catholicism on sins against faith.

#### **THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN AND THE MORALITY OF WAR**

Moral doctrine is not something that is made in the heavens. There is a socio-historical basis for every moral concept or idea. The purpose of this section is to show how two very important moral doctrines of the Catholic Church were formulated the way they were because of the special political position of the Roman Church: as an established ally of the Roman emperor. One of these doctrines is original sin and the other is the morality of war and soldiering. The key to understanding the formulation of these doctrines is the stratification variable, the special position of the Church in the power structure, even though

there were several other attendant historical-cultural variables which had a part to play.

#### THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

An important part of the Christian notion of sin is the concept of concupiscence and original sin. This notion of concupiscence and original sin was formulated by Augustine and since then has dominated a large part of the Christian tradition of sin. In actuality, Augustine's ideas were contradictory and idiosyncratic (Pagels 1988b, p.99) and they were challenged by Pelagius, whose thinking was much more rational and down-to-earth. Nevertheless, Pelagianism was dubbed a heresy and Augustine's ideas have remained a part of the Church's tradition until today. To understand how this came about one has to take into account the interplay of several variables, the life and views of Augustine, the life and views of Pelagius, the internal conditions of the Church and most importantly, the powerful position of the African Church in the Roman Empire.

#### Life and Views of Augustine on Original Sin

If it is true that the whole of Augustine's system forms an interesting commentary on his own personal and lifelong experience (Moxon 1922, p.78), it would help to review briefly the life of Augustine.

Born into a family of moderate circumstances,



Augustine tells us that his pagan father, Patritius, a man habitually unfaithful to Augustine's mother, Monica, expressed pleasure in his adolescent son's sexual appetite. Augustine sought a secular career with intense ambition and plunged into the life of the city - theatrical performances, dinner parties, rhetorical competition, and many friendships. After various sexual adventures he lived for 12 years with a lower-class woman who bore him a son, Adeodatus, and then abandoned her for the sake of a socially advantageous marriage his mother arranged for him. Then at the age of thirty-two, he renounced the world and was baptized. Three years later he became a monk, then a priest and finally was made Bishop of Hippo, a provincial North African City (Pope 1961, ch.III).

There were at least two streams of influence in Augustine's thought. Manichaeism was one. In his book 'Confessions' Augustine describes his struggle to be chaste. He recalls how, "in the sixteenth year of the age of my flesh... the madness of raging lust exercised its supreme dominion over me. Through sexual desire my invisible enemy trod me down and seduced me" (St. Augustine's Confessions 2.2). As a young man, Augustine was drawn to Manichaean theory, which held that man was the product of a primal struggle between God and Satan; Satan was the 'invisible enemy' and thus Manichaeism alone could explain those sexual urges which left him helpless. Later he explicitly rejected

Manichaeism, but was constantly accused of implicitly having Manichaean ideas (Moxon 1922, p.61).

The other stream of influence was Platonic philosophy (Harnack 1898, p.33; Pagels 1988b, p.110) which dominated the whole Roman empire until the third century and was especially popular in northern Africa, through the writings of Plotinus and Victorinus (Harnack 1898, p.33; the World Book Encyclopedia 1971, vol.15). Augustine studied them in great depth and characterised the soul and body as master and slave. The soul was the superior and the body the inferior part.

It is from here that Augustine derived his negative view of the body, the flesh, of sex and marriage (Brown 1988, p.396 ff). In his ethical views, Augustine held that the state of monastic celibacy is higher than marriage and the only justification for sexual intercourse in marriage is the procreation of children (PL, Augustine, The Good of Marriage 16.18; CSEL 41, pp.210-211).

Perhaps the most controversial of his opinions was his doctrine of original sin. According to Augustine, Adam's soul, before his Fall, was perfectly able to subjugate his body, the "inferior part", through his will. But after his sin, there was a change for the worse; the soul could no longer control the body and the will is no longer in control. Worse still, a genetic mutation occurred in the whole human race (Pagels 1988a, p.31). The whole of

posterity was infected. All human beings now come into the world in a corrupted state. By the sin of Adam we inherit from him and are born with a serious handicap, an ingrained moral disease which disturbs and dislocates the whole interior being. Augustine called this "taint of heredity" concupiscence (Moxon 1922, p.90-91). It is concupiscence which explains our human sinfulness and especially our "uncontrollable" human sexual urges. This was Augustine's interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans 5,12: "Through one man sin entered the world and through sin, death; and thus death came upon all men, in that all sinned." From this doctrine Augustine deduced another, the doctrine of the transmission of sin, which would have its effects on later generations.

The Doctrine of the Transmission of Sin: Believing that for all human beings to be corrupted by Adam's sin, they had somehow to be represented "in Adam", Augustine had somehow to justify how millions of people not yet born could be "in Adam". Augustine declares that what existed already was not the individual forms but the nature of the semen from which we were propagated. That semen itself already shackled by the bond of death, transmits the damage incurred by sin (PL, Augustine, The City of God, 13.14). Hence, Augustine concludes, every human being ever conceived through semen is born already contaminated with sin. Through this astonishing

argument Augustine tries to prove that every human being is in bondage not only from birth but from the moment of conception.

The clearest evidence that Augustine offers as proof of his theory of original sin is 'spontaneous sexual desire'. Augustine believes that in the case of anger and other such passions, the impulse does not move any part of the body, but it is the will, which remains in control and consents to the movement. An angry man still decides whether or not to strike; but a sexually aroused man may find that erection occurs with alarming autonomy. In his own words:

At times, the urge intrudes uninvited; at other times, it deserts the panting lover and, although desire blazes in the mind, the body is frigid. In this strange way, desire refuses service, not only to the will to procreate but also to the desire for wantonness; and though for the most part, it solidly opposes the mind's command, at other times it is divided against itself, and having aroused the mind, it fails to arouse the body (PL, Augustine, The city of God, 14.16).

The fact then that we experience the sexual urge spontaneously apart from the will means that we experience it against our will. Because it is against our will, sexual desire naturally involves shame. Its parts are called "pudenda" parts of shame; further proof is the universal practice of covering the genitals and of shielding the act of intercourse from public view (St. Augustine's Confessions, 8,9).

Thus, spontaneous sexual desire, for Augustine, is the proof and penalty of original sin and since spontaneous sexual desire is a universal experience, the whole human race suffers from original sin. The whole procreative process, since Adam, has sprung wildly out of control marring all of human nature (Pagels 1988b, p. 112)

Having thus explained the universal condition of sinfulness, Augustine believes he has laid the foundation for his doctrine of 'divine grace' as necessary to overcome this universal sinfulness and concupiscence.

#### The Life and Views of Pelagius

Pelagius came from Wales or Ireland and his original name was Morgan (Marigena, of which the Greek form is Pelagius). Nothing much is known about his life except that he was a British monk, a man of upright life and serious moral purpose. His personal views were derived not from Britain, but from Theodore of Mopsuestia and Rufinus the Syrian and were therefore akin to the Eastern Fathers (Moxon 1922, p.48-49).

Pelagius wished to avoid controversy at all costs; he was a practical moral reformer; again and again he declared that his anthropological views were outside the domain of dogma.

Pelagius' Doctrine of Freewill and Original Sin: Pelagius maintained the full and unimpaired freedom of the will. As far as the will is concerned all men are in exactly the same position as Adam was before the Fall. All men have the capacity for good and evil. Whether they choose the right or wrong course depends entirely on the use they make of their free will. Sin is not the fault of man's nature, but of his will. According to Pelagius, to lay the blame on nature is to wrong its Creator who would never have imposed upon us obligations which we were unable to perform (Pelagius, De Libero Arbitrio, PL).

Thus the Pelagian view of free-will denies any antecedent moral depravity and brings into prominence the personal responsibility of the individual. Further, Pelagius denied Augustine's theory of Original Sin in the sense of hereditary moral corruption, maintaining that Adam's theory did not affect posterity other than by the evil example it affords. In his letter to Demetrias, Pelagius admitted that there is a deterioration of the race which is caused through the custom of sinning, but sin propagated by generation he utterly repudiated. How could sin, he asked, be transmitted from father to son? as if it was a physical characteristic?

When Pelagius came to Rome in the first decade of the fifth century, he was shocked to find a fatal indifference amongst the majority of Roman Christians as to true inward morality and he immediately commenced to preach the need of

strict uprightness of character. He would say:

Away with such despicable excuses. It is not the strength that you lack but the will. Up, rouse yourselves. You could do better if you would. God has given you a nature that enables you to choose the right. You can avoid sinning if you wish. If you sin, it is not because you are under any compulsion to sin, but because of your misuse of your freewill....  
(Pelagius, Epistola ad Demetrias, PL 30, 16 ff)

Of the two viewpoints described above, Pelagianism seems to be the one closer to the spirit of contemporary reason and more in keeping with the tradition of the Fathers of the Church, while the theory of Augustine seems marginal, idiosyncratic and stretching itself to the limit in trying to sound rational. Nevertheless, it was Pelagianism that was condemned. A brief recapitulation of the events will easily demonstrate that Pelagianism would not have suffered its unhappy fate were it not for the internal conditions of the Church - on the one hand, the powerful standing of the Carthaginian Church (of which Augustine was an important part) and on the other, the weak and hesitant position of the Papacy in that period. These two factors combined to outweigh Pelagianism and ultimately lead to its condemnation. Thus it is the power or stratification variable which is crucial; though it is not isolated, interacting as it does, with other cultural and historical variables.

Events leading to the condemnation of Pelagius<sup>26</sup>

Even though Pelagius was initially condemned at Carthage, he was twice quitted in Palestine by the Eastern Churches. Synods were now held by the Western Church at Carthage and Mileve, in North Africa in 416, and they repeated their condemnation of Pelagianism. Further, a special appeal, along with Augustine's reply to Pelagius' book, was sent to Pope Innocent of Rome, with the request that he would forthwith condemn Pelagius. Innocent, possibly flattered that such importance was assigned by the North African See to the verdict of the Roman See, (Harnack 1898, 182) replied by condemning Pelagius.

After Pope Innocent died and was succeeded by Zosimus in 417, Pelagius sent to Rome an elaborate vindication of himself and was acquitted. Now the Carthaginians, highly indignant, convened a great African Council in 418 at which more than two hundred bishops were present. At this Council, they unanimously and emphatically condemned Pelagius in nine canons and followed with an appeal, not to the Pope, but to the civil power to enforce the condemnation. The emperors Honorius and Theodosius decided to uphold the verdict of the Africans and pronounced sentence of banishment and confiscation against Pelagius.

The vacillating Zosimus, now yielded to the

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<sup>26</sup> For this brief sequence of events, I am indebted to Harnack 1898, p. 168-221 and Moxon 1922, p. 48-76.



pressure, and fearful of his authority, immediately issued a circular letter censuring the tenets of Pelagius. A further condemnation of Pelagianism was made at the Council of Ephesus in 431, where the Bishops of the African Church were present in large numbers. Pelagius sinks into oblivion and from then on Augustine's views of original sin are universally accepted by the Western Church and maintain their supremacy till today (Harnack 1898, p. 29).

So far my argument has shown that Augustine's views were the result of his own personal struggles, Pelagius' view was the result of his own Eastern influences and that the Papacy leaned to the side of Augustine so as to have the backing of the powerful African Church. The question still remains: How did Augustine's idiosyncratic views on the effects of original sin - and its hereditary transmission - come to be accepted from the fifth and sixth century onwards by the whole Church?

The answer to this question is complex. There was a whole web of factors involved, among which were the following: the political situation, the fact that Augustine's views were more sympathetic to this situation, the intervention of the Roman emperor with the use of force and finally the weight of influence in high circles. Each of these factors will be reviewed briefly.

### Factors leading to the Condemnation of Pelagius

The political situation: The political and social situation of Christians in the early centuries had changed radically by the beginning of the fifth century. Under Constantine and his Christian successors, Christians now found themselves the emperor's "brothers and sisters in Christ." During the forty years since Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 313, Christian emperors not only had begun to persecute the former persecutors of Christians, but had poured magnanimous benefits upon the Christian churches (Pagels 1988a, p.29).

Profession of Christian faith had now become a qualification for public office. In 380, the Emperor Theodosius published an edict requiring all subjects of the Empire to be Christians. He made Christianity the State Religion, handed over to the Christians all pagan temples which had not been destroyed and in 392 CE forbade pagan worship even in private. Within one century the Roman empire, which had been pagan, had become Christian. By the year 400, Christianity far from being "disloyal and subversive" was lending its support to the badly shaken Empire. The old idea of a universal Roman imperium still persisted from Syria to Spain, from Britian to Africa, but coextensive with that imperial jurisdiction there now ran the authority of the Christian Church (McSorley 1961, p.74 and p.102).

Augustine's Views More Supportive of the State: Given this background, it is easy to see how traditional declarations of human freedom, by second century martyrs like Justin, who defied the Roman government, no longer seemed to fit the situation of Christians. No longer a persecuted minority, Christians found it no longer necessary to 'criticize' the Roman State. By contrast, the views of Augustine were more sympathetic of this alliance of Church and State. In fact, Augustine's doctrine of original sin was like the theological backdrop, justifying and validating the need of a powerful State as ally to the Church.

For Augustine, inner human conflict (or concupiscence) finds its reflection in social conflict. The war within us drives us into war with one another. "While a good man is progressing to perfection, one part of him can be at war with another of his parts; hence, two good men can be at war with one another." There is need therefore for outside intervention, viz. the secular government. Secular government is indispensable for the best as well as for the worst among its members (Pagels 1988a, p.34).

Augustine's views however are more subtle. Having denied that human beings possess any capacity whatever for free will, he is more sympathetic to the evils of government, church or civil. If there is corruption among the leaders of government, it is probably due to original

sin, in which we all share. Augustine accepts a definition of freedom, far more agreeable to the powerful and influential Christian rulers, with whom he himself identifies as Bishop. Augustine concludes that humanity never was really meant to be, in any sense, truly free. God allowed us to sin in order to prove to us from our own experience that "our true good is free slavery" - slavery to God in the first place and in the second to his agent, the emperor (Pagels, 1988a, p.36).

Pelagius, on the other hand, was a monk and confessor. He was a spiritual reformer and attacked moral laxity whenever he saw it. He did not have any views about the state, but he did have views about the self-government of human beings. He believed that human beings had sufficient free will to overcome sin and did not require any outside intervention or help. Taken to the extreme this would mean that anyone, whether in secular government or church government, could not afford to have the slightest tinge of corruption. If they were corrupt, they had to be strongly and roundly criticized. In this, his views were very "stoicial", similar to the tradition of the early Fathers, Justin, Clement, John Chrysostom and the other Eastern Fathers, who were very critical of the secular government. Chrysostom in particular had felt very strongly this antipathy between the sacred and the secular. As a young priest in Antioch, when a public riot against the emperor's

taxation policies erupted and angry crowds smashed the statues of the emperor and his family, Chrysostom boldly declared to the crowds: "The right of government belongs not to the emperor alone but to the entire human race." By defending human freedom and echoing the views of the Eastern Fathers, Pelagianism was "implicitly" critical of the evils of church authority, civil authority as well as of the latter's need to intervene in spiritual matters. In fact, the letters of the Carthaginian Bishops warned the Pope that "the ultimate consequence of Pelagian ideas would cut at the root of episcopal authority" (Brown 1986, p.358).

The Use of Force: Augustine felt that, precisely because human beings have a taint of evil in them, the only way they could be chastised is through force. When Augustine's authority in North Africa was challenged by the rival church of Donatists, he came to appreciate - and manipulate - the advantages of his alliance with the repressive power of the state. Donatist Christians denounced this "unholy alliance". Augustine came to find military force "indispensable" in suppressing the Donatists; he abandoned the policy of toleration practised by the previous Bishop of Carthage and pursued the attack on the Donatists. After beginning with politics and propaganda, he turned increasingly to force. First came laws denying civil rights to non-Catholic Christians; then the imposition of penalties, fines, and

eviction from public office; and finally, denial of free discussion, exile of Donatist bishops and the use of physical coercion (Pagels 1988b, p.124).

After thirty years of battling with the Donatists, Augustine was dismayed to confront Christians following the monk Pelagius, who had criticized his view of original sin. Pelagians shared with the Donatists the sectarian view of the Church as separate from state power, and an insistence on free will. Augustine unhesitatingly allied himself with imperial officials against the Pelagians. The declarations of the African Synods, together with the stamp of the emperor Honorius, engineered primarily by Augustine and his associates, signaled a major turning point in the history of Western Christianity. By insisting that humanity, ravaged by sin, now lay helplessly in need of outside intervention, Augustine's theory not only validated secular power, but justified as well the imposition of church authority - even by force, if necessary - as essential for human salvation (Pagels 1988b, p.125).

The Weight of Influence in High Circles: There is no doubt that the two hundred bishops convened at Carthage, the second Rome, by the associates of Augustine were an important element in swaying the Pope. Besides his own reputation, Augustine had, in addition, the backing of Jerome, a luminary of the fourth century Church, as well as

the strong arm of the Imperial emperors at his side. pelagius on the other hand, was not able to muster much ecclesiastical support. An insignificant monk, his chief supporter was Caelestius, a volatile and emotional eunuch (Harnack 1898, p.170) and Julian of Eclanum, a lone dissenter in the Carthaginian Council. They had, in other words, no influence or connections in high circles and so lost out in the debate.

Thus we see how the Church accepted the doctrine of Augustine, irrational and contradictory as it might seem, and Pelagian views were condemned for all posterity. This was not the effect of one single variable, but a whole complex of historical-cultural variables working in unison, even though the most crucial was the power variable.

#### THE MORALITY OF WAR AND SOLDIERING

Another important doctrine of the church that went through a remarkable change over the centuries was the morality of war. The question posed by the church was: Is it a sin to wage war? The answer that it gave depended on its relative position in the power structure.

It is a fact that in the first three centuries, when Christianity was being avidly persecuted, waging war was considered unconditionally sinful and becoming a soldier was considered a 'shameful' profession for Christians. This is because Christianity was a minority religion (almost like a

sect) and one of the groups hounding them and throwing them into dungeons were the Roman soldiers. But after the fourth century, when Christianity and the Roman Empire were allies, it became almost noble to be a soldier and a fighter and war became necessary to defend the boundaries against the "heathen" (Westermarck 1939, chp.xi).

This change in attitude towards war and soldiering can be documented by the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

#### Before the Fourth Century

In the first three centuries, the Fathers of the Church, especially Justin, Lactantius, Tertullian and Origen were very much against the idea of Christians becoming soldiers and taking part in a war.

Thus Justin the Martyr (160-220) quotes the prophecy of Isaiah, that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"..... exhorting Christians not to lift up their hands against their enemies (Justin, Apologia I, pro Christianis,39,PL).

Lactantius (second century) asserts that "to engage in war cannot be lawful for the righteous man, whose war is against righteousness itself" (Lactantius, Divinae institutiones,vi (De vero cultu),20,PL).

Tertullian (160-220) asks: "Can it be lawful to handle the sword when the Lord himself has declared that he



who uses the sword shall perish by it?" (Tertullian, de carona 11, CCSL) And in another passage he states that "the Lord by his disarming of Peter disarmed every soldier from that time forward" (Tertullian, de idolatria, 19, CCSL)

And Origen (185-224) calls the Christians 'children of peace', who for the sake of Christ never take up the sword against any nation; who fight for their leader by praying for him, but who take no part in his wars, even if he urge them (Origen, Contra Celsum, v. 33, viii. 73.PL).

It was the practice of the Christian communities that soldiers, after their term of military service had expired, were to be excluded from the sacrament of communion for three whole years (Basil, Epistola CLXXXVIII., ad Amphilocium, can 13. PG, xxxii. 681 sp.)].

According to one of the canons of the Council of Nice, those Christians who, having abandoned the profession of arms, afterwards returned to it, "as dogs to their vomit," were for some years to occupy in the church the place of penitents (Concilium Nicaenum, A.D. 325, can. 12, Mansi, ii.674).

### After the Era of Constantine

When Christianity became a majority religion, there was a dramatic change in the theology of war and soldiering. Several of the Church Fathers held views contrary to their counterparts of the first few centuries.

Athanasius (296-373), the father of orthodoxy, ventured to say that it was not only permissible but praiseworthy to kill enemies in war (Athanasius, 'Epistola ad Amunem monachum,' in Migne, PG, xxiii. 1173).

Ambrose (339-397) eulogized the warlike courage which prefers death to bondage and disgrace and claimed the Old Testament warriors as spiritual ancestors. He adopted the classical maxim that one who does not defend a friend from injury is as much at fault as he who commits the injury (Ambrose, de Officiis Ministrorum, PL, i.35,36,40).

Augustine (354-430), who was forced to face the question by the havoc of the Teutonic migrations and the peril of the Empire, explored the subject more fully. He tried to prove that the practice of war was quite compatible with the teaching of the New Testament. Augustine's interpretation of Christ's declaration that "all they who take the sword shall perish by the sword" is curious. He states that Jesus is referring to those persons only who arm themselves to shed the blood of others without the permission of any lawful authority (Augustine, Contra Faustum Manichaeum, xxii.70, PL). Hence those wars are just which are waged with a view to obtaining redress for wrongs or to chastising the undue arrogance of another State. A monarch has the power of making war when he thinks it advisable and a Christian may fight under him. In short, though peace is the final good, war may sometimes be

necessary in this sinful world (The City of God, 19,11, PL).

With the writings of Augustine the theoretical attitude of the Church towards war was definitely settled and later theologians only reproduced or further elaborated his view.

This position of the Church remained constant over the centuries and especially in the Middle Ages, so long as the Church remained a dominant power. Thus Thomas Aquinas says that the three requisites for a just war are the authority of the prince or ruler, a just cause (eg. a war which avenges injuries), and lastly a right intention of promoting ultimate good or avoiding ultimate evil.

Thus, the real reason for the Church's change of position with regard to war and soldiering was the stratification variable, i. e. its position vis-a-vis the State. So long as it was in the position of a minority group and persecuted by the State, warring and soldiering was wrong. The moment it became the majority group (with Constantine) and acquired the status of a State religion, it became necessary to defend religion against the barbarians and other pagan invaders. From then on, war and soldiering then became legal and justified.

This concludes my exploration of the first period of the catholic social history of sin. My exploration has shown that two important variables in understanding the notion of sin have been the morphology of the Catholic Community and

its position in the power structure. These variables however not isolated. They are constantly seen as interacting with other cultural and historical factors. In fact, in the next period, the interaction of the stratificational with historical-cultural variables is seen even more significantly as the notion of sin is further developed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC NOTION OF SIN

#### PART TWO

#### THE PENITENTIALS AND THEIR SEXUAL CODES

A notable part in the development of the Christian notion of sin was played by the Penitential Books of the early Middle Ages. These books indicate a new method of penitential discipline and give rise to a new era in the history of sin and penance (McNeil and Gamer 1965, p.25). From their early Irish origins the penitentials spread into Anglo-Saxon England and throughout western Europe, providing a broadly based and relatively homogenous code of sexual behaviour. For five hundred years the penitential literature continued to be the principal agent in the formation and transmission of a code of sexual morality.

The penitentials spanned a period from the sixth to the eleventh centuries. They were personal handbooks of reference for the priest-confessor. Compiled by monks or bishops, they aimed to educate, instruct, guide and exhort the priest in his confessional duties. They provided descriptions of various sins, of aggravating and mitigating circumstances and they specified correspondingly appropriate

penances.<sup>1</sup>

All of the penitentials have catalogs of sins and penances; however, many of these books are far more ample, containing introductions and conclusions for the instruction of the confessor which remind him of his role as spiritual physician of souls and counsel him to give due consideration to the subjective dispositions of the penitent.

In those early centuries, the seminary had not yet come into existence, nor was there a house of formation for the training of the priest. The penitential literature was the instrument by which the mind of the priest was formed and through him the mind of the laity. Since each priest was supposed to have a penitential book at hand, the code of morality drawn up by the penitentials became the one that was imparted to the people.

Thus the penitentials were essentially reference works and guides, helping the priest in questioning the penitent. Such interrogation was designed to instruct penitents what the serious sins were and to make sure that they confessed all of these serious sins. In fact, in the ninth century, Bishop Theodulf of Orleans, among others, warned his priests to be careful in their questioning lest they make penitents worse off by suggesting sins to them which they had never even imagined (Payer 1984, p.8).

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<sup>1</sup> The principal penitential books are listed in Appendix B.

## FACTORS LEADING TO THE RISE OF THE PENITENTIALS

To understand, however, how this penitential system, brought to the continent by a few monks, could become universally adopted by the whole Gallo-Roman Empire, one must comprehend the different factors that came together to play an important part in the rise, influence and popularity of the penitentials. These three factors were: first, the decline of the canonical or public system of penance; second, the need to curb and control the new invaders; and third, the rise of sacerdotalism. In the discussion that follows I will deal with each of the three factors in turn and show that the new private system of penance was partly an assertion of clergy power and its need to control the 'barbarians', and partly a question of "adapting" the old penitential system to the needs of the new converts. Put simply, the private system of penance and its emphasis on sexual codes was a result of stratification and historical-cultural factors.

### The Decline of Public Penance:

One of the chief reasons for the popularity and widespread use of the penitentials was the gradual decline of public or canonical penance.

Before the arrival of the penitentials, the system of penance was public and exacting, and even humiliating

Tertullian employs the word 'exomologesis' or self-abasement, calling it a "discipline of prostration and humiliation." Wearing sackcloth and ashes, engaging in fasts, and uttering groans, prayers and outcries to God, the penitent was supposed "to bow before the feet of the presbyters and to enjoin all the brethren of the entire community to be his/her ambassadors" before God (Tertullian, *de Poenitentia ix*, in Le Saint 1959). Thus everyone in the community knew who was a sinner and what was his or her sin. This humiliation was considered a first step towards the penitent's conversion or change of heart. No wonder then that Tertullian complained that "very many" shrank from public penance because of its attendant humiliation (Tertullian, *de Poenitentia x,1* in Le Saint 1959).

The second problem with canonical penance was that it was very severe. The period of penance varied from 40 days to a very long number of years. The penitent could not marry, and if he/she was married already, had to observe continence not merely during the period of the penance but often for the rest of his/her life. Debarred from military service and from most forms of commercial activity (Leo I, *Epistola ad Rusticum*, ep. 167 in PL, 54, c.1203), exile was sometimes imposed in the case of very serious crimes. Some Councils even discouraged the young from performing penance for fear



of relapse and subsequent estrangement from the church. St. Ambrose tells us that it was not wise to counsel a young man to do penance until his passions had subsided (Mansi, VIII, c. 327). These penances remained in vigor even after a Christian had performed the official penance as guarantees that he/she would persevere in this repentant state until death. Thus the penitential life came to be looked upon more and more as a type of monastic life where penitents lived exactly as monks for the rest of their lives (Riga 1962, pp.99-100).

A third problem with canonical penance was that it was not repeatable. It was done once and only once in a lifetime. If the penitent fell again into grievous sin, the Church offered him/her no remedy or hope. In time, therefore, people began to postpone the practice of canonical penance until the very last moment before death and this led to the decline of public penance (Watkins 1969, II, p.557,561).

Canonical penance was preeminently an institution to control the purity and quality of the members of the Church. It was a severe, public and once-and-for-all penance so that a tight rein could be kept on deviant and sinful members flowing in and out of the church.

In marked contrast, the penitential literature inaugurated a system of penance which was in many ways quite different. First of all, it was neither public nor

unrepeatable. The penitent did not have to be formally enrolled in the special order of penitents, nor did he/she have to sit in the reserved area of the church. Above all, recourse to this new system of penance could be had any number of times and it involved no permanent disabilities. The principal inaugurators of this penance were the Irish monks who came to the continent to preach and teach the Germanic tribes during the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries. It is to them, more than to any others, that we owe the practice of this relatively more private type of the penitential discipline (Poschmann 1964, pp.124-5).

The situation of Celtic and Irish Churches were quite different from those on the continent. Because of its isolation, the Celtic Church occupied a special position in questions of worship and discipline and for centuries remained fixed in its usages which differed from those of the rest of the Church (Ryan 1931, pp.340-341). In sixth century Ireland, due to the absence of large cities, the Church was monastic in character, and the religious life of the people centered around the abbot and his monks. Private consultation with the abbot was a common practice for lay folk. The abbot was the spiritual father of both his monks and the people of the surrounding regions as well. Further, being at a distance from the Continent itself, the practice of canonical penance had not been introduced into these regions (Mortimer 1939, p.136). Penance and satisfaction was

administered in a more private fashion. It was the priest-monk who heard confessions of penitents and reconciled them as well.

The new Irish system emerged at a time when Christianity was an officially established religion and large numbers of German tribes were entering its fold; since the German converts would not tolerate the awesome features and deprivations of the earlier canonical penance, these had to be eliminated and in favor of the more relaxed and less stringent demands of the private penitential discipline (Riga 1962, p.103).

Historians are agreed that the new system of penance, though Irish in origin, was essentially an adaptation and modification made by the Roman Church to accommodate the new converts to Christianity. It was an evolutionary result of two opposing forces; the religion of the elite reaching a happy compromise with the religion of the masses. The historian of Penance, Henry Lea, sums it up in the following words:

In dealing with the barbarians, whose laws prescribed only pecuniary, non-personal, punishments, the Church was obliged to adapt itself to their characteristics. It was evidently impossible to persuade them to endure the disgrace and privations of public penance, to throw aside their weapons and to forego marriage and war; the subject populations might submit to these degradations and disabilities, but not the free Germans and Teutons and it was necessary to humor their idiosyncrasies. They might be induced occasionally to confess their sins privately and to accept a secret penance, the rigor of which was softened by a system of composition and redemption (Lea 1896, vol. II, p.95).

From the sixth century onwards, the new system of penance, originated by the Irish monks, began to replace the old canonical, Roman form. It was in this manner that the practice of private penance became widespread.

### The Desire to Curb and Christianize the New Invaders

Another insight into why the new system of penance and its corresponding notions of sin spread so rapidly across the continent derives from the underlying, sociological purpose for which the Penitential Books were written. Essentially, the penitential literature was part of a great missionary effort to train the consciences of priests and indirectly the consciences of the Christians they minister to. This insight becomes clearer if we see the penitential literature as codes for bringing into check the moral life of the people. "Basically the penitential discipline was used by the Roman Church as a form of control; an imposition of a code of conduct to civilize the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic tribes (Baum 1975, p.198).

Beginning from the fourth century onwards, the Roman empire was being constantly invaded, wave upon wave, by Germanic races: the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, the Lombards, and the Franks. At first the Romans tried to ward them off but soon came to realize the impossibility of such a task. It was more expedient to allow them to accommodate and settle

peacefully within the Roman empire. In the course of time, specifically from the fifth century onwards, the Germanic tribes not only integrated themselves within the Roman empire but they also adopted Christianity 'en masse'.

It has been established in sociological literature that every code, whether legal or spiritual, is a form of social control. By labelling groups as deviant or criminal or sinners, the influential members of a society are placing those groups outside the pale of "recognized status." It is the opinion of several historians that the penitentials were really a form of moral or spiritual law code, meant to complement in a manner more thoroughly and completely, the already existing secular law codes of the Germanic tribes. In trying to christianize the Germans and Anglo-Saxons the Roman Church attempted to teach them that every violation of the code was to be thought of as a sin. Leading authorities on the penitentials, McNeil and Gamer state:

The penitentials were employed in administering a religious discipline to our forefathers during their transition from paganism to Christianity and from barbarism to civilization. They record one example of the perennial conflict of ideals with reality, which marks the progress of man towards the attainment of a moral culture. The ideal was founded in monastic asceticism; the reality in primitive brutality (1965, p.3).

The prevalence in the penitentials of the conception of penance as allopathic medicine for the soul is very evident. The Irish abbot Finnian insists on the principle that in penance contraries are to be cured by their

contraries, "contraria contrariis sanantur". Faults must be replaced by virtues (Penitential of Finnian #29, McNeil and Gamer 1965, p.92). The Penitential of Columban demonstrates the same principle: "The talkative person is to be sentenced to silence; the disturber to gentleness; the gluttonous to fasting; the sleepy fellow to watchfulness." The penitential of Cummean professes at the outset to prescribe "the health-giving medicine of souls" stating that "the eight principal vices shall be healed by eight contrary remedies." The writer then applies his penitential medicine in detail: "The idler shall be taxed with extraordinary work and the slothful with a lengthened vigil" (McNeil and Gamer 1965, p.99; p.108). The objective throughout was the reconstruction of personality.

According to Taylor, the Christian missionary monks found a people who, especially in the Celtic parts of the country, maintained a free sexual morality. On them the Church, through its monks, sought to impose a code of extreme severity. According to the same author, the Germanic and English races were wild, spontaneous, impulsive and sexually free and they needed to be controlled and subjected to law (Taylor 1953, p.19ff).

Religious and secular history document the free and uninhibited moral values of the period. The picture, painted

by Gregory of Tours,<sup>2</sup> Boniface<sup>3</sup> and the British monk Gildas, is a society replete with acts of violence, betrayal and fraud - sagas of murders, poisonings, matricides, adulteries, incests, gluttony, drunkenness. Crane Brinton refers to these centuries as centuries of immaturity, crudeness and barbarism (Brinton 1959, p.176).

The free sexuality of the early Middle Ages can also be traced in early court records, which list numerous sexual offenses, from fornication and adultery to incest and homosexuality, and also in the complaints of moralists and church dignitaries (Taylor 1953, p.20).

In short, one finds a system of morality at complete odds with the Christian one: a system in which women were free to take lovers, both before and after their marriage, and in which men were free to seduce all women of lower rank, while they might hope to win the favors of women of higher rank if they were sufficiently valiant (Taylor 1953, p.23).

In circumstances such as these the Roman Church's

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, "Fredegonde deputed two clerks to murder Childebert and another clerk to murder Brunehaut; she caused a bishop of Rouen to be assassinated at the altar". (Gregory of Tours, 1969 edition, II, 29, IV 12, VII 20, VIII 29)

<sup>3</sup> Boniface exclaims that the English "utterly despise matrimony" and he is filled with shame because they "utterly refuse to have legitimate wives and continue to live in lechery and adultery after the manner of neighing horses and braying asses..." (Taylor 1953, p.20).

first object in trying to christianize the new peoples was to impose an entire program of moral and sexual codes, thereby establishing the principle of lifelong monogamous marriage. Thus, for instance, the Anglo-Saxon synod of 786 decreed: " We command then in order to avoid fornication that every layman shall have one legitimate wife and every woman one legitimate husband."

By imposing graded penances on all kinds of sexual deviance, the penitentials established a framework of meanings, a way of sensing and thinking about what was right and what was wrong. The priests, who administered the sacrament of penance, carried out the instructions of the penitentials to the last detail and thus a common pattern became prevalent. In fact, the whole purpose of the penitentials was to standardize norms, punishments, gravity of offence and a common thinking about sinful behaviour.

A deeper analysis of the penitential literature will show that, they were in some sort, rude bodies of law, partly secular and partly spiritual, the resource of men seeking to supplement the crude barbarian codes and to reduce semi-barbarous folk to a recognition of morality and order. The opinion of Henry Lea is classical:

Crude and contradictory as were the Penitentials in many things, taken as a whole their influence cannot but have been salutary. They inculcated on the still barbarous populations lessons of charity and loving-kindness, of forgiveness of injuries and of helpfulness to the poor and stranger as part of the discipline whereby the sinner could redeem his sins. Besides this the very vagueness of the boundary



between secular and spiritual matters enabled them to instil ideas of order and decency and cleanliness and hygiene among the rude inhabitants of central and northern Europe. They were not confined to the repression of violence and sexual immorality and the grosser offenses but treated as subjects for penance excesses in eating and drinking; the promiscuous bathing of men and women was prohibited and in many ways the physical nature of man was sought to be subordinated to the moral and spiritual. The essential distinction between the Penitentials and the confessor becomes clear when we consider the Penitentials for what they really were, codes of criminal law ancillary and supplementary to the crude and imperfect legislation of the Barbarians (Lea II 1896, pp.106-107).

### The Rise of Sacerdotalism

The third factor that had an influence in the development of the penitential system was the rise of priestly power. Until the fifth century, the most important person in the local church was the bishop. It was he who held the title to the see, who controlled all the money, all the lands and all the transactions with the secular emperors. The local priest, mostly uneducated, was completely under his tutelage. It was the penitentials and the system of penance they evoked that gave to the local priest his first taste of power. It was now in his hands, though of course he had to be guided by the penitential books, to question penitents about their life and sinful behaviour, ultimately to give absolution, to demand penance and satisfaction, to exact restitution.

Lea sees the rise of sacerdotalism as coterminous with the spread of the penitentials. Sacerdotalism refers to the

growth of priestly power, the awareness of themselves as a class as they begin to take over (from the Bishop) the sphere of liturgical functions (Mohler 1970, p.104). When the Church was being persecuted and its numbers were small, the Bishop was the only one who presided over the Eucharist and Liturgies. The priest or presbyter had a purely nominal or consultative function; his was largely a physical or decorative presence like the Elders of the Jewish Sanhedrin (Mohler 1970, p.113). However, after the Constantinian turning point, the Church grew in numbers, big Churches were built and received large benefices from the Empire. The Bishop had his hands full with the administration of these properties and gradually the presbyter or priest stepped in to assume some of his liturgical functions, at first only in the provinces and rural areas, but later in the cities as well (Mohler 1970, pp. 82-83). For a while then, the priest was commissioned only to offer Eucharist and to bless, but with the arrival of the penitentials and the new system of penance, there opened up one more avenue of power for the priestly class. It was now equally within the priest's domain to hear confessions, to reconcile important persons to the Church and to give penances, some of them pecuniary in nature and likely to enhance the wealth of his parish.

The bishops, however, did not abandon the control of private sins to the priests without a struggle. A decretal was forged and attributed to Pope Eutychianus (275-283 CE)

which declared that episcopal command is necessary before priests can reconcile sinners for secret sins, except on the death-bed, when they can absolve them, and the preservation of this in the collection of canons up to the middle of the twelfth century shows how loth were the bishops to abandon their ancient prerogatives (Lea, II, 1896, p.97).

When the option was offered to the sinner between public and private penance the number who refused to undergo public humiliation naturally increased and the priests were not less encouraging, for it enabled them to assume episcopal functions, in addition to the attraction of penitential "alms", for the rule became established that solemn and public penance belonged to the cathedral and private penance to the parish church.<sup>4</sup>

Under this double impulsion from priest and penitent, the bishop was unable to hold his own and the function of public penance and reconciliation declined. The bishop abandoned to the priest the mass of secret sins, save such of the more heinous as he might reserve for public penance. Thus, the distinction between notorious crimes, that required public penance and reconciliation, and secret sins treated in private confession and penance became gradually recognized (Lea 1896,II, p.98).

Slowly and irregularly the practice of private penance

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<sup>4</sup> Bernardi Papiensis Summae Decretalium Lib. III. Tit.xxv #2.

for secret sins established itself and the bishops gradually abandoned it to the priests, though even as late as the close of the eleventh century some Norman canons forbid priests from imposing it save by order of their bishops (Post Concil. Rotomagens. ann. 1074, cap. 8, Mansi). How rapidly under this influence the confessor assumed discretionary power is seen in the practice related of St. Gerald, the founder of the Abbey of Grandselve. By his preaching and exhortation, we are told, he drew many to repentance and confession. Crowds came to him with the burden of their sins, when the good saint would impose on them as penance simply a fast on Friday and abstinence from flesh on Saturday (Vita S. Geraldii Silvae Majoris cap. 24 (Migne, PL, CXLVII. 1040; Lea 1896, II, p.99)).

The power which had, for so many centuries, been confined to the bishop slipped from his hands and was transferred to the priest. Occupied for the most part, in the temporal administration of their sees, which had become wealthy principalities, the bishops finally abandoned the struggle and handed over the souls of their subjects to their subordinates, only reserving the right to except such of the more heinous offenses as they might deem fitting.

The above discussion has shown how the private system of penitential morality was the result of the power and morphological variables interacting with other historical-cultural factors. Specifically, it was the coming together

of three strands: the rise of priestly power interacting with the morphology of the Irish communities and the popular culture of the Germanic converts, that refused to accept the imposition of the severe, canonical penance. In the section that follows I draw out the implications of the penitential morality, specifically, the emphasis on sexual codes.

#### CONTENT OF THE PENITENTIALS AND THEIR EMPHASIS ON SEXUALITY

Though the Penitentials dealt with all kinds of sins and offenses, there was special stress on those offenses which, in the mind of the monks who wrote them, were most prevalent among the population or were least emphasized in the native Germanic laws, the Salic laws, the Visigothic or Frankish laws (Noonan 1967, pp.190-203). The two areas of morality which, in the mind of the monks, were found to need work, were the areas of superstition and sexuality. Though a good part of the penitential literature is devoted to condemning magic, sorcery, witchcraft, necromancy and other pagan practices, by far the most striking feature is the breadth and detail of their treatment of human sexual behaviour (Payer 1984, p.3).

The penitentials represent a consistent and comprehensive treatment of sexual behaviour. Few sexual acts are omitted and canons were concocted to cover all conceivable possibilities. In many of the penitentials the canons dealing with sexual subjects comprise over 20 per

cent of the total number of canons. In a representative sampling of penitentials up to the eleventh century, the following percentages emerge:

Penitential of Vinnian

Total number of canons 57  
Sexually related canons 21 = 37 %

Penitential of Egbert

Total number of canons 113  
Sexually related canons 51 = 45 %

Burgundian Penitential

Total number of canons 41  
Sexually related canons 11 = 27 %

Capitula iudiciorum

Total number of canons 301  
Sexually related canons 76 = 25 %

Merseburg Penitential

Total number of canons 168  
Sexually related canons 41 = 24 %

Monte Cassino Penitential

Total number of canons 124  
Sexually related canons 34 = 27%

Arundel Penitential

Total number of canons 97  
Sexually related canons 39 = 40 %

Source: Payer 1984, pp.52-53

The Penances

The manner in which the sexual code was brought to bear on the popular mentality was through the 'tariff'

penance'; the penitentials prescribed a variety of penances, graded according to the severity of the sin. The common person was made aware of how seriously the sin was considered by the priest and therefore by God by the penance he or she received. In this respect the penitentials were like codes, comparable to the criminal codes of later times.

Among the penitential prescriptions, fasting joined with fervent prayer occupies the most prominent place, so that in the penitential books "paenitere" simply means "to fast". It admits of different degrees, ranging from abstinence from certain foods to a near restriction on eating and drinking. Thus there is "fasting on bread and water", and abstinence from meat, from solid food and from wine; there are stricter fasts on certain days of the week and certain times of the year (the three forty day periods: before Easter, before Christmas and after Pentecost). For murder and for unchastity, abstention from marital intercourse and renunciation of weapons were normally required and for certain specially heinous sins exile was also imposed. Almsgiving is not forgotten. The duration of these penances is graded according to the gravity of the sins and varies in the different books. Starting from sentences of lifelong penance for certain specific crimes, we find others of fifteen, twelve, ten or seven years downwards to one year; and for lighter sins, penances of forty, twenty, seven days or one day (e.g. for drunkenness,

seven days; for immoderate eating, one day) (Poschmann 1964, pp.126-127).

### The Comparative Gravity of the Penances

The Penitentials seldom use evaluative terms such as bad, horrendous, terrible, mortal, venial or worst to characterize the sins they censure. Nor do they provide an explicit ranking of various offenses. However, they implicitly rank offenses through the penances which they impose. One trait which the penances share is length of time in years, months, weeks or days - so it would seem reasonable to use length as the primary feature for ranking the different sins.

On the basis of this ordered scale one could then reasonably argue to the comparative gravity of the various sins in the same penitential. Sins higher on the time scale will be considered graver than the sins lower down. However it is to be remembered that this comparative scale is meaningful only for the penitential for which the scale is devised. It is not helpful in making comparisons between penitentials simply because each author devised his own scale.

Given the fact that there is a great deal of inconsistency in the penitentials and quite often no uniform standard for a specific offence, any chart that is made out,



as the one made out by Noonan (1967, p.204), can only be a rough estimate of the comparative gravity of sins.

Nevertheless, a comparative scale constructed from the penitential of Theodore, gives an idea of how seriously sexual sins were rated in comparison with other sins. The penitential of Theodore was chosen because it stands at the heart of the penitential tradition (Payer 1984, p.132).

### Killing

A person who commits homicide: 10 years (1.4.3)

### Incest

Fornication with one's mother: 7, 10 or 15 years (1.2.6)

### Homosexuality or Sexual intercourse with an animal

Anyone: 10 years (1.2.2)

### Oral intercourse

7 years (1.2.15)

### Adultery

Anyone with married woman: 4 years (1.2.1)

### Theft

Of consecrated objects: 3 years (1.3.5)

### Perjury

Base penance for perjury: 3 years (1.6.5)

### Fornication

With a virgin: 1 year (1.2.1)

### Pornographic thoughts

7 days (1.2.22)

(McNeil and Gamer 1965, pp.184-217)

No doubt what is being imposed here is the spirituality of celibate monks, an important group in the church's hierarchy, who had a very negative view of sexuality. Celibacy was considered superior to marriage and sexual intercourse was inherently polluting. Perhaps an idea of this negative view of sexuality can be gauged from a canon in Theodore which states: "Those who are married shall abstain from intercourse for three nights before they receive holy communion" (Penitential of Theodore, 1.12.1).

#### A SAMPLING OF THE CANONS RELATING TO SEXUALITY

It might be interesting to know what the penitentials actually have to say about a few of the sexual sins, especially those which are more pertinent and commonly spoken of in modern times.

##### On Adultery

For the sin of adultery the offender is not to have sexual relations with his own wife during the time of his penance (Penitential of Columbanus, Bieler 1963, p.102). There were gradations depending on who committed the adultery and with whom the act was committed. The following canon, from the Capitula iudiciorum, is representative:

If a bishop commits adultery he shall do penance for 12 years; a priest for ten years; a deacon and a monk, for seven years; a cleric and a layman for five years, two of these on bread and water; the last two are to be deprived of communion. They shall never approach the priesthood (Payer 1984, pp.20-34).

There were other penances for married couples - for failing to abstain from sex during the special periods of abstinence, for improper forms of sexual intercourse, for incest with children and for the use of aphrodisiacs.

#### On Contraception and Abortion

The penitentials use the word "maleficium" to denounce potions taken by a woman in order not to conceive (Merseburg, c.13; St. Hubert, c.56). The penitential of St. Columbanus states: "If one has destroyed another [child] by his maleficium, let him do penance on measured bread and water for three years and for another three years abstain from wine and meat, and then in the seventh year he may be received into communion" (P of Columbanus B.6, Bieler p.101).

Other texts cite penances depending on the motive for which the abortion/contraception is performed. A concession is made when the motive is economic. Thus, if a woman killing her child were a 'paupercula' or 'pauperina', a "poor little woman", the penance was to be half that for a mother not in this condition (P of Theodore 1.14, Bieler 1963, pp.25-26).

Finally, there are prohibitions of various forms of marital intercourse in which procreation was intentionally avoided. Thus, coitus interruptus, oral and anal intercourse are all considered unnatural forms of intercourse, which are

regularly condemned, and have penances of 5, 10 or 15 years attached to them.

The serious light in which these sins were considered can be gauged from the strict penances imposed on them. Thus, for abortion, the average penance was approximately 7 years of fasting (P of Merseburg c.3; P of Egbert (2.2, 4.21); for contraception too it was approximately 7 years (P of Pseudo-Bede 15.3), and for the non-procreative forms of sexual intercourse, it ranged from three or four to seven years and sometimes even 10 years (Penitentials of Bede 3.38,39; Merseburg c.13; Egbert 7.10; Pseudo Egbert 4.68).

#### On Premarital Sex

There were many canons referring to fornication. Although addressed to all persons, they specially had in mind the clerical or monastic classes. (The penitentials were collated mostly by monks) A penitential of Columbanus states: "If an unmarried man sleeps with a virgin, if her relatives agree, let her be his wife, but on condition that both first do penance for a year" (McNeil and Gamer 1965, p.254).

The Penitentials, of course, are all written from the male point of view.<sup>5</sup> Pences for the man vary depending upon whether the woman was less than 20 years (puellae), had already lost her virginity (stuprata), or if the act took

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<sup>5</sup> Even the language of the penitentials refers to "he" rather than "she" and refers to "him" rather than "her".

place by chance (fortuitu). Finally, if a child is born from such a union, a penance of 4 years is imposed [on the man] (P of Bede 3.1-6).

### On Homosexuality

The normal penance for homosexual acts (sometimes described as sodomy, sometimes as anal intercourse) is approximately 10 years according to the Burgundian penitential and that of Columbanus (P of Columbanus B.3, Bieler 1963, p.100). So much importance was given to homosexuality that even boys and adolescents had punishments assigned to them. Thus, boys of fifteen years who practise mutual masturbation receive penances of forty days.

### On Masturbation

Nearly all the penitentials talk about it. Thus the Paris Penitential: "If anyone has a sexual experience arising by arousing his body he shall do penance for forty days; if he was polluted through this arousal, seventy days" (Payer 1984, p.47).

There are penances even for people who merely have the desire in their mind to commit fornication, even though they may not do so in reality. Even more there are penances for nocturnal pollution (P of Cummean 10.6,7 in Bieler 1963, p.114). Likewise there are penitential canons that condemn immodest touching, kissing, immodest thoughts and attach penances to them.

## THE POPULARITY AND WIDESPREAD USE OF THE PENITENTIALS

The penitentials exercised a wide influence upon church discipline and social morality. They furnished the basis for the practice of the confessional in the West. Without their help it is difficult to see how the local priest could have carried on his task of personal guidance (McNeil and Gamer 1965, p.46).

A number of documents of the period recommend that priests have a penitential and that they be familiar with it. For instance, three texts edited by Boretius in his collection of capitularies suggest that the possession of a penitential was expected of a priest and that he was to be acquainted with its contents. A number of diocesan statutes are quite explicit in recommending that priests possess a penitential and be familiar with it (Payer 1984, p. 55-56).

There are some authors, however, who feel that the penitential prescriptions do not reflect the actual behaviours, but reflect the fantasized concerns of their compilers or authors. Thus Nora Chadwick attributes those canons to the wild imagination of their authors:

We may be sure that many of these cases are the webs spun in the casuistry of the monkish brain. They form an abstract compendium of suppositious crimes and unnatural sins, thought up in the cloister by the tortuous intellect of the clerical scribe (Chadwick 1961, p. 149).

The vast majority of scholars however (McNeil and

Gamer 1965, pp.46,47; Raymond Kottje 1981, pp.22,24; Payer 1984, p.13) hold that the penitentials were living documents used for practical ends. Although some of the detailed specifications mentioned in the penitentials might owe their existence to a desire for material completeness and a delight in subtle distinctions, the overall purpose of the penitentials was to respond to actual pastoral problems. The very existence of such prescriptions over centuries would seem to be good grounds for inferring their practical nature - that they represent responses to actual experiences.

The formation of a sexual code went hand in hand with the creation and diffusion of the penitentials. Certainly the codes of Theodosius and Justinian as well as the law codes indigenous to the tribal groups of Western Europe deal with sexual offenses - adultery, rape, abduction, homosexuality - that were believed to affect the public domain. However, they did not cover many areas of individual sexual conduct and they were far removed from the interpersonal relation of confession and penance. The penitentials were the context in which the most comprehensive code of sexual behaviour was elaborated. They served to specify the whole range of proscribed activities and to establish a certain ranking among the various offenses, thereby dealing with the day-to-day failings of Christians.

## IMPACT OF PENITENTIAL LITERATURE

By way of conclusion, it might be worthwhile to evaluate the impact of the penitentials on modern morality. There is no doubt about the significance of a body of literature which for more than four centuries continued to transmit a relatively consistent and comprehensive code of sexual behaviour. According to some authors, "Western attitudes may have suffered because of this over-emphasis on sexuality over such a long period of time" (Payer 1984, p.121), but according to other authors, "it is questionable whether Europe would have reached the stage of Victorian culture and restraint were it not for the penitentials (McNeil and Gamer 1965, p.47).

Among the many consequences of the penitential literature, the following are conspicuous:

1. They gave new prominence to the rite of confession. The sacrament of Penance was formerly divided into three stages. The first stage was confession, when the penitent accused himself/herself of sins. The second stage consisted of acceptance by the bishop or priest into the order of penitents. This was symbolized by the imposition of hands or absolution. The third stage was the satisfaction or performance of penance.

While in earlier times, it was the second and third stages that were considered more important, with the arrival



of the penitentials, the first stage or the "confession" began to take on added significance. It was necessary that the penitent confess his sin fully along with his motives and all the attendant circumstances, the mitigating as well as the aggravating circumstances. Only if he made a thorough confession and detailed all his intentions was the priest properly able to deem the appropriate penance for him/her. Further the priest was supposed to help him/her by a full and complete interrogation, sometimes the entire process taking up to half an hour (Di Meglio and Valentini 1974).

Within the next few centuries this aspect of Confession will be stressed even further so that there will arise the institution of the confessional box or grille, which ensured the privacy of the penitent, and the tradition of the "confessional seal" which ensured the confidentiality of the penitent. This change is so significant that for several centuries, the sacrament lost its old name of penance or reconciliation and came to be called simply "Confession".

2. The penitentials paved the way for casuistry. By introducing a system of tariff penance or graded penances, it became necessary to evaluate the sinful act on a set of scales just like a judge does in a court of law. During his detailed interrogation of the penitent, the confessor was also supposed to counsel the penitent and give him/her the right advice for the particular problem or sin. After a due

consideration of all the motives and attendant circumstances, he was supposed to give the right type of penance so that the penitent could make a change or conversion in his life. This aspect too would be developed further with the publication of the confessional manuals in the next few centuries and there would arise a whole science of dealing with problems or sins called casuistry or "cases of conscience".

3. Manifestly clear is the emphasis the penitential literature gave to the whole theme of sexual sins. In the words of Michel Foucault, the penitentials paved the way for a whole new discourse on sexuality (Foucault 1980, p.17 ff). This discourse would be amplified from the year 1215, from which time onward it would become obligatory for every Christian to confess his/her sins to a confessor once a year at least. By the seriousness of the penances tabled for sexual offenses, the penitentials established a whole new way of speaking and thinking about sin, chiefly about sexual misconduct. Even today, when Catholics say they have committed sin, the first thing that comes to mind is sexual sin; and when they confess sins the chief or principal sin they confess is sexual in nature (Di Meglio and Valentini 1974). Some authors have called it the church's hang-up on sex (Greeley 1988). The 1988 Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life showed that Roman Catholics are more likely to use values related to sexual behaviour than attendance at

Mass in determining who is and who is not a true Catholic. It is not just a remarkable coincidence that when Catholics today grade their sins, they use a scale very similar in scope to the gravity scale mentioned in the penitentials; thus murder is ranked highest; abnormal sex (like bestiality, pederasty, incest) is ranked higher than adultery; homosexuality is considered more grievous than abortion; and masturbation and having "impure" thoughts are considered mortal sins though lower down on the scale. (People Weekly Poll, Feb. 10, 1986).

4. The penitentials led to the privatization of the notion of sin. It is from these early Middle Ages that there arose from within the Catholic Church itself this trend to "privatize" the notion of sin. As a result of the systematization and classification of sins and penances, what began to be emphasized from then on would be the individual act, the individual thought or deed. No longer would the stress be on the overall attitude of sinning or the general orientation of the sinner. What would now be referred to was the act of lying rather than the insincerity, the act of intercourse rather than the basic infidelity, the act of striking rather than the attitude of hatred or jealousy which led to it. In the minds of most people, the privatization of sin is associated with the growth of cities, the "philosophy of individualism" or general trends of secularization, and while these are

definitely reinforcing factors, it is possible that the privatization of sin really began from within the Church itself with the systematization and tariffing of sin and penance by the monks of the early Middle Ages.

One more element of the Catholic notion of sin remains to be studied, and that is, its casuistic component.

### THE SUMMAS AND MANUALS FOR CONFESSORS AND CASUISTRY

#### THE LITERATURE

The Summas and Manuals belong to the genre of confessional literature. The word Summa means a summary of cases of conscience and the term Manual means a handbook, but both basically were meant for the purpose of helping the confessor in pastoral care.<sup>6</sup> Together they were responsible for the development of casuistry within the Catholic Church.

The unique development of casuistry is the result of the legalistic and bureaucratic minds of the learned priests and monks of the late Middle Ages, as they exercised their control over the very private area of the confessional. At about this time the Church began to lose some of the power it had over temporal properties and its primary area of control was the internal area of morality and the confessional. It was to this sphere that the great clerical minds of the late Middle Ages applied their rationalism and

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<sup>6</sup> A complete list of the books is given in Appendix C.

scientific thinking. The result was the science of casuistry. The following section discusses how this came about.

Two well known events define symbolically the period of the summas and manuals for confessors. The period begins with the publication in 1215 of the bull *Omnis Uttriusque Sexus*, by which Pope Innocent III and the Fourth Lateran Council commanded all Christians who had achieved the age of discretion to confess their sins yearly to their own priests. The period ends with the dramatic protest enacted by Martin Luther at the gates of Wurttemberg, where on December 10, 1520, he publicly burned, among several other works, the *Summa Angelica*. Before 1215 no summa for confessors had been written. By 1520 the the last true representative of the genre had recently been completed. Between those two dates there had appeared - depending on how you define them - from twelve to twenty-five summas of casuistry for confessors (Tentler 1974, p.103).

If the initial event is an act of Rome, the terminal event is an act against Rome and all her works. Luther's angry defiance is a fitting symbol for the end of the era of the summists, because it represents a rejection of the medieval system of discipline and, of course, of the summas and manuals for confessors that had been created to explain and enforce it. The Reformation marks the end of the composition of summas for confessors and of their

publication and circulation.

### The Purpose of The Summas and Manuals

The purpose of these books was to help priests in the care of souls, especially priests who did not have access to the great commentaries and specialized writings of the major scholastics. Through these manuals and summas the decrees of popes and councils, and the teachings of theologians and canonists on any and every aspect of domestic, social and economic life were conveniently placed at the disposal of priests who were often far removed from any contact with scholastic circles. Written for the information of the simple priest, the task of the summas was first and foremost to present confessors with a detailed and informed exposition of the law of God and of the basic requirements of Christian belief and practice (Boyle 1974, p.128).

### The Nature of These Works

The Summas and Manuals were the creation of an intellectual elite. They were written by priests or monks, who were aware of the seriousness of the obligation to hear confessions and equally conscious of the complexity of the legal and moral prescriptions that had to be honored if the confessional were to fulfil its role as the principal place for the forgiveness of sins. The books display harmony, clarity, distinctness and totality. Their cases touch every

aspect of life and their solutions draw on reason, law, theology and experience. They were erudite but not profound. They made it easy for literate people to use them. Many of them were arranged alphabetically, many were equipped with a full index; many had cross references. They were all ecclesiastical and theological encyclopaedias. Their purpose was to lay down the law.

The first of these books, the Raymundina, established the basic pattern. Its four books cover the major kinds of sins, and present them in cases of conscience (it was Raymond, the author of the Raymundina who introduced the term "cases" in penitential literature).

Book I deals with sins against God  
 Book II with sins against one's neighbor  
 Book III with Penance and Holy Orders and  
 Book IV with matrimonial sins

Raymond's world is defined by law, positive, ecclesiastical law, and moral law, divine and natural - and he tries to apply these realms of law to concrete human situations.

### Popularity of These Works

The summas and manuals were responsible for influencing the discipline of the late medieval church. The fact of their being so widespread is supported by the evidence of the early history of printing. The chart below displays the number of times the summas or manuals were

printed and reveals their enormous popularity at a time when printing technology had just begun.

Summas and Manuals by Times Printed

Pisanella, 6 incunabular editions  
 Astesana, 10 incunabular editions  
 Rosella and Baptistina, 14 incunabular editions  
 Supplementum, 29 incunabular editions  
 Angelica, 24 incunabular editions  
 Sylvestrina, 28 incunabular editions  
 Manipulus curatorum, 90 incunabular editions  
 Confessionale of Antoninus, 100 editions  
 Modus Confitendi of Andreas Escobar, 86 printings

Essentially, there were two areas that this genre of literature served to develop. On the one hand, it developed the power of the priest even more and on the other hand, it gave rise to the science of the classification of sins. Both areas will be discussed below.

THE POWER OF THE PRIEST

The decree of 1215 ordering every Christian to make Confession to a priest at least once a year is a papal law and universally binding. H.C. Lea calls it "perhaps the most important legislative act in the history of the Church" (Lea 1896,I,p.230). The clergy are ordered to publish the papal decree in every church so that no one can escape the obligation by pleading ignorance. It endorses the jurisdiction of the parish clergy by stipulating that everyone confess to "his own priest." It prescribes harsh penalties for those who fail in this Easter Duty - they are



barred from the Church and denied Christian burial - and thus it gives added urgency to the requirement of confession and the power of the priest. At the same time, however, the papal decree grants a pastoral office to confessors that unequivocally establishes their spiritual authority. From now on, priests can act as healing experts and impose penances, which penitents must try to complete as best they can (Tentler 1974, p.104).

There is no doubt that the sacrament of Confession enhanced the power of the priest over the spiritual life and behaviour of his parishioners. First of all, the priest was the only one who could give absolution and pronounce the words, "I absolve you." Second, he discerned the extent of sorrow and sincerity of sorrow and made a decision as to whether the change of heart and resolution to amend was sufficient. Third, he gave the penance and determined the amount of restitution. Fourth, he interrogated the penitent and made a thorough inquiry into his life, his sins, his attitudes, circumstances etc. He did this to determine whether it was a mortal or venial sin. Fifth, he was given a payment by the penitent, called the "Stipend". By definition a voluntary gift, it was nevertheless a hardened prerogative of the clergy and considered a normal part of a parish priest's revenue. Another habit of confessors was to impose penances consisting in the purchase of Masses, with the stipulation that the Masses be purchased from the

confessor himself (Over twenty synods forbade this practice between 1195 and 1446; Lea 1896, I, pp.404-411).

One of the reasons why all adults were obliged to confess once a year was that the pastor could know his sheep and thus not fail to detect heresy (Guido de Monte Rocherii, *Manipulus Curatorum*, II, 3,2, fol. 73b).<sup>7</sup> If the parishioner failed to make this annual confession, he or she was excommunicated or denied the other sacraments (Rhodes 1968, pp.188-190)

During the middle ages three new occasions were introduced when confession of sins was said to be necessary, thereby enhancing priestly power:

- when in danger of dying
- before receiving the Eucharist
- before receiving any of the other sacraments (Guido de Monte Rocherii, *Manipulus Curatorum*, II, 3,3, fol. 85a-b; Angelica, *Confessio sacramentalis*, 31; Gerson, *Opus Tripartitum*, I,17; Sylvestrina, *Confessio I*, q.2, par.3).

Confession was undoubtedly more frequent than communion. The Eucharist was seldom received, but Confession was tied to seasons and crises: to dangerous journeys, to marriage and childbirth, serious illnesses, the possible absence of a priest confessor and to the major feast days of the year.

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<sup>7</sup> All references from the Summas and Manuals are from Michaud-Quantin 1962.

The most prominent feature of both manuals and summas bearing on the conduct of confession is usually the part devoted to the "questions." The anonymous *Psycht Spiegel* and the *Manipulus Curatorum* commend to the literate the practice of writing down their sins on a paper and reading them off to the priest. Evidence that the questioning of penitents was taken very seriously is contained in the treatise On the Confession of Masturbation, attributed to Jean Gerson (Opera Omnia 1706). An example is given of how the confessor is supposed to prod, probe and interrogate, asking the same question in different words until finally a confession is "forced" out of the penitent. The penitent is then led to make a deeper evaluation of his malice and a more complete confession of his motives and intentions.<sup>8</sup>

But the most compelling argument for the necessity of confession was the insistence of the clergy that only by virtue of the sacrament of confession could a man's sins be forgiven. "This was the second plank that saved a man after his shipwreck," according to Jerome (Epistle 84, PL, 22,748).

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<sup>8</sup> Further examples of this type of questioning are found in Di Meglio and Valentini 1974, Sex and the Confessional; and in Tentler 1977.

### Examination, Classification and Casuistry

The examination of conscience, interrogations, general confessions, forms of etiquette, and the like, were all designed to uncover sin. In different ways they encouraged the penitent to think about his sins, identify them, classify them and tell them. By these means, the sacrament inculcated an attitude toward sin and the self (Tentler 1977, p.134).

The purpose of the thorough examination was first, to introduce certainty and to relieve the anxiety of doubt, and second to provide content to the norms this institution would enforce. Predictably there developed a moral science that classified offenses (Tentler 1977, p.135).

The modern reader is bound to be struck first of all by the overwhelming detail possible in the confessors' inquiry, or the penitent's introspection into and narration of his sins. One manner of examination was to go through the lists or categories of sins. Below is a sample of one such list.

- Ten Commandments
- Seven Deadly Sins
- Twelve Articles of Faith
- Five Senses
- Eight Beatitudes
- Six or Seven Corporal Works of Mercy
- Six or Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy
- Four or Five Sins Crying to Heaven for Vengeance
- Six Sins against the Holy Spirit
- Nine Sins against one's Neighbor
- Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Four Cardinal Virtues
- Three Theological Virtues
- Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Still other ways of classifying sins were possible: sins of thought, word and deed; sins against the natural law, sins of omission and commission; sins called the 'five outward signs' (embracing, kissing, gestures, suggestions and writing) and the innumerable sins associated with particular statuses and professions. Furthermore with any of these categories there were unlimited possibilities for elaboration. The types and principal branches of pride are ingratitude, boasting, flattery, hypocrisy, derision, ambition, presumption, curiosity and disobedience; of avarice they are simony, theft, usury, sacrilege, fraud and prodigality (Jean Columbi's Confession Generale Blb ff). Love of detail invades the literature's examination of sins. Famous is Jean Mombaer's 'tree of sin' in his 'Rosetum' which covers two folio pages and is a detailed chart of sins.

But there was a logic behind this proliferation. If the confessional is a primary institution for control, it must be used according to the rules, which demand that discipline be exercised by identifying and condemning sins. No doubt there were other ecclesiastical institutions exercising control in medieval society, such as the sermon, the canon law court, and the community of the parish, but the confessional had a supreme place, for it was here, in the forum of penance, that a priest directly confronted and

corrected the fallen, the unreformed. It was here that the church demanded that all sins of every adult Christian be acquitted. It was here that vice was judged and sentenced, that virtue was hopefully encouraged. No matter how effective in defeating sin this institution really was, the hierarchical Church had a theology and practice that made it seem central and indispensable; and the men who wrote down lists and lists of sins did so on the assumption that here was their best chance for discipline (Tentler 1977, pp.138-139).

### The Grading of Sins

The best illustration of the penchant for grading sins, and one of the favorites in the literature, is the rank ordering of sexual transgressions. A rather fine example occurs in the General and Brief Confession. Its sixteen grades of sexual sin afford a good opportunity to understand which sexual sins were considered worse than others.

1. Unchaste kiss
2. Unchaste touch
3. Fornication
4. Debauchery (seduction of a virgin)
5. Simple adultery
6. Double adultery (both partners are married)
7. Voluntary sacrilege (illicit relations with one who has taken religious vows)
8. Rape (abduction of a virgin)
9. Rape or abduction of a wife
10. Rape or abduction of a nun
11. Incest
12. Masturbation
13. Improper manner of sexual intercourse (unnatural

- positions)  
 14. Improper organ (oral intercourse)  
 15. Sodomy  
 16. Bestiality

(Confessio Generalis Et Utilis, Columbi n.d.)

Numerous Distinctions: Mortal and Venial, Consent and Intent, Thought and Deed

The great problem in the forum of conscience was to determine the degree of culpability and the critical determination was the line between mortal and venial sins. In a work first written in French in 1510, On the Difference between Mortal and Venial Sins, Gerson outlines the most intelligent opinion of the late medieval ages. He defines mortal sin as having three characteristics : a serious offence, deliberate knowledge and explicit consent. In addition to these critical standards, Gerson discusses twenty three considerations on the seven deadly sins, lying, swearing, fraternal correction, when to form an opinion on the mortal character of a sin, the choice of the lesser of two evils, ignorance, sins of merchants, sound faith, excommunication, the avoidance of a bad priest, venial sins and a general example for the distinction between mortal and venial sins (J. Gerson, De Differentia, Du Pin, II, pp.487-504C).

If classification of acts themselves can cause confusion, it is nothing compared to the doubts raised when a penitent, examining his conscience and confessing his

sins, has to decide whether he has really consented to the thoughts, words, actions that trouble him. Summas, manuals and spiritual counselors suggest rules to remove perplexity. Godescalc offers rules for distinguishing venial and mortal sins on the basis of intention and consent.

Willful consent not only distinguishes mortal from venial sin but also affects the gravity of the sinfulness of an action. In simple terms, the more rational and complete the consent, the more culpable the act. An example of the ridiculous extent to which this kind of hair-splitting distinctions can go to is given by Godescalc when he argues that men sin more gravely than women because they are more rational than women. Vivaldus, Godescalc's contemporary, announces that men are more culpable in adultery and fornication, because women are weaker in mind and body. But per accidens the woman's adultery is graver because of the evil consequences - infanticide, abortion, contraception that flow from the crime of the woman (Rosemond Godescalc, *Confessionale*, 10,2, fol. pp.165a-166b; Vivaldus, *Aureum Opus*, pp.56a-b).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Gerson makes an ingenious attempt in his work, *On the Difference between Mortal and Venial Sins*: it describes six stages in the assent of the will to sin by analogy to the betrayal of the king of France by his wife, the queen, for the benefit of his enemy, the king of England. The analogy begins as a messenger from England appears before the queen, but she refuses to hear him. In the second stage, she is attracted by the gifts the messenger brings and decides to hear him; but she is displeased by what he has



Much later historians referred to this time period as Catholicism's "preoccupation and obsession" with sin (Doyle and Mailloux 1956, pp 53-65 and 75-85; Corcoran 1957, p.313-329). It was from this obsession that problems of scrupulosity and guilt-complexes were found to be more prevalent among Catholics than in persons of other religions (Hepworth and Turner 82, p.48). Summing up, I quote from a historian of moral theology.

Moral theology has still not yet shaken off the influences of the summists which began during this era. Textbooks on Catholic moral theology, articles, instruction, and preaching from the pulpits still echo the excessive stress on casuistry first voiced to an extreme in this period. Divorced from dogmatic theology, moral theology pursued its own course of development and focused attention on the treatise concerning the judgment of conscience. Fervid controversies arose which principally concerned the problem of probabilism (R. Dailey 1966, pp.175-177).

Another historian, Regan, called this "a basic sterility" of the entire moral theological endeavour. The "harmful casuistry which prevailed reduced morality to a carefully constructed system of foreordained conclusions based on universally valid, abstract principles" (Regan 1971, pp.29-30).

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to say and sends him away. In the third stage however she hears the message with pleasure, and it is here that mortal sin begins. In the fourth stage, she accepts the gifts, and then in the fifth she actively seeks to aid the enemy of her husband. In the final degree of surrender she proves herself obdurate in her infidelity. No threats or punishments from France or ill treatment from England can extricate her from service to her husband's enemy (Gerson, *De Differentia*, 25, Du Pin, II, pp.502C -504C).

An obvious question that comes to mind is why so much classification and casuistry. It is not enough to say that this was the way in which the priests and clergy exercised their power and control. Somehow the power variable alone does not seem enough. In the last chapter we already saw how the clergy's power was made secure through the institution of private penance. What then was the reason for the further elaboration and minute classifications. It is only when the power variable is seen in conjunction with other historical-cultural factors that the situation becomes clearer.

The complete answer lies in the kind of power the clergy exercised. The Catholic clergy of the Middle Ages were not really involved in the secular life of people, in their day-to-day mundane, economic activities. Their sphere of control was limited to the private and internal area of spirituality, and to the most private of those areas, the area of sexuality and conscience. It was the only area of control allowed them by the other strata in society. It is no coincidence that already at this time, Princes and Nobles had begun to be independent of the clergy in matters secular and economic. The gradual disentanglement of State and Church had already begun. The only sphere in which the priest controlled the life of the people was through the one-on-one, private encounter of the confessional. Hence, the more clergy power increased, the only channel for

development was in the internal area of conscience and morality. Classification and casuistry was thus the overflowing of that very private and internalized area of control.

The development of casuistry is seen partly as the result of priestly power carving out for itself an area of private control and partly as the only area permitted them by other strata in society. In other words, casuistry was the influence of the power variable and historical-cultural variable.

### Epilogue

One manner of understanding the Reformation is viewing it as a cultural reaction to the whole medieval system of penance and casuistry. Another manner would be to look at the socio-economic forces that gave rise to the conflicting groups, and Engels has done this in detail. Relevant to my purpose here is the fact that the Reformation gave way to the Counter-Reformation in Catholic Circles. The Council of Trent (1542-1563) was one effect of this Counter-Reformation.

The Council of Trent spelled out in clear terms what was sinful and not sinful through a big list of 'anathemas' and condemnations. It was this list and following on its heels, a code of Canon Law (in 1580) struck in granite, that reigned over the Church for several centuries right until

1917. The position of the Catholic Church on morality and sin remained virtually unchanged. Moral theology slumbered in an era of decadence and sterility (Regan 1971,p.30). Canon Law was etched out in black and white and even when organized and reformulated in 1917, the same blue print held sway unaltered for both confessors and penitents until the 'opening of the windows' during the Second Vatican Council (Lynch 1987, p.153-154).

This social history of the Catholic notion of sin served to highlight its essential characteristics: a strongly personalistic sense of sin, emphasis on sins of sexuality and sins against the faith, and a decidedly casuistic attitude. The history also brought into focus the principal factors that developed these notions, the morphological factor, the power factor and the historical-cultural factors.

In the next two chapters I trace the main elements in the Hindu concept of sin and examine whether the same factors - morphological, stratification and historical-cultural- were influential in its formulation. Chapter Four will trace the social history of sin for the pre-Christian era and Chapter Five for the post-Christian era.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A SOCIAL HISTORY OF SIN IN HINDUISM

#### PART ONE

It has been said that sin is a Western concept and therefore one should not talk about sin in India (Morton Smith 1983, p.125). However, while it is true that the exact connotations and nuances that the concept of sin stands for in Christianity may not be found in Hinduism,<sup>1</sup> it is nonetheless true that a similar notion of "moral wrong doing" can be found in Hinduism in a range of different words and terms.

A perfect match of concepts is not to be expected in any study of comparative religions. Every concept has its own framework or "sitz im leben" and cannot be transposed directly from one cultural context to another, without suffering somewhat in the translation or meaning.

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<sup>1</sup> The technically-correct term should be Brahmanism to refer to the religion in India prevailing before the 8th century. The term Hinduism was given currency by the Arabs in the eighth century CE when referring to the religion of the Indians. Hence, use of the term Hinduism before the eighth century CE would really be an anachronism. (Thapar 1966, p. 131-133) For the sake of simplicity however, we shall be using the expression Hinduism, as is done by most authors.

Given this proviso, I turn to Hinduism to look for the words or concepts that come closest to the Christian idea of sin. The search however for the word or words that approximate the equivalent of sin in Christianity is problematic for two reasons:

First of all, early Hinduism never makes such a clear-cut distinction, as did Christian theology, between moral evil and natural evil. According to this theology moral evil, of which sin is a part, is the evil that we human beings originate, with our cruel, unjust, vicious, and perverse thoughts and deeds. Natural evil is the evil that originates independently of human actions, in disease, earthquakes, droughts, tornadoes, etc. (Hick 1979, p. 18). In Indian religions, the two forms of evil, moral evil and natural evil, are regarded as aspects of a single phenomenon, for which a single explanation is sought (O'Flaherty 1976, p.6). Thus, in Hinduism, quite often one finds that the terms for sin and evil are used indiscriminately and hence one has to be extremely careful in choosing a term that corresponds purely and adequately to the notion of sin, without having the connotation of evil mixed in (De Smet 1968, p.126).

A second reason that makes the search difficult is the fact that Hinduism, unlike Roman Catholicism, has no centralized teaching authority like the Pope and the Bishops. Nor does it have territorial administrative

structures like the Catholic parishes. There is no single, official doctrine about sin in Hinduism, enunciated by a central body, and disseminated down the line as in Catholicism. As a result, different scholars of the Hindu Sacred Books, with different viewpoints and differing motives, have tried to locate the Christian equivalent of sin in Hinduism and each one of them has come up with different words and terms. Consequently, there now is, a whole range of terms and expressions that, in some way or another, have a referent to the Christian concept of sin.

Among these scholars there are at least two categories: first, those who looked at Hinduism somewhat critically, considered it amoral and tended to focus on a Hindu notion of sin as material or ritual pollution; secondly, those who looked at Hinduism sympathetically and attempt to make the Hindu notion of sin somewhat broader and more all-embracing.

Included in the former category are the first students of Hinduism, the Evangelical Missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who wished to change India by converting it to Christianity. Not surprisingly, they took a disparaging view of Hinduism, condemning it as amoral, and tried to prove that the essential backwardness of India was due to the Hindu religion (Thapar 1978, p. 5).

Another group of scholars, still in the first category, are from the ranks of the British Administrators.

Their purpose was to bring about change through legislation. Their studies, in the eighteenth century, arose principally because the East India Company required that its officers, in order to properly administer Indian territories, should become familiar with the laws, habits and customs of the people they were governing (Thapar 1978, p. 2).

Forming a quite different category, are the scholars from the Universities of Europe in the nineteenth century, who were genuinely interested in Indology and Oriental studies. They delved deep into the original works, translated them into modern European languages and developed a deep appreciation of Hinduism. The ancient Indian past was seen as a lost wing of early European culture and the Aryans of India were regarded as the nearest intellectual relatives of the Europeans (Thapar 1978, p. 2). These scholars were wont to elevate Hindu ideas and they tried to find similarities with Western religions.

Last of all, but still part of the second category, are the Indian scholars, who wrote in reply to the earlier critical interpretations of the missionaries, and in trying to prove that Hinduism was very moral, often assumed an apologetic style.

As a result of these various scholars and their different perspectives, there is a whole group of words, that correspond, in different ways, to "moral wrongdoing". I need to go over these words in order to select those,



which properly approximate the Christian concept of sin and to discard those which do not. Before I begin with a social history of sin then I shall briefly survey the words or terms found in the literature.

1. Enas is a word found in the Vedas (1300-1000 BCE)<sup>2</sup>. It means the result or consequence of evil actions; Enas refers to the impurity, the pollution, the disease that may or may not follow from sinful or evil actions, but does not as such refer to sin.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Vedas are the very first of the Sacred Books of Hinduism and the most difficult to date. Different authors have come up with different dates (Chaudhuri 1979, p. 31). After consulting several authors, I decided to stick with Basham's chronology, which puts the Vedic period between 1300 and 800 BCE.

<sup>3</sup> Although the ideas of pollution and purity are very much a part of Hindu religious behaviour, the ideas are not directly connected with sin. Hence, I have not considered them specifically under sin. I think a clearer picture can be obtained if we consider three categories. First, there are categories of actions or events which are impure but not sinful. Equally, there are categories of actions which are sinful, but not necessarily impure. And there is a third category in between, where actions are both sinful and impure.

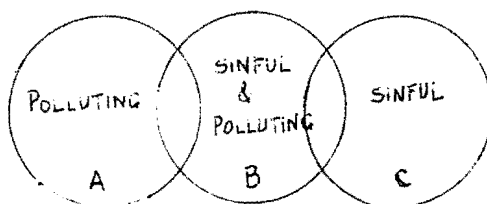


Diagram II

Category A: Actions or events which are polluting, like, birth, death, puberty for a woman, eating meat and handling garbage.

Category B: Actions which are both sinful and polluting.

2. Anrta is another Sanskrit word, referring to sin in the sense of going against the rhythm of the cosmos. Anrta is the opposite of Rta (the right path), both words dating from the time of the Vedas. Anrta is a cosmic notion of sin.

3. Avidya or ignorance, is a word commonly used in the time of the Upanishads (approximately 800 BCE to 600 BCE). The goal of the Upanishads was the realization that God and one's self are one and the same; evil consisted in whatever prevented this realization (De Smet 1968, p. 129). Since avidya or ignorance prevents the realization of Atman or Self, it is evil. Avidya therefore is not an offence against God but an obstacle to perfect knowledge. This is ethical intellectualism, where sin belongs to the sphere of ignorance (De Smet 1968, p. 229).

4. Adharma or failing to do one's duty, is the opposite of dharma or duty. This notion received great attention during the Buddhist period (600 - 300 BCE). Duty is here understood as one's eternal and absolute duties, sanatana dharma. To speak the truth and not to injure any living being are two of the most important duties.

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Killing an animal, killing a person, sexual intercourse with a person of a lower caste.

Category C: Actions which are only sinful, not necessarily polluting, for instance, taking and giving bribes, telling lies, stealing.

5. Pataka or wrongdoing is the term that was popular during the Brahminic Revival (300 BCE and 300 CE) and prevailed for a good ten centuries. This is the first time that sins are classified and enumerated. Pataka means failing to do one's duty to the community, but was interpreted primarily to mean failing to do one's caste duties. Pataka is a very caste-based notion of sin.

6. Papa is the modern word for sin and became very popular in the vernacular languages during the later Bhakti period (fifteenth to seventeenth centuries). Papa, too, has a cosmic - and mystical - dimension but today is used by most Indians as the synonym for sin.

Having reviewed the list of words found in the literature I can safely eliminate the two words, Enas and Avidya, from my consideration as the following discussion will demonstrate.

Enas is an idea of pollution or impurity that is the result of evil actions, but it is not sin itself. The word enas is, however, found in the Vedic books, and because of its frequent use, certain Western scholars, critical of Hinduism, have understood this idea of pollution as part of the Hindu notion of sin and characterised the concept of sin in a "quasi-physical" way (Thakur 1969, p. 182). But enas is the consequence of sinful actions, it is not sin itself.

Avidya or ignorance is another word that has to be eliminated from our consideration. Avidya is a mental

attitude or state of the mind, and no Hindu would consider it as sin (Thakur 1969, p. 173). The word Avidya came to be classed under the category of sin by those apologists of Hinduism who try to make the Hindu notion of sin as expansive and all-embracing as possible. These scholars, stung by those who considered Hinduism immoral, have tended to delve into the literature and find as many words as possible that approximate the Christian concept of sin. Thus the word Avidya was included, by them, under the notion of sin (De Smet 1968, p. 128).

Similarly, there are a number of other words found in the literature (De Smet 1968, p. 126) that come close to, but do not refer to sin. These too can be safely omitted from my consideration because they refer to other aspects primarily. Thus :

- amhas = distress or anxiety (Rg. X, 126.1)<sup>4</sup>
- agas = guilt (Rg. II, 29. 1)
- viloma = stain (De Smet 1968, p.126)
- dukh = pain (Smith 1983, p.126)
- dosh = fault or blame (Smith 1983, p. 126)
- vrjina = hatred (Rg. II, 27.2)

Having excluded the words that do not properly convey the notion of sin in Hinduism, there remain four terms -

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<sup>4</sup> All references from the Hindu Sacred Books are from the series, Sacred Books of the East, edited by Max Mueller.

anrta, adharma, pataka and papa. These I propose to examine as they unfold and reveal the Hindu notion of sin in the respective periods in which they were popularly used. Anrta and adharma will be examined in this chapter and pataka and papa in the next chapter.

**THE VEDIC PERIOD (1300-800 BCE): ANRTA OR COSMIC DISHARMONY**

A very ancient Sanskrit word is anrta, which means, sin in the sense of going against the rhythm of nature or the cosmos. Thus, anrta or cosmic disharmony is a very early notion of sin, stemming from the Rgveda, the earliest of books (Max Mueller 1882, p.243).

This Vedic idea of sin is clearly the reflection of the community structure at that time, which was agricultural. After evolving from pastoralism, Vedic India became very much a settled agricultural society (Thapar 1978, p. 213-4). This can be inferred from archaeological evidence, from the nature and language of the Vedic hymns and from the nature of gift giving. From initial gifts of cattle, gifts changed to the form of land and grain (Thapar 1978, p.105-122). References to gods like Varuna (the god who upholds heaven and earth and also the god of rain), Agni (the god of fire), Indra (the god of lightning and thunder), Aditi (the sun god), Prajapati (the creator of the earth and the soil), Soma (the moon plant, whose juice was like nectar) and Vayu (the wind God) demonstrate a concern with

the laws of nature, with its rhythms and seasons (Fallon 1968, p.83). Every farmer knows that the ability to harmonize with nature and its laws is the key to success and thus the bards and chroniclers of Vedic times also saw that the way to peace and salvation depended on harmony with the rhythm of the cosmos.

The Aryans, who settled in India, were lovers of nature. Whether farmer or poet, they forever contemplated the movement of the sun, moon and stars, the rhythm of the seasons and the sprouting of plants and trees.

Max Muller, one of the great scholars of Vedic India, traces the origin of the notion of Rta from this agrarian world-view. Writing about the origin of ideas in the Hindu religion, he states:

Thus we can understand that while, at first, the overpowering phenomena of nature were exciting awe, terror, admiration and joy in the human mind, there grew up by the daily recurrence of the same sights, by the unerring return of day and night, by the weekly changes of the waning and increasing moon, by the succession of the seasons, and by the rhythmic dances of the stars, a feeling of relief, of rest, of security, a kind of unconscious celebration, capable of being raised into a concept, as soon as that feeling, could be comprehended and expressed in conscious language (Mueller 1882, p.242).

That feeling, according to Muller, found expression in the Sanskrit word, Rta, "a word which sounds like a deep key-note through all the chords of the religious poetry of India," and is the germ of the idea of order, measure and law in nature (Mueller 1882, p.243).

Rta is a participle of the verb Ri, which conveys the sense of being fitted, fixed; or of the path followed in going - the procession, the great daily movement, or the path followed every day by the sun, by the dawn, by day and night, and their various representatives, a path which would soon be regarded as the right movement, the straight path (Rg Veda, VII, 40,4). Besides Rta, there is in Sanskrit, a common word for seasons, rtu, meaning originally the regular steps or movements of the year.

The Vedic poets, observant worshippers of nature, were believers in the established order of things. The stars in heaven, day and night, the seasons, all followed an all-compelling law, Rta, the course of all things. Rta is a universal principle, the unchanging law, physical and moral, on which the whole cosmos is founded. All objects, all creatures, all gods<sup>5</sup> are subject to Rta (Mehta 1956, p. 41-42). Thus we read of Usha, the goddess of dawn: "She follows the path of Rta, the right path" (Rg Veda, I, 124,3). The path of Rta, is also spoken of as the law which the god Varuna follows: "I follow the path of Rta well; evil-doers on the contrary, are said never to cross the path of Rta" (Rg Veda, IX, 73,6). Slowly and gradually, Rta

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<sup>5</sup> Avatar is the Sanskrit term and it definitely does not have the same connotation as the term 'God' in Christian theology. Most authors have used the term divine manifestation or 'god' [with a small 'g']. I shall therefore follow the latter tradition.

assumed the meaning of law in general (Mueller 1882, p. 250).

As Rta came to express all that is right, true, ordered and natural, so Anrta came to express whatever is false, untrue, evil and unnatural (Mueller 1882, p. 251). As Rta meant the "course of nature" or the "regular and general order in the cosmos" (Rg. IV 23.8-10; Rg.II 28.4; Rg. I 105.12; Rg. I 164.11; Rg.I 124.3), Anrta came to mean anything that disrupted that cosmic order. As Rta meant also 'the moral conduct of man' (Rg. I 90.6 ; Rg.V 12.2 ; Rg.X 87.11 Rg.X 10.4), Anrta came to mean anything that was immoral or unnatural.

Anrta or sin consists then in the transgression of the laws or ordinances of the cosmos. What are these sins ? To kill, (even to kill a foetus), to curse, to deceive, to gamble and cheat, indulge immoderately in wine, anger, dice. This is clearly the ethic of agricultural tribes (Mehta 1956, p. 41), but there are also sins like oversleeping, having black nails and teeth, marrying before the elder brother. Thus, the particular sin or wrongdoing is not cosmic, but it is the way of conceiving it as a breaking of the cosmic law.

The meaning of anrta can be illustrated by comparing it to the Christian notion of sin. If a Christian sins, he/she considers himself/herself to be insulting God and God will punish him/her. If a Hindu does something wrong, if



he/she fails to do his duty, there is a feeling that he/she is going against the order of the cosmos, and ultimately that will work against him/her, there will be a boomerang or rebounding effect.

The historian Henry Lefever sums up this conception nicely:

The gods are 'charioteers of rta' guarding the transcendent cosmic law by means of their statutes. These statutes have their origin, not so much in the pure will of the Gods, as in the transcendent rta. Therefore the breach of such statutes is not so much a personal offence against the Gods as a violation of the rta, which the Gods protect. The sole duty of the Gods, as guardians of rta, is to punish the violation or to reward the keeping of rta. It is in relation to this office that the attitude of the sinner towards the Gods must be understood (Lefever 1935, p. 20).

My investigation into the idea of Anrta has so far confirmed Durkheim's research on morphological variables. If a people are lovers of nature and their main preoccupation has a lot to do with nature, then their notion of sin will also be reflected in terms of nature and the cosmos.

However, during the time of the Brahmanas<sup>6</sup> there was a change in the power structure. The class of Brahmin priests began to assume power and the beginnings of the caste system<sup>7</sup> began to take shape (Mehta 1956, p. 82). To examine

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<sup>6</sup> According to Basham (1975) and Albrecht Weber (1892), the Brahmanas were written after the Vedas, between 1000 and 800 BCE.

<sup>7</sup> According to the Varna Model of the Caste system, the Brahmins, or priestly class, were at the top rung of the hierarachy. The Kshatriyas, warriors/administrators, were next in importance, followed by the Vaisyas, farmers /

exactly how this took place would take us too far afield and beyond the scope of this study, but important for our present purposes, is to understand that the Brahmins were the highest ranking group, the most pure, the only ones who had authority to perform sacrifice or the ritual cult and it is they who began to define sin in terms of ritual. This shift in the power structure illustrates how the stratification variable comes to play an influential part in the definition of sin. From now on, through the proper performance of the ritual, the gods would be pleased and the crops would be abundant. Through the improper performance the gods would be displeased and there would be famine. The Brahmanas are filled with descriptions of exact procedures

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merchants, and at the very bottom were the Shudras, the menials or lowest class. These four classes belong to the category called "twice born." There was a fifth group comprising the Untouchables, made up of the tribals, (termed "mleccha"), and were outside the Varna Scheme. This scheme was given credence by a verse from the Purusa sukta, a book from the Vedas.

One way of understanding the origin of the caste system is to look at it as a series of successive dichotomies (Dumont 1970, p. 67). The first dichotomy is the Aryan Brahmin and the tribals. The Aryans gained power by means of their superior technology - the horse, the chariot and the use of iron over copper - and made the tribals their slaves. Because of their different speech, different physical characteristics and different rituals, the tribals were labelled "impure" (Thapar 1978, p.152). Marriage between the pure Aryan Brahmin and the impure tribal gave rise to the mixed breed Shudra. Marriage between a Shudra and Brahmin gave rise to the Vaishyas and finally marriage between the Vaishyas and Brahmins gave rise to the Kshatriyas...

It was this simple varna division, a distinction based on power and ritual purity, which was the beginning of the caste system.

stating how the ritual should be performed and what kind of gifts should be given to the Brahmin priest.

Writing about sin in the time of the Brahmanas, De Smet states:

In the Brahmanas everything is centered on the sacrifice and its efficacy. Sin consists chiefly in ritual mistakes, even if merely accidental. Immoral acts imply guilt only insofar as they prevent ritual purity. Sins are removed by being sacrificed away. (1968, p. 127-8)

It is not that sin had lost its cosmic meaning. It is just that during the time when the Brahmins were staking their status claims and trying to emphasize their first ranking in the hierarchy, the ritual aspect was stressed, ritual sacrifice being the specialization of the Brahmin priestly class. The term Rta, besides its two earlier meanings of "the course of nature" and the "right conduct" came to take on an added dimension, "the correct and ordered way of the cult of the gods."

We are told in the Brahmanas that there are two kinds of divine manifestations, the gods and the learned Brahmins. Both have to be propitiated, the former through sacrifices, the latter through gifts (Satapatha Brahmana II, 2.10.6). Failure to make the appropriate gift offering was sinful.

It was during the time of the Brahmanas that the idea of unintentional sinning became prominent, even ritual mistakes and ritual inaccuracies being considered sinful. Thus, authors like Max Mueller have posited a degeneration

from a moral conception of sin (such as the hymns in the Rg Veda) to a physical one (Hindu ritual expiation) (O'Flaherty 1976, p. 166). Other authors believe that the two notions - cosmic sin and ritual sin - existed side by side (Rodhe 1946, p. 161).

My own estimation is that ritual sin was only a temporary phenomenon appearing during the time of the Brahmanas and that it declined more and more in importance as the other notions of sin were stressed. It is the idea of Anrta, in its cosmic sense, that continued to be a part of the underlying substratum of every Hindu's notion of sin (Thakur 1969, p. 184).

#### **THE PERIOD OF REACTION : ADHARMA 600-300 BCE**

A second strand in the development of the Hindu notion of sin is described by the term adharma or failing to do one's duty<sup>8</sup> (Derrett 1978, p.27). This notion of dharma/adharma became very prevalent at the time of Buddhism and Jainism (600-300 BCE). Reacting to Brahmin ritualism, whereby only the priest was given prominence, the Buddhists and Jains stressed individual effort. They gave importance to being truthful and not injuring any living being. In this sense they "modified" Hinduism, so that no longer was the emphasis on ritual sins, but on individual values of

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<sup>8</sup> The opposite of adharma is dharma or duty.

truth and nonviolence. In trying to understand how this took place, the interplay of morphological and historical-cultural variables is evident.

At the end of the Vedic period (600 BCE) there were certain distinctive features in the communities of northern India: first, the ascendancy of the Brahmins as the priestly caste; second, the importance given to the knowledge of the Vedas; third, the primacy accorded to the Sanskrit language in which the Vedas were written and with which only the Brahmins were familiar and fourth, the power of the ritual sacrifice, which was performed solely by the Brahmins. All four features were closely related.

The first groups to protest against this state-of-affairs were the Renouncers, who, like the later Monastics of Europe, opted out of the social scheme. The first renouncers were Kshatriyas, members of the warrior and administrative class, who became ascetics, lived moral lives and indirectly rejected the Brahminic power, the importance of the Vedas and the emphasis on rituals. Two of the renouncers became founders of two separate religious movements called the heterodoxies; one renouncer was Mahavira, the founder of Jainism and the other was Gautama,<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jainism was founded by Mahavira (died around 600 BCE), a Kshatriya noble (Weber 1958, p. 193) and Buddhism was founded by Gautama Buddha, who was elevated by legend from the scion of rural nobility, which historically he was, to the son of a prince (Weber 1958, p. 226).

the founder of Buddhism. As Weber says: "It is extremely suggestive and rightly assumed that the wish by these Kshatriya princes to be free of Brahman power was one of the most important political motives for supporting the Jains and the Buddhists." (Weber 1958, p. 202) It is further very significant that the language used by the Buddhists and the Jains was not Sanskrit, the language of the cultured elite, but Prakrit, the language of the common people. It is the thesis of Max Weber that Buddhism and Jainism were reactions to the ritualism and power of the Brahmins.

Romila Thapar believes that the rise of Buddhism and Jainism was more the result of socio-economic forces, especially the growth of urban areas. The surplus crop from the land gave rise to the growth of towns. The subsequent trading, which ensued, developed enough wealth so that the Buddhist and Jain renouncers could easily live off the grants given them by the rich administrator/landowners (Kshatriyas) and wealthy merchants (Vaishyas) (Thapar 1978, p. 43-45). Both these groups were just below the Brahmin in status, but with their growing economic power, they gave full support to the Buddhist and Jain heterodoxies. Many Kshatriyas joined Buddhist communities and the Vaishyas flocked in large numbers to the Jaina sects.

Whatever the causes that gave rise to Buddhism and Jainism - whether it was the result of a cultural reaction (Weber) or the result of socio-economic forces (Thapar) or a

combination of both factors (my own opinion) - it is clear that Buddhism and Jainism made a heavy impact on Hinduism and modified its doctrine of dharma and adharma.

The Buddhist and Jain movements were ethical movements stressing individual effort; there was no deity and no cult. More correctly, they espoused an ethic with absolute indifference to the question of whether there are "gods" and if so, how they ought to be pacified. Salvation is a solely personal act of the single individual. No one (no priest), no ritual, no cult and no special knowledge (like that of the Vedas) can help the individual. There is no recourse to a deity or saviour. A person's ultimate fate depends entirely on his/her own free behaviour (Weber 1958, p. 206,207).

The Jain and Buddhist renouncers symbolically gave up their kshatriya status, according to which they had to fight and be soldiers, and in contradistinction took the vow of ahimsa, or the vow not to hurt or injure any living being (Zaehner 1971, p. 111). The goal of Jainism is asceticism, the goal of Buddhism is tranquillity. In both cases they seek the expurgation of all aggressive tendencies (Weber 1958, p. 209).

The renouncers preached a morality of truth and honesty for the Vaishya merchants and traders (How could business continue without honesty ?) and a morality of non-bribery and non-corruption for the Kshatriya rulers and

administrators.

Thus there was great emphasis on individual asceticism, on honesty, truth and non-injury to living beings. A Jain commandment forbids saying anything false or exaggerated; the Jains believed in absolute honesty in business life, all deception was prohibited, including especially all dishonest gain through smuggling, bribery, and any sort of disreputable financial practice. The Jain dictum was "honesty is the best policy." The honesty of the Jain trader was famous (Weber 1958, p. 200).

The first two of the five great vows of the Jain monk were: prohibition against killing (ahimsa) and prohibition against untruth (asatya tyaga) (Weber 1958, p. 201).

Among the advisory counsels of Buddha there were strict prohibitions against killing (ahimsa), and injury of all live beings, and a commandment of unconditional truthfulness (in the Hebrew Decalogue it applied only to court witnesses) (Weber 1958, p. 215). The five great Vows of Jainism, and the five Qualities of Character (Pancasila of Buddhism) emphasized more or less the same rules: Non-injury, non-lying, non-stealing, non-indulgence and non attachment.

An important factor in the spread of this Buddhist notion of dharma/adharma was the acceptance of Buddhism by



the great king Ashoka, who believed in making dhamma<sup>10</sup> the prevailing law of the country. After the bloody conquest of the Kalinga kingdom, the king declared that he regretted the unavoidable butchery and the destruction of pious people. Forthwith, he prohibited slaughtering in the capital city of Pataliputra and even in his own royal kitchen would not allow cattle to be killed. He promulgated the laws of dhamma (among which was the respect for life), and to control and carry out these ideas the king created special officials called "censors" (dharmarashtra). (Weber p. 238,239)

With the break up of the Maurya dynasty, both Buddhism and Jainism began their decline, but not without leaving their impression on Hinduism. In the course of time, Hinduism absorbed these Buddhist rules of truth and nonviolence into its own philosophy and vocabulary (Dumont 1970, p.149-150).

Erikson pointed out that when a community is being persecuted, it stakes out its moral boundaries even more sharply, delineates and demarcates what is orthodox and what is heretical. This is what happened to the Christian communities of the first three centuries: when faith was threatened, faith was more sharply defined. Conversely, when a community is not persecuted, its moral boundaries are more flexible. There is no need for strict demarcation and

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<sup>10</sup> prakrit for the sanskrit dharma

there is a tendency to exchange views with the majority religion. There is osmosis and give-and-take. This is what happened between Hinduism and the Buddhist-Jaina sects. Hinduism was the majority religion. The Hindu kings, following a live-and-let-live policy, did not persecute these sects and that is why Hinduism simply absorbed the tenets and values of Buddhism and Jainism.

Thus Patanjali, author of the Yoga Sutras around 300 BCE, had no difficulty in incorporating the five qualities of Buddhism and Jainism into his five yamas or acts of self-restraint, non-violence, non-lying, non-stealing, non-indulgence and non-attachment (ahimsa, satya, asteya, aparigraha and brahmachari).

A little later, the two great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, a means of moral education for millions, teach moral lessons in concrete terms and illustrate in the lives of heroes and heroines such virtues as truth, love, fidelity and courage. Yudhistira, in the Mahabharata, is known for never having told a single lie in his entire life. In the Ramayana, Rama, who is himself a pattern of loyal truthfulness, declares: "Truth is lord in the world; virtue always rests on truth. All things are founded on truth; nothing is higher than it" (O'Malley 1935, p. 82).

According to Max Muller, "the whole of Hindu literature, from one end to the other, is pervaded by expressions of non-violence and reverence for truth." (Max

Muller 1882, p. 64). Prashastapada, who incorporated the ideas of Manu and Yajnavalkya, (see part two) in the early middle ages, wrote out a list of common duties, which every person must follow. In that list, truth and non-violence are among the first five (Thakur, 1969, p. 146).

Thus the concept of adharma, now synonymous with untruth, is a wonderful illustration of how historical-cultural factors play their part in the development of the notion of sin. Gramsci pointed out that moral ideas are not simply the result of a straightforward imposition by the dominant culture on the other cultures. Rather moral ideas are an area of "contested terrain." There is struggle, there is give-and-take and the final result is a compromise, a negotiated synthesis. This is exactly what is seen in the notion of adharma. The reaction of Buddhism and Jainism forced the dominant culture of Hinduism to change and adapt. The cosmic notion of anrta is now interpreted in terms of the moral ideas of nonviolence and truth, so that till today every Hindu will speak of non-injury and non-lying as part of his sanatanadharma or duty which is absolute and true for everyone, irrespective of caste (O'Flaherty 1978, p. 96).

The notion of sin as adharma is in no way contradictory to the earlier cosmic notion of anrta. Far from it, the Hindu believes that adharma is also cosmic. If a Hindu should speak untruth, he or she is afraid that some cosmic law has been broken and, as a result, some terrible

cosmic harm will befall him/her.

In the next chapter I will discuss how the Brahmin writers propagated the idea of another type of duty, the duty to one's own caste or station in life, called svadharma. Failure to perform one's svadharma was called pataka.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SOCIAL HISTORY OF SIN IN HINDUISM

#### PART TWO

#### THE BRAHMIN REVIVAL: PATAKA OR WRONGDOING AGAINST CASTE AND THE PUBLIC GOOD 300 BCE - 1300 CE:

A notion of sin that was prominent from 300 BCE to about the twelfth or thirteenth century CE is the notion found in the famous Law books called the Dharma Sutras and Dharma Shastras (Kane 1953, vol. IV, p. 1 ff.). It is here that sin is called 'pataka' or wrongdoing, it is here that the different sins were collected and written up as a code, made uniform and standard, given a definite purpose, and specific penances prescribed for each sin. The law books<sup>1</sup> can be divided into two sections:

1. The Dharma Sutras or primary law books written around 300 BCE; specifically Apastamba Dharma Sutra, Baudhayana Dharma

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<sup>1</sup> Sacred Hindu literature is divided into two parts, shruti and smriti. All Vedic literature is called shruti or inspired. All later literature is smrti or "that which is remembered". The law books are a part of smriti literature.

sutra, Gautama Dharma Sutra and Vasistha Dharma Sutra.<sup>2</sup>

2. The Dharma Shastras, or secondary law books, of which the two most famous are the Law of Manu (compiled by Bhrigu<sup>3</sup> around 100 CE) and the Code of Yajnavalkya (written between 100 CE and 300 CE).

There are of course many other minor law books that are part of the Dharma Shastras, for instance the Vishnu-smriti (c. 300 CE), the Narada smriti (300 to 600 CE) and Brihaspati (300 to 600 CE) and numerous other commentaries and digests, including the whole literature on prayascitta (penance), but these are either more recent or not as well known among the Hindu people, or they refer to the more legal and secular aspects of sin.

In Manu and Yajnavalkya are to be found the most elaborate treatment of all kinds of sins (Kane 1953, p.16). It is in these two books that sin is divided into mahapatakas (major sins) and upapatakas (minor sins). My analysis of the notion of Pataka will be based largely on the Law of Manu and Yajnavalkya. They are not only the most famous and widely known, but they incorporate the earlier literature and become the fount and source for later

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<sup>2</sup> Henceforth referred to by abbreviations : Ap. Dh. S., Baud. Dh. S., Gaut. Dh. S. and Vas. Dh. S. References from these books are found in Sacred Books of the East, vol.2 and 14, ed. Max Mueller

<sup>3</sup> There are many manuscripts of the Law of Manu, but the version I am following, has been compiled by Bhrigu and is translated in The Sacred Books of the East, vol. 25.

commentaries.

In Vedic mythology, Manu, is the "heros eponymos" of the human race and by his nature belongs both to gods and to men. In the Rig Veda he is repeatedly called "Father Manu," indicating his position as the progenitor of human kind. Being the father of mankind, Manu is naturally considered as the founder of social and moral order, as a ruler of men and the author of legal maxims (Buehler 1967, p. lviii). The commentators of the law of Manu, Medhatithi and Kulluka and other passages of the Smrti literature, the Epics and the Puranas<sup>4</sup> all mention the preeminence of Manu's teaching. The Brihaspati Smriti, for instance, places the Law of Manu at the head of all works of the same class (Buehler 1964, p.xiv). The Yajnavalkya smrti<sup>5</sup> is only second in importance to Manu. Though not as popular, yet far more thorough and complete, Yajnavalkya is a further step in the development of Dharma Shastra literature (Nold 1978, p. 31).

However, since both Manu and Yajnavalkya took their material from more ancient law books, called the Dharma Sutras, it is best that we begin by considering the Sutras first.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Appendix D for complete chart of Hindu Sacred Books.

<sup>5</sup> The version I refer to is edited by M.N. Dutt, 1977.

## CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE LAW BOOKS WERE WRITTEN

origin of the Dharma Sutras

To understand the origin of the Great Law Books of Hinduism, the Dharma Sutras and Dharma Shastras, it is necessary to begin by understanding the power structure in India in the first millenium BCE. Since the time of the later Vedas and the extraordinary importance given to sacrifice and ritual, the Brahmins held the highest position of power. This has been well documented by several social historians (Max Weber 1958, chp. 2; Thapar 1978, p. 122-149; Dumont 1970; Srinivas 1971, p. 31).

But, as seen earlier, Buddhism and Jainism, which began about 600 BCE as small movements rebelling against the caste structure of Hinduism, gradually grew into much larger movements. Buddhism was spurred on by the power of the Buddhist sanghas, which received the blessings of the Kshatriya kings, chiefly Ashoka, who became a Buddhist himself. Jainism, a movement of the Vaisyas, grew in power through the wealthy merchant guilds in urban areas and thus the two movements together formed a major source of threat to Brahmin power in Hinduism (Thapar 1978, p. 40-63).

The Brahmins, the only class that knew Sanskrit, were the most educated people, and they maintained their power through their knowledge of the sacred Vedic literature,



written in Sanskrit.<sup>6</sup> However with the growing power of the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, Sanskrit as a language, and with it the Vedic literature began to fade in significance, and along with it the importance and esteem given to sacrifice and ritual, all began to decline.

The Brahmin now has a fresh cause for grudge. He comes forward as the saviour of the Vedic Brahminic culture (Ghurye 1961, p.71). He wants to reassert his supremacy and culture against the burgeoning heterodoxies. This is the beginning of the Brahminic Revival.

The Vedic Schools: Sensing the decline of Vedism and correspondingly of Brahmanism, there grew up as a reaction, special Vedic schools, with the express purpose of teaching Brahmin students Vedic literature.

These schools, called Sutrakaranas, collected the fragmentary doctrines, scattered in the older Vedic works, and arranged them for the convenience of oral instruction in Sutras or strings of aphorisms. In this manner, they taught the different subjects - ritual, grammar, phonetics, astronomy, sacred law and the other so-called Angas (limbs) of the Veda.

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<sup>6</sup> For a more complete description and analysis on how knowledge leads to power refer to Michel Foucault, Knowledge and Power, 1980.

The Sutras on the subject of law and behaviour were called the Dharma Sutras. Meant exclusively for Brahmin students, they taught the students how to comport and conduct themselves in society, giving them a list of do's and don'ts, and indirectly stressing their distinctness and superiority from the other varnas.

Thus, the Apastamba Dharma Sutras were the sutras taught in the school of Apastamba; the Gautama Dharma Sutras were those taught in the school of Gautama. It was through these Vedic or Sutra schools, run very much like Catholic seminaries, that the Brahmin hierarchy sought to counteract the heterodox movements of Buddhism and Jainism.

#### Origin of the Dharma Shastras

As the Vedic Sutra schools systematized and cultivated the six sciences of the Vedic Angas, the materials for each of these subjects accumulated and the method of their treatment was perfected in the process. As a result, the enormous quantity of matter to be learned and the difficulty of its acquisition gave rise to the establishment of new specialized schools of science, which while they restricted the range of their teaching, taught their curriculum thoroughly and more completely. Thus streams of specialization set in and the more famous of the specialized schools for Brahmins were the law schools (Buehler 1967, pp. xlvi - xlix).

The Law Schools: The chief aim of the specialized school was to make the Brahmin perfect in one or more of the special sciences studied without reference to a particular Vedic school. The Law schools, in this sense, were created to give the stamp of universalism.

The products of the specialized law schools were the secondary law books or secondary Smritis, chief of which are the Dharma Shastras of Manu and Yajnavalkya; they show a fuller and more systematic treatment of all legal topics, while incorporating at the same time, clear traces of older redactions taken from the Sutras.<sup>7</sup> They are free from all signs of sectarian influences, or of having been composed, like many of the later Digests, at royal command. They finally exhibit unmistakable marks of being school books. There is no doubt that the Law of Manu and Yajnavalkya treat all legal topics more fully and more systematically than the earlier Sutras (Buehler 1967, p. liv).

Thus the general cause which led to the production of that class of secondary smritis, to which the Code of Manu belongs, seems to lie in the establishment of the special

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<sup>7</sup> According to the theory of George Buehler, there was a manuscript called the Manava Sutra, which is now lost, and the present Code of Manu, compiled by a Brahmin named Bhrigu, may be considered as a recast and versification of the Dharma Sutra of the Manava Sutra School, a subdivision of the Maitrayaniya school (Buehler 1967, pp. xviii-xix).

law schools, which were independent of any particular School of the Veda, and which supplanted the Vedic Schools as far as the teaching of the sacred law is concerned.

The characteristics of the Law Books then are as follows:

1. That the authors of both Manu and Yajnavalkya were Brahmins (Srinivas 1971, p. 5; Thapar 1978, p. 31).
2. They were written after the break-up of the Mauryan dynasty, with the purpose of reasserting Brahmin ascendancy, at a time when it was being threatened by the Kshatriya kings and the wealthy Jain merchants, when even the Shudras laid claim to being rulers of kingdoms (Thapar 1966, p.133).
3. Unlike the earlier Sutras, they were not written solely for Brahmins but supposedly for everyone.
4. They were a first attempt to write up a uniform code of laws in a society where diversity was prevalent.

#### CONTENT AND IMPLICATION OF SIN IN THE LAW BOOKS

The chief law books, Manu and Yaj, are divided into three parts: the first part deals with acarya or rules of behaviour; the second part deals with vyavahara or civil and criminal laws; the last part deals with prayascittas or penances for purification. The enumeration and classification of sins can be found in a small section of this last part (Nold 1978, p. 5).

Hence the classification of sins was not a goal in

itself, but rather it was done with the purpose of establishing the appropriate kinds of penances for purification, so as to be properly admitted back into the caste fold.

For the Brahmins, the caste hierarchy (with the Brahmins on the top, followed by Kshatriyas, next by the vaishyas and the Shudras at the bottom) was the basis of India's unity. When this hierarchy was being upset, with Shudras claiming to take the place of Kshatriya rulers and and Vaishyas usurping occupations of another caste, the Brahmins felt that the basis of unity was being shattered. Hence the purpose of the Law Codes (and the definition of sins in them) was to re-establish the unity and the hierarchy.

From an analysis of the different sins mentioned in the Code of Manu and Yajnavalkya, it is very clear that the notion of sin is hierarchy-maintaining or caste-maintaining. Thus, sinful action is an action that goes against Brahmin supremacy, and consequently against the hierarchical-framework, and consequently against the unity of society. This notion of sin is manifested in three ways:

1. From an analysis of the major sins
2. From an analysis of the minor sins
3. From an analysis of the penances prescribed.

## ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR SINS

The law books were not original when they spoke of five great sins called the Mahapatakas. These were found first in the Chandogya Upanishad, (V, 10. 5) and repeated, with a twist of interpretation, by the Code of Manu (XI.55,180) and by Yajnavalkya<sup>8</sup> (III,227,261). There is a conspicuous difference when comparing the earlier Chandogya version, when the Brahmins did not feel that their supremacy was threatened, with the later codes of Manu and Yaj, when Brahmin supremacy was being challenged. This difference is revealed by comparing the following two lists of sins.

### Chandogya Upanishad

1. Murder
2. Drunkenness
3. Theft
4. Incest
5. Association with criminals

### Law of Manu (emphasis mine)

1. murder of a Brahmin
2. drinking of sura or liquor
3. theft of gold from a Brahmin
4. violation of the brahmin guru's wife
5. one who associates with the above four criminals.

The above two lists illustrate how Manu reinterpreted the 5 great sins to give prominence to the Brahmin and reflect the hierarchy-maintaining notion of sin.

I now examine the major sins in greater detail to show their two main purposes: firstly, to provide that the other

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<sup>8</sup> Henceforth abbreviated to Yaj.

castes maintained the hierarchy and secondly, to provide that the Brahmin himself maintained his purity and distinct status.

Murder of a Brahmin: This was the gravest of all sins, because the Brahmin was the sole repository of Sacred Knowledge. Killing a Brahmin was like destroying Sacred Knowledge. This sin included even inciting others to kill, imploring or ordering them, merely helping and abetting them, or even encouraging them to kill a Brahmin. Even the killing of a foetus, born of Brahmin parents, was the same as killing an adult Brahmin. By contrast the killing of a Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra was only a minor sin.

Drinking of Sura or Liquor: Sura was a type of liquor made from flour. It was forbidden to the Brahmin because once intoxicated the mind could not concentrate on the sacred scriptures. Sura is the enemy of knowledge (Satpatha Brahman V.1.5.28). While all intoxicants were forbidden for the Brahmin, some intoxicants were allowed for the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas. The Shudras were allowed to drink intoxicants at any time. The rule was lenient for the other castes because knowledge of the Vedas was not their sacred duty as it was for the Brahmins.

Steya or Theft: In order to constitute theft as a grave sin, according to the commentaries, the theft must be of a Brahmin's gold of a certain quantity. The later commentaries and digests state that the gold stolen must be of a certain

weight (Madanaparijata p. 827-828 and Prayascitta Prakarana p. 72 in Kane 1953, p. 23). This was a sin of violation of the Brahmins' property.

Sexual Relationship With the Wife of the Guru : According to Gaut II.56, the teacher of the Veda is the foremost among Gurus. To have a sexual relationship with the Brahmin guru's wife is like a violation against Sacred Knowledge. Sexual relationships with other persons are only considered minor sins, if considered at all. (See Appendix E for complete list of minor sins.)

Association with Sinners (Those Guilty of the Above 4 Sins):

Association would mean eating food with the sinners, receiving a gift from them, officiating as a priest for them, or cohabiting or entering into a matrimonial alliance with any of the above four sinners. The purpose of labelling this a sin was to ostracize and isolate the sinner completely.

Thus, all the five sins were defined with the purpose of maintaining the hierarchy and protecting and defending the high status of the Brahmin; the Brahmin was the repository and chief exponent of the Vedas, the fount of true knowledge. Knowledge was the source of his power and anything that took away from either the knowledge or the person or the property of the Brahmin was defined as a grave sin.



## ANALYSIS OF THE MINOR SINS

The next list of sins in the Law Books are the Upapatakas or minor sins. These, in the Codes of Manu and Yaj, are approximately fifty in number and, unlike the mahapatakas, which were entirely oriented towards protecting the status of the Brahmin, are more universal in scope. The authors of the codes realized that if all the sins defined were solely for the benefit of the Brahmin, sooner or later there would be a rebellion by the other castes. Hence a good number of sins (more than one third) were oriented toward the public good.

On making a classification of these 50 sins, I found that 19 out of these 50 (more than one third) are sins relating to the public good. Another 17 of them relate to caste duties. 10 of them relate to the welfare of the family and the remaining 3 relate to sexuality. The chart below shows why the notion of pataka had essentially a two pronged aspect: sins against the caste-hierarchy and sins against the public good.

### Mahapatakas

- 17 refer to caste duties, for the 3 upper castes
- 19 are sins that refer to the public good
- 10 are sins that pertain to the family.
- 3 are sins that pertain to sexuality.

Of the 17 sins pertaining to caste duties, most of them were meant to maintain the purity of the Brahmin.

status, meant to cultivate in him a love of the Vedas, to deter him from adopting the secular and easy-going life of the lower castes, or they were meant to insure that the other castes might respect the hierarchy.

The next set of sins are the 19 sins which try to protect the common good. They are reproduced in detail, for they form an important part of the Hindu thinking about sin.

sins against the common good or sins against social duty

1. Usury (more than allowed by the sacred scriptures)
2. Manufacture of salt (which was common property).
3. Selling what ought not to be sold (e.g. salt)<sup>9</sup>
4. Maintaining oneself on condemned wealth
5. Non payment of debts
6. Sale of a tank or park intended for the public
7. Cheating or following crooked ways
8. Cutting down a big tree for fuel<sup>10</sup>
9. Maintaining one's self on one's wife's earnings or maintaining oneself by killing animals or using herbs as charms
10. Setting up machines that cause death or injury (e.g. pressing oil for sesame or for crushing sugarcane)
11. Addiction to the vices
12. Fattening oneself on food charitably supplied by others
13. Holding the office of the superintendent of mines<sup>11</sup>
14. Slaying of cattle
15. Theft of gold (small quantities)
16. Theft of corn, inferior metals or cattle
17. Killing a woman (of any caste)

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<sup>9</sup> It is because of notions of sin like these imbedded in the Hindu tradition that when the British introduced the Salt Tax in 1931, Gandhi was able to galvanize the masses into protesting against it; millions joined the famous Salt March and the British were forced to withdraw the tax.

<sup>10</sup> Not long ago, the late Sanjay Gandhi used the slogan "Plant a Tree" in his political campaign, aiming to invoke religious sentiments to strengthen his popularity.

<sup>11</sup> Mining was considered destruction of natural wealth.

18. Killing a Shudra  
 19. Killing a Kshatriya or Vaishya

At first glance, these social sins might appear surprising or contrary to what one might expect in a society where hierarchy is stressed so much. However, in the mind of the Brahmin writer, cosmic sin or the law of the gods, is really reflected in the laws of society.<sup>12</sup> Thus, for the Hindu, caste laws and societal laws were one and the same thing. All through the period of the Brahminic revival, "svadharma" (or caste duties) for the Hindu means social duty, and social duty means respecting the caste hierarchy and respecting the common good. This double aspect of pataka became very much a part of the Hindu way of thinking.

The next big list of sins (10 in number) concern the welfare of the family and these too were seen as part of the social duty of the Hindu. Most of these pertained to the elder brother or sister marrying before the younger one, about looking after the parents when they were old and about hospitality toward family guests.

There were just two or three sins concerning sexuality, one pertaining to adultery, one to fornication and the third about sexual relationship with a woman of a lower caste.

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<sup>12</sup> To the Western mind, hierarchy and social good seem contradictory; not so to the Indian mind, as "Homo Hierarchicus" has demonstrated (Dumont 1970).

Thus, the analysis of the minor sins demonstrates that the notion of pataka had two parallel streams running within it; on the one hand, the hierarchy-maintaining aspect of the sins, on the other, the social duty aspect of sins.

#### ANALYSIS OF PRAYASCITTAS OR PENANCES

The literature on prayascitta is vast in extent, since in ancient times they loomed very large in the popular mind. Manu alone devotes 222 verses of chapter eleven to penances and in Yajnavalkya 122 out of a total of 1009 verses deal with prayascittas.

Prayascittas are of two types, the earlier and stricter ones of Manu and Yajnavalkya and the later prayascittas, more lenient, which extend up to the middle ages.

The smritis contain numerous prayascittas for the same sin and it is often difficult to reconcile all the data (Kane 1953, IV p. 87). Most of the prayascittas have become antiquated and are hardly ever performed now except in the form of gifts of cows or money to the Brahmins, pilgrimages or recitation of Vedic mantras, or japa (repetition in a rhythmic manner) of the names of some favorite deity such as Vishnu or Shiva (Kane 1953, IV p. 87).

What is clear about the prayascittas is that they too had the purpose of reinforcing the pattern of hierarchy for

those who dared to challenge it. In the first place, the prayascittas were for the purpose of purging a person of his/her sins and for the readmission of the person into society.

In the second place, the prayascittas re-emphasize, in many ways, the hierarchy of the varnas<sup>13</sup> by the differentiated treatment accorded to each. The Brahmin naturally has privileges. He is inviolable and a number of punishments do not apply to him. He cannot be beaten, put in irons, fined or expelled. In general, the prayascittas were stricter for the other caste members than for the Brahmins. For example, Yaj II, 206-7 states that if a Kshatriya or Vaisya defames a Brahmin the fines are respectively twice or thrice as high as for a Brahmin defaming a Brahmin; for a Brahmin defaming a Kshatriya or Vaisya, the fine is reduced by half in each successive caste. In killing, if a Kshatriya, Vaisya or Shudra intentionally and directly killed a Brahmin, the expiation was death, but for unintentional killing each had respectively to undergo twice, thrice or four times as much prayascitta as a Brahmin sinner would have had to undergo for killing a Brahmin. If a Brahmin had 12 years of penance, the Kshatriya would have 24 and the Vaishya would have 36 years of penance (Commentary

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<sup>13</sup> Although there is a distinction between the word "varna" and the word "caste" or "jati," for the purposes of my study, this distinction is not relevant.

on Yaj III,267). But whilst there is privilege or immunity in most cases for the Brahmin, there are some instances where noblesse oblige, and a Brahmin thief for example is punished more severely than his inferiors (Dumont 1970, p. 69-70).

In the third place, where penance has not been prescribed, it is the caste council (made up generally of learned Brahmins) that made a decision. Therefore, one guilty of a sin, should approach an assembly of learned Brahmins and after making some present (a cow or the like) announce the nature of his lapse, and seek their decision about the proper penance for his lapse (Yaj III, 300).

#### Examples of Prayascittas for Major Sins

Just as defining a sin is a form of controlling behaviour, so also defining the penance for it, is equally an extension of that same control. A brief review of the prayascittas or penances illustrate how the brahmins promoted a social mentality that would respect the caste hierarchy and respect the public good as well. A cursory review of the penances for the major and some of the minor sins reveals firstly that the more severe penances were reserved for those of a lower caste and secondly that there were very precise and exact penances, though not as severe, for sins against the public good.

Murder of a Brahmin: For the murder of a Brahmin the penance was death. For the killing of a Kshatriya or vaishya, or when the killing was unintentional or indirect, the 12 year penance was prescribed. This consisted in living for 12 years in the forest begging for one's food. Milder penances provide that a murderer may make a gift of all his wealth to a worthy Brahmin or donate a furnished house or do "tapas" (fasting, abstinence and austerity for a prescribed period) (Manu XI,76 and Yaj III, 250).

Drinking Sura: For a Brahmin the penalty is death (Manu XI,90-91; Yaj III, 253). A milder penance prescribed that the sinner was supposed to eat for one year just once at night only boiled rice and should wear clothes made of cow's hair and carry a flagstaff (Manu XI,92 and Yaj III, 254).

Theft of a Brahmin's Gold: The penance for the theft of a Brahmin's gold of the weight of 80 raktikas or more (Manu VIII,134 and Yaj. I,363) was death for the offenders of all varnas and for a brahmin offender it was penance in a forest for 12 years. The offender may also give as much gold as would be required for the maintenance of a Brahmin's family for the latter's lifetime (Yaj III, 258).

The prayascitta digests contain numerous and varying expiations depending upon whether the man robbed was of a high or low sub-caste, whether it was a first offence or a repeated one, on the price and nature of the thing stolen and on the time, place etc. (Manu XI,162-168).

Sex with the Guru's Wife: Penance for this sin was usually death though milder penances were also prescribed (Manu XI,103-104; Gaut 23, 8-11; Ap. Dh. I,9.25.1-2; Baud. Dh. II,1.14-16). The Guru's wife was also understood to include a girl of a higher caste. For the other varnas sexual relations with a high caste girl was a punishable sin; for the brahmin, on the other hand, sexual relations with a low caste girl, only made him lose his caste status (Manu XI,106 and Yaj. III, 260).

Associating with Sinners: The usual penance for associating with sinners in any way was the twelve year penance (Manu XI, 181; Vishnu Dh. 54,1 and Yaj.III, 261).

#### Examples of Penances for Minor Sins

For killing cattle, especially for killing the cow, the same penance was recommended as for killing a Shudra (Ap. Dh. I,9.26; Gaut. 22.18) viz., staying for three years in a forest, subsisting on alms, and donating 100 cows.

A penance of reciting 100 rig veda verses was laid down if a man cut off big trees like mango or jackfruit trees (Manu XI,142; Yaj III, 276).

For adultery the male had to sit on a donkey and go around the village begging for food, the woman had to perform moderate fasting for six months (Manu XI,170-172, 175,178; Yaj III,231-233). There were penances also for bribery (Manu XI,194) and for selling things which are not



to be sold like the soma plant, salt, water and cooked food.

The above analysis of pataka reveals how the power variable cannot be the sole variable in understanding the notion of sin. Power has to be seen in conjunction with historical-cultural variables, in order to comprehend how pataka can have a bipartite meaning - sin against the caste-framework and sin against the public good. If power was understood as the only variable then one would expect a notion of sin that was purely hierarchy-maintaining, but since power interacts with cultural variables as well, one can find elements of sin that are also concerned with protecting the public good.

#### COMPARISON OF CATHOLIC PENITENTIALS AND BRAHMINIC VIEW OF SIN

This section can be appropriately concluded by a brief comparison between the Catholic penitentials and the Dharma Shastra literature:

1. Some of the Hindu penances, especially those ending in death, are extremely strict and rigorous, far more so than the Catholic penitentials. But it is to be understood of course, that we are talking of a time period much earlier than the penitentials (early Middle ages). The penances as prescribed by Manu were written in the first century of the Common Era and down the centuries the digests continued to make them milder and milder. In fact, authors like Srinivas

(1971, p.3) think that Manu and Yaj were thinking of the ideal situation rather than the actual situation. The Brahmin writers were describing "what should be" rather than "what actually was."

2. The Catholic penitentials had stricter and many more penances for sexual sins than the Hindu law codes and scarcely any literature about sins against the community (Refer to pp.113 ff of this paper). The Hindu codes, on the other hand, had more penances for sins against the public good and little or nothing about sexual sins. Adultery and fornication were considered as minor sins and homosexuality and masturbation treated extensively in the penitentials are not even treated in the Hindu codes.

3. The main difference is that while the Catholic clergy exercised their control through the private institution of penance, the Hindu Brahmins exercised their control through the public institution of caste.

The reason for this difference I think is the fact that the Catholic priests or clergy in the Middle Ages lived celibate lives in monasteries or parishes. Their lives were separate from the lives of the people. Many of their preoccupations were of a sexual nature and this was apparent in the only way they could exercise control - in the private area of spirituality and inner conscience.

The Brahmins on the other hand, though a separate class, were very much a part of Hindu society. They were

married and were teachers, record-keepers, administrators, advisors to the king, judges, and some of them were priests (purohits). In most villages they were the dominant caste and in many villages, they were also the most numerous. Thus, the Brahmins were more involved in the public life of the people than the Catholic clergy of the middle ages, and it was to the Brahmins' own interest to safeguard this public good. Hence, they laid a strong emphasis on sins against the public good. Dumont has documented very carefully how the whole jajmani system<sup>14</sup> worked to the benefit of everyone including the Brahmins (Dumont 1970, p. 97). Since the jajmani system works on a natural economy and repayment of the Brahmin for his services is in kind, it follows that the Brahmin would see that the public good, land, trees, forests, wells, cattle be protected. In the long run that would work to the Brahmins' own good.

In the last section of the social history of sin in Hinduism, it will be seen how repeated assaults on the Brahmin supremacy, gave rise to a new notion of sin. This new notion of sin, originating from the popular classes,

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<sup>14</sup> The system corresponding to the prestations and counter-prestations by which the castes as a whole are bound together in the village, and which was more or less universal in India. The "jajmani" system is based on a natural rather than on an a monetary economy. A Hindu dictionary defines "jajman" as he who has dharmik (socio-religious) rites performed by Brahmins by giving them fees, land, grain, food, etc. Repayment is in kind, rather than in money. It is not made individually for each particular prestation but is spread over the whole year.

lost its hierarchy-respecting aspect was less legalistic and more cosmic in meaning.

### THE ANTI-CASTE PERIOD AND THE NOTION OF PAPA: 1400-1947

#### ATTACKS ON BRAHMIN SUPREMACY

The Law of Manu and Yajnavalkya remained in effect for a good ten centuries; the laws were emphasized and re-emphasized through the minor law books, the commentaries on Manu and Yajnavalkya, and the various prayascitta digests. All of these interpreted Manu and Yajnavalkya, mitigating their harsh penances, but at the same time maintaining the Brahmin hierarchy.

Gramsci has contended that no religion, even the religion of a dominant class, is homogeneous. Beneath its surface unity, and precisely because of its efforts to maintain that surface unity, there is always a bubbling, underground current of reactionary, if not revolutionary, ideas waiting to spring to the surface. In more ways than one this holds true for the hierarchy-maintaining morality of the dominant Brahmins. While overtly the caste-hierarchy was respected, beneath there was an undercurrent gathering momentum over the years, beginning from the seventh century (with the Tamil bhaktas), but more assuredly and definitely coming to the forefront from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries onward. From that time on, there were a whole series of movements that attacked the Brahmin' superiority

and the caste system. The hierarchy-maintaining notion of sin rested on the caste system. So when the caste system came under attack, the hierarchical notion of sin was the first to go into decline. These attacks on the caste system were mounted by the Bhakti movement, the reform movements, the backward classes movements and the British with their Census taking.

In the section that follows I will describe briefly how these cultural movements reacted against brahmin supremacy, inveighed against the caste system, and progressively broke down the hierarchical notion of sin.

#### The Bhakti Movement

The powerful Bhakti movement of medieval India, was a movement involving the low castes and the poor. Even though its origins dated from the seventh century Tamil singers, it really became an all-India movement and began to flourish around the fourteenth century. The Bhakti writers challenged the hierarchy-maintaining notion of sin by insisting on the love of God as the most important thing in religion, rather than ritualism and caste (Srinivas 1971, p.25). The Bhakti saints preached the "fundamental equality of all religious expressions, held that the dignity of a person depended on his actions and not on his birth, protested against the domination of brahmin priests, and emphasized simple devotion and faith as the means of salvation for one and all" (R.C. Majumdar et al. 1963,

p.44).

Official Hinduism, with the Veda as its sacred book and sole source of infallible wisdom, had become increasingly identified with the caste system, itself originated and buttressed by the highest caste, the Brahmins. Furthermore, it was only the three 'twice' born classes that had access to this saving wisdom. The lowest class, the Shudras, were forbidden all access to the Veda, as were also women and, of course, outcastes. It was then largely to satisfy the needs of these religiously disenfranchised persons that Bhakti devotional trends developed. The Bhakti movement did not care for the absolute sanctity of the Veda and was open to all persons irrespective of caste differences. Because this new type of religion was not confined to the superior castes alone, an extensive literature began to develop in the various vernacular languages of India (Zaehner 1971, p. 12).

According to Thapar, the content of brahminical education, although admirably suited to brahminical purposes, had a restrictive effect on the intellectual tradition. Its medium of instruction was Sanskrit, which by the end of this period, had become a language spoken and read only by the privileged few who had received a formal education. The result was intellectual inbreeding which both isolated and weakened the brahminical tradition. The emerging regional languages were to become the medium of popular expression (Thapar 1966, p. 254).

According to D. S. Sharma, it was the establishment of Muslim power in India, (the conquests of Mahmud of Ghazni and Mahmud of Ghor, paving the way for the Moghul invasion of the fifteenth century) that broke up the unity of the cultural life of the country. The first to suffer was the Sanskrit language. It was around this time, the thirteenth century, that vernacular languages found popular expression all over the country.

Justice Ranade however cites the real and deeper cause:

It was not just a political movement that stirred Maharashtra. The political movement was preceded, and in fact, to some extent caused by a religious and social upheaval which moved the entire population. The religious revival was not Brahmanical in its orthodoxy. It was the work of the masses and not of the upper classes. At its head were poets and saints who sprang from the lower orders of society - tailors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shopkeepers, barbers and even outcastes - more often than Brahmins. The impulse of the time was felt in art, in religion, in the growth of vernacular literature, in the communal freedom of life and in increased self reliance and in toleration (Ranade 1961, p.124).

Not only in Maharashtra and Bengal, but throughout northern India there was an outburst of devotional literature in the vernacular languages, which henceforth became the medium of literary expression. This literature is connected with the names of Ramananda, Kabir, Nanak, Mira Bai, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Tulsi das and Tukaram, Eknath and Namdev. A prominent historian V. Raghavan has stated:

As extensive as the regional spread of the devotional movement, was the spread of the social standing of its

leaders. If Mira was a princess of Rajasthan, Manikkavacaka was a minister of the Tamil court, Namdev was a tailor and Sadhana, a butcher. Dadoo was a cotton ginner, and Sena a barber. Deriving the brotherhood of man from the fatherhood of God, these saint-singers could recognize no differences in social status. Raidas, a cobbler and Kabir, a Muslim weaver, were accepted by the great Brahmin teacher and philosopher, Ramanand. Throughout the centuries the devotional movement has been a great solvent for the exclusive and separatist feelings stemming from the consciousness of social status (Raghavan 1965, pp. 14-15).

Besides the fact of language, Bhakti writings were distinguished by other features. By rejecting the Vedas, Sacred Books for the Brahmins, and book learning as a way of reaching God, they opened the doors to all low status groups and to women (M. Kishwar 1989, p.4). They took for their inspiration the manifold stories of the Epics and the Puranas, chiefly the Bhagavata Purana and the Bhagavad Gita. These books, unlike the Vedas, were far more down-to-earth and written in the metaphor and symbolism of the common people. "The living religion of the Hindu masses is found, better perhaps than in any other text, in the Bhagavata Purana, with its infinite variety...warmly sensuous symbolism and popular imagination" (Fallon 1968, p. 237).

The liberating aspects of Bhakti movements are well known. The Bhaktas asserted the equality of all souls before God, denounced caste discrimination, paid no account to religious authority figures and even suggested that high status and wealth were impediments to finding oneness with God (M. Kishwar 1989, p. 4).



## The Reform Movements

A second major factor that debilitated the caste system and the hierarchy maintaining notion of sin was the Reform Movements of the nineteenth century. All of these movements and institutions were founded with the express intention of reviving a Hinduism that was devoid of caste discrimination. One of the key features of the Brahmo Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohun Roy (1772 -1833), was to purge Hinduism of caste laws and customs that were manifestly evil. The custom that Ram Mohun Roy spent his life trying to eradicate was Sati.<sup>15</sup> Another issue hotly debated by the Brahmo Samaj was the question of whether all members should give up the sacred thread, traditionally worn only by higher caste Hindus, as a kind of symbolic action. A third issue championed by the Brahmo Samaj was the acceptance of inter-caste marriages. Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884), founder of a splinter group called the "New Brahmo Samaj" pressured the government into passing a law in 1872 which sanctioned inter-caste marriages (Farquahar 1967, pp. 43-49).

Another institution that was against the caste system was the Prarthana Samaj, founded in Maharashtra in 1867. One of the chief aims of this institution was social reform,

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<sup>15</sup> The practice of a young Hindu widow immolating herself on the funeral pyre of her husband in compliance with caste laws.

and its fundamental principle, as formulated by one of its greatest members, Judge Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) was: "All men are God's children; therefore they should behave towards each other as brethren without distinction" (Farquhar 1967, p. 76,79).

Still another institution, the Ramakrishna Society, founded by Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), and its greatest spokesman, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) delivered a great blow to the caste system and its evil. Though both of them were Brahmins, they rejected much of the elitism attributed to Brahmins. Ramakrishna, revered as a very religious man, stated openly that he did not believe in sin (meaning caste sin). The Ramakrishna Mission, he founded, carried on humanitarian work (social service and anti-caste work) at various places in India (Sharma 1973, p.145).

Still another reformist movement that tried to break down caste barriers was the Theosophical society with its greatest adherent in India, Annie Besant (1847-1933). During October and November 1913 she delivered a series of lectures in Madras on the depressed classes, women's education, mass education and the caste system.

And finally, Mahatma Gandhi (1862-1948), who was sadly depressed by the treatment handed out to the untouchables, carried out one of the most fervent onslaughts against casteism. He believed that social reform should go hand in hand with political reform and declared his political goal

to be the uplift of the Untouchables, whom he called, 'Harijans' or the 'Children of God.'

The Reform Movements of the nineteenth century, by denouncing the caste system and caste sins, started a tradition that esteemed social service much more than the avoidance of patakas.

It is in this sense that the history of morality in India can be seen as a constant struggle between the assertion of casteism (from the first to the tenth centuries) on the one hand and efforts to eradicate it on the other (sixteenth to the twentieth centuries).

#### The Backward Classes Movement

The backward classes movement, on the one hand, is a movement that revolted against Brahmin supremacy and dominance in all government and educational posts, and on the other hand, a movement to achieve mobility on the part of groups which had lagged behind the Brahmins in Westernization. In India south of the river Godavari, with the exception of Hyderabad and parts of Kerala - the term 'backward' included (until the 1950s) all castes except the Brahmin; in fact, anti Brahminism provided a rallying point for a highly heterogenous group. But the ideological center of the movement was South India, especially Madras city (Srinivas 1971, p. 101-102).

The opposition to Brahmin dominance did not come from the low and oppressed castes but from the leaders of the

powerful, rural dominant castes such as the Kammas and the Reddis of the Telegu country, the Vellals of the Tamil country, and the Nayar of Kerala. These groups were immediately below the Brahmin in caste status, with a position of social prestige among non-Brahmin ranks and with a relatively high English literacy rate (E. Irschick 1964, p. 113).

The Backward classes movement developed an ideology of its own. Speculation identified the Brahmins with the Aryans and Tamil with the original Dravidian language. Thus, it was concluded, that the Brahmin invader had brought the evil institution of caste into India and some of the writings of the law-giver Manu were quoted to point out the injustices of the caste system. If the historically suppressed sections of society were to obtain their share of the new opportunities, they would have to be granted some concessions and privileges. This would be discriminating against Brahmins, but it would be infinitesimal compared to what the oppressed castes had suffered for centuries. Present day Brahmins should pay for their ancestors' sins. This was roughly the theory of social justice (Srinivas 1971, p. 105).

An important strand of the Backward Classes movement was the Self-Respect movement, formulated by Ramaswamy Naicker, though the seeds of the movement go back to Jyoti Rao Phule in 1873, a leader from the gardener caste of

poona. The movement was pronouncedly anti-Brahmin and encouraged non-Brahmins not to call upon Brahmin priests to perform weddings and other rituals (Srinivas 1971, p. 105).

The movement, which eventually gave rise to political parties in Tamilnadu, played an important role in weakening the caste stronghold and correspondingly the hierarchical notion of sin.

### The British and the Census

The final agent that militated against the caste system and its definitions of social control was the British government. The foundations for modernization and Westernization were laid by the establishment of British rule over India, and the consequences, direct and indirect, which flowed from it. In the first place, the new technology brought by the British made possible the effective administrative and political integration of the entire subcontinent. The establishment of schools and colleges for imparting modern education, and the institution of law courts, both of which, in theory, were irrespective of caste and religion. The study of Western literature, political thought, history and law made the Indian elite sensitive to such new values as the equality of all men and women before the law and civil rights. European missionary attacks on untouchability, and caste, and missionary-run schools, orphanages and hospitals all played their part in the social reforms which have been introduced in the last

130 years in India and in creating an ideological and moral climate favorable to Westernization.

Perhaps the best expression of the break-up of the caste system and its corresponding philosophy was the census operations. The tendency on the part of the castes to take advantage of the census record to claim a higher status became widespread with the census of 1901. This tendency increased as the years went by so that O'Malley has recorded that at the time of the 1911 census:

There was a general idea that the object of the census is not to show the number of persons belonging to each caste, but to fix the relative positions of different castes and to deal with questions of social superiority. In 1911 hundreds of petitions were received from different castes - their weight alone amounts to one and a half maunds, requesting that they be placed higher up in the order of precedence. (Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Sikkim Census Report, 1911, p. 440)

In the 1931 Census, 148 castes made 175 claims, each caste making at least one claim and 23 making more than one. There were 33 claims to Brahmin status, 80 to Kshatriya status, 15 to Vaishya status, and 37 were new names (Srinivas 1971, p. 99) Over the years, the tendency became so pronounced that the British Census commissioner eliminated the column about caste (Donald Smith 1963, p. 304.).

Earlier it was seen that the very basis of sin in the Brahminic revival period were the caste divisions. It was precisely these caste divisions that were being strongly criticized by the above four movements. As a result they eroded the Brahmin notion of pataka and the laws of Manu,

which upheld the hierarchy for several centuries. Both, pataka and the laws of Manu, went into decline and so did the hierarchical or caste-based notion of sin. The Indian penal code was enacted in 1957 replacing the age-old Laws of Manu. The modern word for sin is now 'papa', given prominence since the Bhakti period, and now used by one and all, rich and poor, upper caste or lower caste.

#### PAPA OR THE MODERN NOTION OF SIN

It was the Bhakti writers who re-instated the term papa for the notion of sin. Papa was an original Sanskrit word (Rg.VIII, 61,11; Rg. X 10,12) but hardly stressed throughout the period of Brahminical literature. From the sixteenth century onwards papa becomes the favorite expression for the modern Hindu authors, so much so that it replaces the Sanskrit word pataka. While papa is currently the synonym for sin in all vernacular languages, the Sanskrit word pataka has faded into oblivion.

The notion of papa in Bhakti writings is very general, with no individual sins being named. While the Brahminical law codes were the result of law schools, making very clear legal classifications of the different sins and exacting punishments for each of them, Bhakti literature was mystical and devotional in style. The Bhakti poets spoke about sin in general. None of the poets make any comparison between sins, nor do they speak of the relative gravity of some types of

sins over other. Sin is spoken of in terms of a general attitude (Lele 1981, p.1-15). One of the greatest Maharashtraian Bhakti saints was Tukaram, a Shudra. Tukaram's writings was eminently mystical but the same general understanding of sin prevails. In one of his poems he writes:

Ah, do not cast on me  
 the guilt of mine iniquity.  
 My countless sins I, Tuka, say  
 Upon thy loving heart I lay.  
 I am a mass of sin  
 Thou art all purity. (Organ 1974, p. 330)

One of the most celebrated of Bhakti poets in northern India, Tulsidas, devotes a whole section on the sin of Social Duty in his 'Ramcaritamanas' (Babineau 1979, p. 101 ff) but otherwise Bhakti literature was content to emphasize love, charity and the equality of all persons before God.

A second characteristic of the notion of papa, given prominence first during the Bhakti period, but emphasized since the Reform movements, is the new interpretation given to the idea of karma<sup>16</sup> and rebirth.

The doctrine of Karma and Rebirth is very ancient,

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<sup>16</sup> Another very important principle of Hinduism is the law of karma according to which every action has its consequences. Thus, the present existence is shaped and determined by the deeds of a previous existence, which itself was the result of the deeds of a prior existence, and so on. Likewise one's present sinful actions have a repercussion on one's future life (R. Antoine, 1964, p. 113).



dating back from Rig Vedic times (Walker 1968 p. 529) but, bhakti and the anti-caste movements give a whole new slant to the idea of rebirth and karma. Brahminic writers, like Manu, understood karma in very caste-oriented terms. Thus, if one was born a Shudra, one could not change one's caste situation. All that remained to be done was to fulfil the duties of the Shudra Caste and then in the next world one's caste situation would improve. In this way, one hoped to go up the ladder, stage by stage, according to the inexorable law of Karma, and eventually become a brahmin before attaining moksha or salvation.

The writings of the Bhaktas and the anti-caste reformers mitigated this Brahminic doctrine of Karma (Walker 1968, p. 530) by stating that each person had a store of papa and punya; every virtuous deed (punya) and every sin (papa), leave their hidden impress on the soul, throughout this present life and serves to identify the individual in the future life. Therefore if one collects sufficient punya (good karma) then one can come directly closer to God in the next life without going through all the caste stages. Karma is thus seen to be a cosmic law of debit and credit for good and evil.

In this sense, the notion of papa also includes the connotation of karmic evil. Every individual's sins and good works are carried over from the previous life, just as the sins and good works performed in this life will be carried

over to the next. By stressing the individual implications of karma, the Bhakti and anti-caste movements considerably weakened the caste or social implications.

I showed earlier that the notion of pataka, used predominantly during the early centuries and Middle Ages, had two facets. On the one hand it was hierarchy-maintaining with its strong caste-based content, on the other hand it protected the public good with its strong social content. When the caste system came under heavy attack in the modern period, the hierarchy-maintaining facet was lost, but the new word papa retained the public good content.

Further, in the Brahminic revival period, karma and rebirth were understood as going up the caste ladder, from Shudra to Vaishya, to Kshatriya to Brahmin. In the modern period, with caste under attack, this caste-understanding was also shed and the new, simplified, papa-punya scheme was incorporated into the understanding of sin. The term papa now has its karmic or cosmic denotation, without the caste-based interpretation.

The purpose of this last section was to establish how historical-cultural developments can have implications for the notion of sin. Not only did they erode the caste-based notion of sin or pataka, but they laid the basis for a new notion of sin (papa), a product of popular culture, which is less legalistic, more general and not based on caste.

It needs to be stressed that the above historical

developments did not completely stamp out the caste mentality in India. While a caste-mentality still prevails, what appears to have been eradicated is the ideal of brahmin supremacy with the attendant social control devices that supported it - certain legal codes, definitions of what is wrong/right and prescriptions of punishment. These latter have gone into decline and with them the hierarchy-maintaining notion of sin.

The above discussion has demonstrated that when the power structure is under attack, it is the historical-cultural variables that are the key to understanding notions of sin and morality in a particular society.

Summing up, I might say that the social history of sin in Hinduism, revealed four related characteristics. The first development was the cosmic notion of sin, conditioned by the morphological structure of Indian agricultural society. In Hinduism's strong accent on truth, assimilated from the heterodoxies of Buddhism and Jainism, one sees the interaction of morphological and historical-cultural variables.

In the second part of the historical review, the interaction of stratification and historico-cultural variables was evident in the way in which the class of Brahmins defined their caste understanding of sin. Belonging to the uppermost rung in the hierarchy, they saw to it that their notion of sin was hierarchy-respecting. However, being

part of that same society (and not living apart from it) they also emphasized sins against the public good. Their form of control and power was exercised in an institutional manner, through the enactment of legal codes stressing social duty.

Finally, the historico-cultural variables are prominent in the reactionary Bhakti and anti-caste movements with their development of the idea of papa. When the power of the Brahmins came under attack, the caste-maintaining notion of sin dwindled in importance and the general, societal notion of sin, which arose from the popular culture and stressed the public good, came back into prominence.

With this review of the social history of sin in Hinduism, I have concluded the first or historical part of my study. In the next two chapters, I introduce the results of my sample survey to see whether the findings of the historical study, about the notion and types of sin stressed in the Catholic and Hindu religious traditions, are confirmed by the responses of present-day Hindus and Catholics of the city of Bombay.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE SURVEY: METHODOLOGY AND PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Having reviewed the social history of sin in Catholicism and Hinduism, I found that Catholicism has a personalistic and casuistic view of sin and lays an emphasis on sins against sexuality and faith. Hinduism, on the other hand, has a cosmic and impersonal view of sin and lays emphasis on sins against truth and against the public good.

Further, I found that the main variables that gave rise to these distinctive conceptions of sin were the morphological, the stratificational and the historical-cultural variables, the last category being the interaction of morphological and stratificational variables with historical and cultural factors.

In this chapter I introduce the results of my empirical survey. In the survey I considered samples of Hindus and Catholics in the city of Bombay and examined their notions of sin to see if they confirmed the results of my historical study. Further I verified whether the same category of variables which played a part in shaping the historical definitions of sin, plays a similar part in influencing the thinking of contemporary Hindus and

Catholics, viz., the morphological, stratificational and historical-cultural variables.

Before I outline my methodology and a profile of the respondents of my survey, I sketch a brief history of Catholicism in India and in Bombay. The sketch will show that Catholicism, even though its numerical adherents are comparatively small, is a well established religion in India, dating from several centuries, very much a part of the overall culture of India, and capable of being compared to an older, entrenched religion like Hinduism.

### HISTORICAL SKETCHES

#### Catholicism in India

The history of Catholicism in India began in the second century, when St. Thomas (or one of his disciples) came over from Syria to the lower Western coast of India (today Kerala) and founded Catholic communities. These communities were of Syrian Rite and are called the Malabara and Malankara Churches, but they kept in touch with Rome and today have blossomed into one of the strongest centers of Christianity in India.

The other branch of Catholicism in India consists of the Latin Rite communities, which had their origins much later, in the sixteenth century. These Catholic communities, founded by the Portuguese missionaries, were settled predominantly along the upper Western coast of India,

specifically in Goa, Mangalore and Bombay and a small group along the southern coast of India, in Tamilnadu. Because of portuguese and later British influences, the communities from Goa, Mangalore and Bombay are somewhat westernized in language and culture, whereas the communities in Kerala and Tamilnad kept closer to their own vernacular language and traditions.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Latin branch of the Roman Catholic Church established new communities among the caste people of Andhra Pradesh. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries more Catholic and Christian communities were established among the tribals of Bihar and Assam, and most recently, in the twentieth century, Christian communities have sprung up even among the scheduled castes and tribes in several parts of India, specially in the Gangetic plain (Gispert Sauch 1983, p. 229).

With their extended network of schools, colleges and hospitals, the Catholic communities of India, both Latin and Syrian, are now significant agents in the educational, social and medical services offered in many regions of the country, even though they consist of only 1.7 % of the total population of India (See Table 1).

Table 1  
Population of India by Religion

	<u>Number in millions</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Buddhists	4.7	0.7
Catholics	11.4	1.7
Other Christians	4.8	0.7
Jains	3.2	0.5
Muslims	75.5	11.4
Sikhs	13.1	2.0
Hindus	549.8	82.6
Others	2.8	0.4
Total	665.3	100.0

(Census of India, 1981, Statistical Outline 1986)

### History of Catholicism in Bombay

The first big Catholic communities were established on the upper Western coast with the coming of the Portuguese. The Portuguese first established themselves in Goa in 1510, but in 1534 the islands of Southern Bombay, Salcette (Northern Bombay) and Bassein were ceded to the Portuguese by the Bahadur of Gujarat. In this very year the diocese of Goa was created and the whole of the western coast around Bombay became a part of that diocese. Missionary activity in and around Bombay commenced from 1534 onwards. The Portuguese missionaries were Franciscans, Jesuits (including St. Francis Xavier), Dominicans and Augustinians; they converted a number of people along the fertile coastal areas and baptized them Catholic. By the end of 1600 there were



approximately 30 churches in the area in and around Bombay.

Portuguese influence was supplanted by British influence in 1665, when the island of Bombay passed into British hands. This was the result of the Marriage Treaty of 1661 between Charles II of England and the Infanta of Portugal, whereby Bombay was ceded to the British as part of the marriage dowry. The Portuguese sponsored missionaries were expelled and now the British asked the Carmelite priests to take over the care of the Catholic communities. It was still under British influence in 1886 when Bombay became an archdiocese with its own archbishop.

After Independence in 1947, the Archdiocese of Bombay continued to grow in size. Aside from the Latin rite Catholics who were the original inhabitants of Bombay, several Syrian rite communities too established themselves in Bombay and today there is even an Eparchate of the Syrian rite. At present the Archdiocese of Bombay is the largest diocese in India, consisting of 561,308 Catholics, with 177 schools and 126 parish units, 550 priests and 1526 religious sisters. Just as the city of Bombay is a microcosm of India, the Archdiocese of Bombay is also a mixture of Catholics, Latin and Syrian, Westernized and non-Westernized (Ratus 1982, p. 3,4)

Since the setting of my study and the respondents interviewed were from the city of Bombay, a brief description of the city and the selected neighborhoods is

relevant.

### The City of Bombay

With a population of 8,243,000 (Census of India, 1981) the city of Greater Bombay is the second largest in India; It is the heart of the textile industry and is the commercial nerve center of the country, with the largest concentration of industries and one of the busiest natural harbors in the Eastern hemisphere. The city is overcrowded with approximately 300 migrants moving into the city each day.

Originally, the city consisted of two islands, Bombay and Salcette, joined to the mainland, but today the two islands have merged, and are now called southern and northern Bombay. Running through the length of the city like its veins are three busy railway lines, Western Railway, Central Railway and the Harbour Branch, carrying millions of commuters to and from the city each day. A notable feature of the city of Bombay are the 'illegal' squatter settlements that have sprung up all along the railways lines. About 2 million people reside in these make-shift homes. Most of these people are rural immigrants, who come to Bombay in search of jobs and are not registered with the Municipality. Even though the neighborhoods are demarcated by municipal wards, the records contained in these wards are sadly outdated. Hence, the only way to develop a sample of the

population is not from the lists of the Municipal wards, but actually going from house to house.

Having described the setting where the study took place, I now discuss the methodology of my survey.

## METHODOLOGY

### Objectives of the Survey

The objectives of my survey then are to find out, first of all, what notion of sin Catholics have and what notion of sin Hindus have. Secondly, to discover what types of sins Catholics lay stress on and what types of sins are stressed by Hindus. Finally, do Hindus have an idea of original sin as Catholics have? The purpose of these questions is to find out if the historical religious tradition made a significant difference in the Hindu and Catholic thinking about sin.

Another whole series of questions tries to find out if the community structure one hails from plays an important part in forming one's conception of sin. I was interested in discovering if people from a rural community have a different way of thinking about sin than people from an urban community. Likewise, if persons who grew up in pre-Industrialized India, have different concepts of what is right and wrong than persons who grew up in a modern-day Industrialized city. Sociological theory shows that socio-economic strata play an important part in defining one's

ideas including one's ideas of sin. Hence, the survey tests whether persons hailing from a higher socio-economic strata - with higher income and higher education - have different ideas of sin than those who hail from a lower socio-economic strata.

Ultimately, my study will attempt to determine if historical-cultural factors are more significant than the morphological and socio-economic factors.

### Design

Since in my study I am essentially looking for patterns of thought and attitudes, I adopted the sample survey method. I compared groups of Hindus with groups of Catholics, essentially people with two different religious backgrounds, to ascertain what they think about sin. My survey method also examines to what extent the independent socio-structural variables play a part in a group's thinking about sin. The comparative sample investigates whether different religious traditions, different cultural cohorts, different socio-geographic communities, different educational and income groups have differing concepts of sin and whether they stress only certain types of sins as opposed to others.

### Scope of the Study

The study concentrates on communities of Hindus and

Catholics in the city of Bombay. I chose Bombay, first of all, because I am familiar with the neighborhoods in the city, and more importantly because Bombay is a microcosm of India. Not only does one find all kinds of religions, but all types of income groups and ethnic communities of India can be found in Bombay. Being heavily commercial and industrial, the city has a very large number of rural immigrants that keep pouring in from all parts of India (The Examiner 1988, p.1), Bombay has become a mosaic of all cultures, traditions and religions that exist across the length and breadth of the country.

My respondents were all above 18 years of age. Eighteen is the voting age in India, the age of political maturity, and that is the age, when persons have a fairly good understanding of their limitations, of sin and its social consequences. For most Catholics in India, by this age they are already baptized and confirmed and for most traditional Hindus too, this is the age when they have already performed their upanayana (initiation) ceremony.

### The Neighborhoods Selected

The neighborhoods of Bombay are not segregated. Besides Hindus and Christians there are also people from other religions like Muslims, Parsis and Buddhists living in these areas. But while there is heterogeneity within neighborhoods, there is a good deal of homogeneity between

neighborhoods. It could be said that while each neighborhood is a heterogenous mix of different types, the different neighborhoods are similar to each other in composition. For my survey I selected two neighborhoods of Bombay, Girgaum and Goregaon. I had lived in both these areas for several years and am very familiar with their cosmopolitan and demographic composition. Girgaum, is an old established neighborhood, situated in the southern part of Bombay near the downtown area. Goregaon is in the northern part, on the outskirts of the city<sup>1</sup>, and is relatively newer, having sprung up about 25 years ago. It is therefore more open to migration from the rural areas. In 1960 most of this area was swamp land used only for buffalo grazing, but now, within the short space of 25 years, it has become extremely congested, with shops, houses and people. (See map in Appendix F)

#### Method of Data Collection

For my data collection I used a questionnaire for those who were educated and a face-to-face interview schedule for those who were uneducated (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was first pretested among a sample of 20

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<sup>1</sup> According to the old definition of city boundaries, the city was smaller, and made up only of the island of Bombay; Goregaon, in the island of Salcette, was outside the limits. But now that the two islands have merged into the one city of Greater Bombay, according to the new definition, Goregaon is just inside the outskirts.

Indians in Chicago, 10 Catholic and 10 Hindu. It was then revised and the final copy of the questionnaire sent to Bombay. The actual field work was conducted by seminarians from St. Pius College, Bombay, who went from house to house, in the neighborhoods selected and tried to locate their respondents according to a pre-established quota. In all cases the anonymity of the respondent was safeguarded. The questionnaire was originally drafted in English, but an authentic and close translation was used for those respondents that spoke Hindi or Marathi.

The questionnaire had both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions included a list of actions and behaviours each with a Likert type scale from very strongly sinful to not sinful at all. Some questions, where the respondent was expected to give his/her own views were open-ended. Thus, questions on the definition of sin, the sense of sin in the modern world and beliefs about original sin were open-ended.

### Sampling

The sampling method used is a combination of judgmental and quota sampling. Returned questionnaires were monitored and, where necessary, house-to-house screening was done, with the idea of obtaining comparable quotas for economic status and type of social community. The interviewers were asked to make a rough estimate of the

economic status from the type of dwelling - hutment, chawl,<sup>2</sup> tenement, flat or house, the last two categories being residences of the upper economic status. My intended quota was 35 percent from flats and houses and the remaining 65 percent from low and middle income groups, i.e., from tenements, chawls or hutments.

Another category was type of social community. My intended quota was at least 25 percent (about 90 respondents) from among those who have recently come to live in the city of Bombay, within the last 5 or 6 months. I was aware that these rural respondents would be very difficult to locate. Many of them are squatters on illegal land and are very frightened of being interviewed for fear that the interviewers are government officials planning to relocate them. Therefore I did not expect to get too many of them. By means of a screening preview, the interviewers were supposed to ask two questions: first, how long have you been living in the city of Bombay and second, where did you spend the first ten years of your life. Quite often interviewers failed to elicit both answers. As a result, not everything went according to plan and only 50 rural persons were interviewed. Thus the sample is biased in favor of the urban residents. However, I did not make an attempt to get large numbers for the simple reason that I was not looking

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<sup>2</sup> One or two living rooms without self-contained sanitation facilities.



for universal generalizations; I was looking more for a map of attitudes, for patterns of thinking.

Data was collected over a period of six months from November 1988 to April 1989. Ultimately 369 respondents were selected to provide 175 Hindus and 194 Catholics. There were two problems in the collection of data. One is that I had to monitor the questionnaires from the United States while the actual data was being collected in Bombay. Second, the interviewers were Catholics and found it easier to enter the homes and get responses from Catholics than from Hindus.

#### Dependent and Independent Variables

The Dependent variable: The dependent variable is the notion of sin or wrongdoing. Aware that the notion of sin could have different connotations in Catholicism and in Hinduism, I looked for a definition that is as broad as possible and at the same time as simple as possible. Hence, for the purposes of my study sin is defined as moral wrongdoing or any action or behaviour that goes against a moral norm. In Hindi or Marathi the closest translation would be the word 'papa' (Greek popoi) which is found in the Vedas itself and is now the most commonly-used word in all the vernacular languages (M. Smith 1983, p.126).

The notion of sin however can be understood in two ways. At a general level, it can be understood as a broad

characterization of the relationship/rupture with God. In this sense, the understanding of sin can be personalistic or cosmic-societal, casuistic or non-casusitic. These were the classifications I used to categorize the different descriptions of sin given by the respondents in the open-ended questionnaire.

A personalistic sense of sin describes sin as a personal offence against God, a breaking up of an I-Thou relationship, an insult, injury or 'slap in the face' to God. It presupposes a transcendent, though personal, relationship with God.

One of the possible features of a personalistic notion of sin is a sense of casuistry (Gaffney 1983, p.6). Casuistry is an understanding by which the individual feels himself/herself indicted in the "private court of conscience" (by God) and the emphasis is on how grievous the sin was, how ingrained the motives and how much was the guilt. A respondent is described as having a 'casuistic' notion if he states that he/she believes strongly in the qualitative distinction between mortal and venial sins, actual and potential sins, sins of thought and sins of action (Sidgwick 1931, pp.151-153). He/she would not only mark wide differences between the two kinds of actions, but would also qualify his/her answers with conditions and phrases like "it depends".

A cosmic understanding of sin, on the other hand, is

conceived of as a disharmony with Nature, a going-against the natural rhythm, a breaking of the laws of nature and of society. There is no concern here as to whether the action in question constitutes a personal offence. The force of obligation here is 'prudential' or 'purely societal'. It presupposes a pantheistic notion of God. One of the features of a cosmic understanding of sin is the societal aspect. A societal notion of sin is an understanding by which the individual feels that he/she has somehow harmed society and its members. The emphasis is on the harm done to society and he/she is now "fearful" of the rebounding effects.

At the general level, I also asked respondents what were the authoritative sources that told them what was right and wrong. Furthermore, by means of open-ended questions, I probed whether or not they believed in original sin.

Original sin is understood as an underlying and universal condition of sinfulness in which all persons participate. Original sin is believed to be an inherent state of sinfulness that has beset all humanity since the sin of the first parents (Gaffney 1971, pp.4-5). Thus, a respondent who states that he believes in this "universal condition of concupiscence" as the cause of all sinful actions would be considered as believing in original sin.

At a specific level, particular categories or types of sins can be accentuated. A factor analysis was conducted on

the 37 actions or behaviours rated by the respondents. Initially I had six factors and finally reduced them to four factors.<sup>3</sup> The two factors discarded, because of low communalities, were sins against self and family and sins against life and property. There were approximately 5 or 6 actions or behaviours that loaded on the remaining 4 factors. Through this process of factor analysis, the following types of sins were classified:

1. sexual sins
2. sins of untruth
3. sins against faith
4. sins against the public good

For each of these four sin types, respondents had a total score. These scores on sexuality, on truth, on faith and on public good are my dependent quantitative variables.

The Independent Variables: The main Independent variables

- are:
1. the religion one was brought up in
  2. the geographic setting of one's community (rural or urban)
  3. the socio-economic status of one's group.
  4. the cultural influences peculiar to a particular age group.

Other independent variables are gender, marital status, religiosity or faithfulness to the practices of one's religion and type of family upbringing, whether strongly disciplined or not.

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<sup>3</sup> More about this in the next chapter.

### Defining the Terms of the Independent Variables:

1. The most important independent variable is the religious tradition: This refers to the religious tradition one was brought up in. It did not matter whether one is practising one's religion or not (that was considered under a separate variable). The two types of tradition considered are: Hinduism and Roman Catholicism. Thus, the reformed offshoots of Hinduism, like Sikhism or Jainism, were not considered. It did not matter what sect the Hindu respondent belongs to, whether Vaishnavite or Shaivite or Durga Kali.<sup>4</sup> Similarly for Catholicism, only the Roman rite Catholics were considered and not the Syrian rite Catholics. It is expected that notions and categories of sin among Hindus and Catholics are deeply ingrained because of the historical religious tradition.
2. Another independent variable is the cultural cohort. Age is considered as a cohort variable rather than in the chronological sense. Srinivas (1971, chp.2) has described the tremendous changes in politics, technology, industrialization and Westernization that

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<sup>4</sup> Since the Middle Ages, Hindus have been divided into three main devotional sects, Vaishnavite, Shaivite and the Shakti sects; worshipping God under the manifestation of Vishnu (or Krishna), Shiva or Kali.

took place in the cities of India in the decade 1940-1950. With the birth of the Five Year Plans, India attempted to include itself among the industrialized countries of the world and, in the cities especially, the schools, media, business and family institutions underwent metamorphic changes. Hence, I decided to consider all those under 50 (who grew up after 1940) as having been exposed to different cultural influences than those who were more than 50 years of age.

3. A third important independent variable is the: type of social community one belongs to. When Durkheim spoke of how morality can be shaped by the social organization of the community, he was thinking primarily of mechanical and organic communities. But the same distinction was visualized by other sociologists in terms of rural-urban differences (Wirth 1969, pp.165-169). Another sociologist, Gellner, in distinguishing between a set of characteristics belonging to Christianity and a set of characteristics appropriate to Islam, suggests that the characteristics of Christianity were more favored by a rural setting, while those of Islam were more favored by an urban setting (Gellner 1969, p.13-31). These studies suggest that the

rural-urban typology, which is still valid in India, is useful for understanding differences in religious thinking. Accordingly, I classify my respondents in two ways: a. those that have lived in the city of Bombay for at least 10 years and b. those that lived in the rural areas all their lives and had just arrived in Bombay within the last 5-6 months.

4. Another independent variable is socio-economic status or the stratification variable. This was measured by the variables of income and education. Originally, I had intended to combine these two variables into one, but since I found that the data showed a slightly different pattern, I left them as separate variables:
  - a. Income as measured by the monthly salary
  - b. Education as measured by the number of years spent in schooling.
5. Another variable is the respondent's religiosity or faithfulness to the practice of religious duties. The indicators considered under this variable are: the number of times the respondent prayed during the day, read the Holy Books, went to the temple or Church. I expected that respondents who were faithful to religious practices would have a more pronounced sense

of sin, i.e., higher scores on the respective sin categories.

6. A variable that I expected to show big differences was the strongly-disciplined type of family. For this variable I defined a four point scale, asking respondents to look back on their childhood and state if they were afraid of their parents, were beaten by their parents and had most of their decisions made by their parents, especially the choice of their profession. To each item the respondent had a range of response items to choose from ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. I expect that persons hailing from strongly disciplined families would have a sharper consciousness of sin and therefore higher scores on sins against truth, sexuality, faith and public good.

### PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The total number of questionnaires returned were 369, 209 from Goregaon and 160 from Girgaum. To obtain a profile of the respondents I gathered information on the following variables: religion, age, gender, marital status, education, income, geographic origin, religiosity and type of family upbringing. In the ensuing pages I describe my respondents according to these variables.



Table 2Percent Distribution of Respondents by Religion<sup>5</sup>

Hindus	47.4	(175)
Catholics	52.6	(194)
Total	100.0	(369)

There are slightly more Catholics than Hindus in my sample, 52.6 percent are Catholics and 47.4 percent are Hindus. This was because the administrators of the questionnaire, being Catholics themselves, found it relatively easier to enter the homes of Catholic respondents.<sup>6</sup> Religion is my historical-cultural variable. My argument is that if there are differences between Hindus and Catholics in their way of thinking it is mainly because of the differences imbedded in the respective historical traditions.

From a cursory glance at Table 3, it is clear that there is a large number of young people in my samples of Hindus and Catholics, 54 percent of Hindus and 53 percent of Catholics are under 30. This however mirrors the configuration of the overall population of India as the last column in Table 3 shows (Census of 1981, Statistical Outline

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<sup>5</sup> Actual numbers within parentheses.

<sup>6</sup> The originally desired sample size was supposed to be 180 Hindus and 180 Catholics, but after the 180 Catholics were met, I felt that there would be no harm in a slight oversampling of Catholics.

Table 3Respondents by Age

<u>Age in years</u>	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>	<u>India %</u>
18 - 20	15 (27)	14 (28)	15.91
21 - 30	39 (69)	39 (75)	37.41
31 - 40	26 (45)	22 (42)	23.17
41 - 50	12 (20)	14 (27)	13.60
51 +	8 (14)	11 (22)	9.91
Total	100 (175)	100 (194)	100.00

1986). Studying the samples of Hindus and Catholics, it is apparent that although they are not perfectly matched samples, they are comparable.

My purpose in selecting age as a variable is twofold. Firstly, to show that my sample is representative of the overall population of India and secondly, to contrast the differences between two cohorts, the pre-1940 cohort and the post-1940 cohort. I am considering age in this context not in the chronological sense, but in the sense of a culturally-defined cohort. Since the 1940s, India experienced a series of successive dramatic changes, the Second World War, Independence and Industrialization (Srinivas 1971, chp.2). and persons, who grew up before 1940, underwent vastly different cultural influences than those who grew up after 1940. Hence, it does make sense to divide my sample into two distinct cultural cohorts. However, since I had a very small percentage of respondents over 50 years of age, 8 percent for Hindus and 11 percent

for Catholics, my results are to be interpreted with caution.

Table 4  
Respondents by Gender

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>	<u>India %</u>
Males	55 (96)	50 (97)	51.67
Females	45 (79)	50 (97)	48.32
Total	100 (175)	100 (194)	100.00

The overall population of India has a male-female ratio of 517 males to every 483 females (Census of India 1981, Statistical Outline of India, 1981). Although there are no precise statistics for the city of Bombay, it can be expected that, because of the attraction for jobs, the male ratio is slightly higher than for females and this is adequately reflected in my sample of Hindus. In my Catholic sample however the male-female ratio is almost equal and this does constitute a slight difference from the Hindu sample. However, the difference is not very great and the two samples are still comparable.

Table 5  
Respondents by Marital Status

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
Married	51 (89)	44 (85)
Single	46 (81)	52 (101)
Other (sep,div,wid)	3 (5)	4 (8)
Total	100 (175)	100 (194)

The larger number of single persons in the Catholic sample, 52 percent as compared to only 46 percent for Hindus, is reflective of the overall Catholic population. Catholics do have many more cases of love marriage as compared to Hindus, among whom the vast majority of marriages are arranged. As a result, Catholics are liable to remain single for a longer period of time, until they find suitable partners. Since the average age of marriage is higher for Catholics than for Hindus, there are more single people among the Catholic youth. For the overall population of India, the age of marriage is 22 for males and 18 for females (Census of India 1981, Statistical Outline 1986), for a sample of Catholics in Bombay it is 26 for males and 21 for females (Parish Records, O.L. of Victories, 1986-1988).

Table 6

Respondents by Years of Education

<u>Years of Education</u>	<u>Hindus</u>		<u>Catholics</u>	
Less than high school	27	(47)	32	(62)
High school and some college	39	(67)	47	(90)
College graduates and more	34	(59)	21	(40)
Total	100	(173)	100	(192)

Though the overall population of India has a literacy rate of only 36 percent, my samples have a much higher

number of educated people. This imbalance is because it was necessary to have respondents who could read the questionnaire. This is no doubt a limitation of the study and to that extent must be taken into consideration before a generalization is made.

The same imbalance is noted in the income variable. As observed in Table 7, there is a preponderance of middle and upper income people in both samples, as compared with the general population of India. This is because I had limited my sample to those who had a working knowledge of English and to know English one has to be educated, and being educated, one generally would hail from a middle or high income bracket. The only exception was the rural sample, most of whom were interviewed in the vernacular.

Table 7

Respondents by Income

<u>Income level</u> <sup>7</sup>	<u>Hindus</u>		<u>Catholics</u>	
Low (less than Rs.1000 per month)	12	(20)	28	(53)
Middle (Rs.1000 - 3000 per month)	45	(76)	37	(71)
High (more than Rs.3001 per month)	43	(72)	35	(67)
Total	100	(168)	100	(191)

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<sup>7</sup> Rupees 15.00 = \$ 1.00 at the present rate of exchange, Oct.1989

Education and income were my socio-economic or stratification variables. I expected to see significant differences, especially in scores on sexual sins, between persons coming from high income, high educational backgrounds and persons hailing from low income, low educational backgrounds. I would expect that the high income, high educational brackets were more concerned with sins of sexuality than the low income, low education categories.

As a measure of my morphological variable I used the extent of rural-urban exposure. Since all my respondents were residents of Bombay, I asked them two questions. The first question was about their formative influence or place of origin, whether rural or urban. The second question was about the number of years they had spent in the city of Bombay, whether less than 6 months, between 6 months to ten years and more than ten years. By combining their responses I was able to arrive at three categories:<sup>8</sup> a group that had very little urban exposure, a group that had mixed exposure

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Less than 6 months in Bombay but rural origin	rural
Less than 6 months in Bombay but urban origin	
Between 6 mts to 10 yrs in Bombay but rural origin	
Between 6 mts to 10 yrs in Bombay and urban origin	mixed
More than 10 yrs in Bombay but rural origin	
More than 10 yrs in Bombay and urban origin	urban

and a group that had a intense urban exposure. The results are shown in table 8.

Table 8

Respondents by Place of Origin and Years Lived in Bombay

<u>Years lived in Bombay</u>	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
Less than 6 months in Bombay and rural formative influence	8 (14)	18 (35)
6 months to 10 yrs in Bombay mixed formative influence	15 (25)	7 (14)
More than 10 yrs in Bombay and urban formative influence	77 (133)	75 (145)
Total	100 (172)	100 (194)

For the purpose of comparing and polarizing rural and urban culture, I eliminated the second or mixed category and retained the two extreme categories.

There is a very small sampling of the first category: respondents with rural exposure. They numbered 49 in all, 14 Hindus and 35 Catholics. The category of those with intense urban exposure were 278 in all, 147 Hindus and 145 Catholics. From these 278 I picked a small systematic random sample of 49 so as to have similar and matching comparisons with the rural group. The final grouping is

recorded in table 9:

Table 9  
Respondents by Rural-Urban Exposure

	<u>Hindus</u>		<u>Catholics</u>	
Mostly rural exposure	10	(14)	20	(35)
Mostly urban exposure	90	(133)	80	(145)
Total	100	(147)	100	(180)

Besides the information on the demographic variables, I also collected information on two other independent variables, religious practice and type of family upbringing.

Religious practice is considered an important variable in determining one's thinking about sin. It is commonly believed that if a person practices his or her religious duties faithfully, it is more likely that the notion of sin will play a greater part in his/her thinking than if he/she does not practice religious duties.

To determine the extent of their religiosity, respondents were asked three questions: whether they prayed and how frequently, whether they went to the church or temple and how frequently, and finally whether they read their Sacred Books and how often. The close-ended answers ranged from several times during the day to never.

Tables 10 through 12 show that Catholics are slightly more assiduous in their religious practices than Hindus. The



## RELIGIOUS PRACTICES (Percentages only)

Table 10Frequency of Visits to Church or Temple

	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
Once a week	30.6	66.7
Once a month	12.1	26.6
Occasionally	46.2	5.2
Once a year	4.6	1.0
Never	6.4	0.5

Table 11Frequency of Reading Holy Books

	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
Everyday	13.8	13.6
Several times a week	5.7	4.7
Once a week	7.5	3.7
Occasionally	51.7	63.9
Never	21.3	14.1

Table 12Frequency of Prayer Times

	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
Several times a day	48.6	65.5
Once a day	15.4	12.4
Several times a week	6.9	6.2
Once a week	2.9	5.2
Occasionally	18.9	7.7
Never	7.5	3.1

percentage of Catholics who go to Church once a week is double that of Hindus who frequent their temple once a week. This is understandable because for Catholics to miss Mass on Sunday is traditionally understood as a sin against the third commandment, while there is no such prohibition for Hindus. With regard to reading of the Sacred Books, 14 percent of Catholics and 21 percent of Hindus do not read them at all. This data was confirmed by one more question on belief in God. I found that while 7 percent of Hindus are agnostic and 4 percent are atheists, among the Catholics, the total number of agnostics and atheists do not comprise even 1 percent. From the above it is clear that a slightly greater percentage of Catholics practice their religious duties than Hindus.

The information from tables 10 through 12 was collapsed to form a single religiosity variable. Each item of the three religious practices was weighted to form a simple distance scale. The three scales were added to form a new variable, representing a composite scale of religiosity. While the total range was from 0 to 13, the median score for Hindus was 6, and the median score for Catholics was 8.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the respondents came to be divided into two categories: those above the median with a high religiosity score and those below the median with a low religiosity

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<sup>9</sup> The reliability test for this scale was 0.78 according to Kronbach's Alpha.

score. The results as shown in table 13 demonstrate that Catholics are slightly more assiduous in their religious practices than Hindus.

Table 13

Percentage distribution of Religiosity by Religion

<u>Religiosity</u>	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
High religiosity score	41.7	47.3
Low religiosity score	58.2	52.6
Total	175 (100)	194 (100)

Another variable thought to be influential in shaping the notion of sin is the type of family upbringing. In a family with a strict and strongly disciplined type of upbringing, it is expected that there will be greater emphasis on sins than in a family where the upbringing is liberal and lax (Douglas 1978, p.24 ff).

To gauge the type of upbringing, respondents were asked to look back on their childhood and describe their relationship with their parents. Five questions were asked: whether they were afraid of their parents, whether their parents struck them, whether they were more often in the

home than outside the home,<sup>10</sup> whether their profession was chosen by their parents and whether other decisions too were taken by their parents. Each response was checked on a four-point Likert type scale ranging from Agree Strongly to Disagree Strongly, with 4 points being given for the former response and 1 point for the latter response. The 5 variables combined to give a total score for strength of parental discipline for each respondent. While the range extended from 4 to 20, the median score for both Hindu and Catholic families is 13. Those above the median are considered to have a high score for strength of parental discipline and those below the median as having a low score. The results are shown in table 14.

Table 14

Percentage Distribution of Family Upbringing by Religion

	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
High autocrat score	46.55	45.0
Low autocrat score	53.44	55.0
Total	100.00	100.00

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<sup>10</sup> Till today in Indian homes, where the upbringing is strict, children are seldom allowed to travel freely outside the home on their own. Quite often there are strict curfew hours and the practice of living independently from parents before marriage is frowned upon (Kapadia 1966).

Table 13 shows that there is hardly any difference between Hindus and Catholics in the type of family upbringing. The parents of Catholic families are just as strict or as lax as the parents of Hindu families.

This concludes my brief profile of the respondents of the survey. The purpose of this profile is twofold: first, to compare Hindus and Catholics on the main independent variables and second, to demonstrate that my samples, though not perfectly, are comparable.

Having seen the profile of the respondents, the second part of the survey will deal with the analysis, describing the differences in the respective thinking of Hindus and Catholics about sin and focusing on the specific categories of sin they emphasize.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

#### GENERAL NOTION OF SIN

##### Personalistic or Cosmic Notion

In the historical part of the study I found that, because of its tribal origins, Christianity developed a personalistic notion of sin and because of its agricultural background, Hinduism developed a cosmic understanding of sin.

In the empirical survey I attempted to determine what kind of notion Hindus and Catholics currently have about sin. Respondents were asked to circle the idea or ideas that first come to mind when they think about sin. Besides a number of closed-ended options, an open-ended category was also provided for respondents to describe their own definition of sin.

In table 15, the majority of Hindus (72 percent), give as their primary description when thinking about sin the 'harm it causes to others' and 42 percent think of it as 'doing something that society is against.' This implies that Hindus, when they think of sin, are thinking of its societal effects. On the other hand, the majority of Catholics (69

percent) give their primary description of sin as an insult to God. Fifty-eight percent of them also think of sin in terms of the harm it causes to others. This implies that while both groups think in terms of the harm caused, Catholics define sin primarily in 'vertical' or 'supernatural' terms, while Hindus describe sin primarily in 'horizontal' or 'this-worldly' terms.

Table 15

Respondents' Definition of Sin

<u>Definition of Sin</u>	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
Causing harm to others	72	58
Doing what society is against	42	18
An insult to God	28	69
Breaking of the civil law	18	24
Going against elders' wishes	16	18
Other	7	4 <sup>1</sup>

John Robinson spoke of two planes of morality: a vertical plane, when moral actions are considered in their vertical relationship to a transcendent God "out there" in the heavens; and a horizontal plane, when moral actions are considered in their reference to people on earth. (Robinson, 1963). While the two planes of morality are not exclusive, the former plane of morality is termed a transcendent morality and the latter plane an immanent morality. I refer

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<sup>1</sup> No totals are given as this was a multiple response question.

to the transcendent morality as personalistic, since what is most important in it, is the personal "I-Thou" relationship. I refer to the immanent relationship as cosmic or impersonal in that what is most important is society, people or cosmic laws.

Further, of the 7 percent of Hindus, who gave their own descriptions of sin, three percent spoke of sin as failing to do one's God-given Duty (Dharma) and 4 percent spoke of sin as an evil action that will ultimately hurt the doer in the long run. Both these ideas belong to a cosmic or impersonal notion of sin.

Anthropologists make a distinction between "shame-cultures" and "guilt-cultures" (Taylor 1953, p. 94). By shame cultures they mean societies where the main pressure for conformity to social rules is fear of public scorn. (Benedict 1946, p.166). By guilt cultures they mean societies that are dominated by internal guilt in the forum of the private conscience. To my mind however, this guilt-shame typology is not the same as the personalistic-cosmic typology, for the simple reason that while shame cultures need not be religious, the cosmic notion of sin, even though impersonal, is a deeply religious notion.

Thus, the findings of the survey only confirm the findings of the historical study, that Catholics are more likely to have a personalistic notion of sin and Hindus to have a societal-impersonal notion of sin.



### Sources of Authority about What Is Sinful/Not Sinful

A second finding from the historical study was that in Catholicism, the private institution of penance came into existence in conjunction with the rise of priestly power. It was the celibate monks and priests who framed the definitions of sin in the Middle Ages.

In Hinduism, it was the Brahmin class, the uppermost caste, that constructed the definitions of sin. But, when this class and the caste structure they stood for, came under heavy attack from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, the hierarchical ethical basis of their authority was weakened.

In the empirical survey I sought to find out what sources of authority in contemporary society determine for Hindus and for Catholics what is sinful and not sinful. Respondents were asked to rank order the three most important of the following items: sacred books, other secular books, priests, conscience, the laws of the State, parents, teachers, peers. For greater manageability, a random sample of 50 Hindus and 50 Catholics were selected and the preferences they made were weighted. The first-ranked source was given 3 points. The second-ranked source received two points and a third ranking received just one point. In this way all the different sources of authority for Hindus and Catholics were given a total score. The

results are shown in table 16.

Table 16

Sources of Authority Regarding What Is Sinful

	<u>Hindus</u>		<u>Catholics</u>	
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Source of Authority</u>	<u>Weighted Score</u>	<u>Source of Authority</u>	<u>Weighted Score</u>
1	Conscience	110	Conscience	120
2	Parents	74	Religious Men	96
3	Sacred Books	45	Sacred Books	55
4	Peers	22	Parents	44

For both Hindus and Catholics, the prime source of authority telling them what is sinful or not sinful is their Conscience. This of course is an internal source of authority. The most important external source of authority for Catholics are the priests, for Hindus, their parents. Sacred Books are the third most important source of authority for both Hindus and Catholics. Parents got a fourth rank for Catholics and peers got a fourth rank for Hindus.

It is interesting that Hindus turn to their parents, for an external source of authority to tell them what is sinful or not sinful, while Catholics turn to their priests. This again accords with the earlier finding of the historical study. In Catholicism, it was (and still is) the priests or the Bishops who frame what is sinful and not sinful. The priests are still the most significant

socializing agent with respect to sin. In Hinduism, after the Brahmin hegemony came under repeated attacks, there was no socializing agent of morality left other than the family. As stated earlier Hinduism has no papacy, no central teaching authority and no parish structure for the dissemination of its ideas. Hence, it is natural that the Hindus rate their family or parents as the most important authority telling them what is sinful or not sinful.

#### Casuistic or Non-Casuistic Notion of Sin

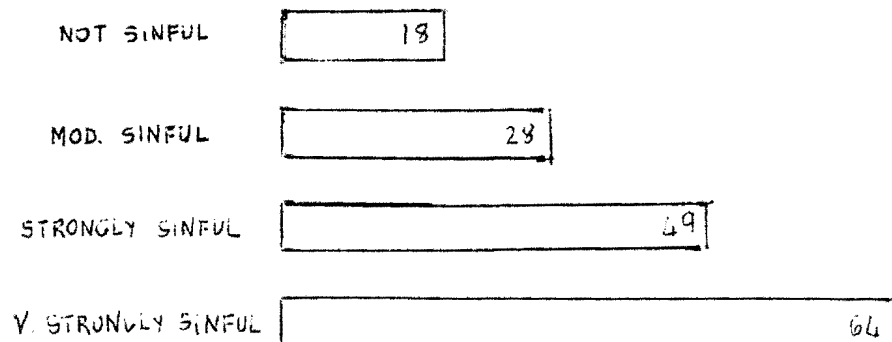
A casuistic notion of sin is a notion that makes legal distinctions between mortal and venial sins, between full consent and partial consent and between clear motives and unclear motives. A non-casuistic notion does not make such distinctions; it prefers to see things more simply as either sinful or not sinful.

In the historical survey, it was seen that casuistry was not present in Hinduism; at least it certainly did not assume the monumental proportions it took on in Catholicism of the late Middle Ages. In the empirical survey I measured group differences on this characteristic of sin by looking at the distribution of responses on sinful actions. Each sinful action was rated on a scale of four options ranging from Very Strongly Sinful, to Strongly Sinful, to Moderately Sinful to Not sinful at all. While responses of Hindus tend to cluster at one end of the scale and to have a skewed

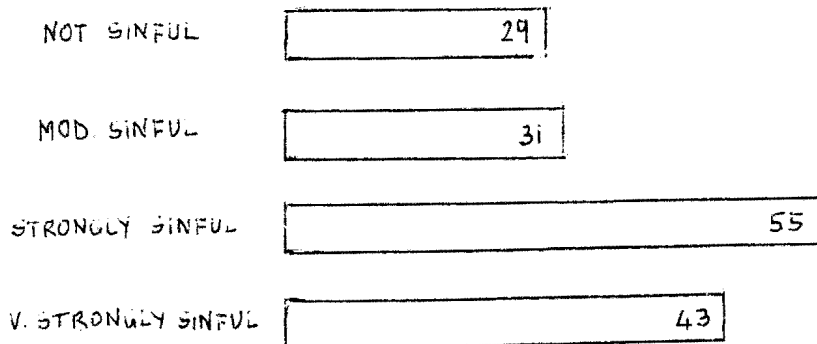
distribution, the responses of Catholics tend to spread more evenly and be more varied. (See example below)

Frequency Distribution of Opinions

On item Selling Guns, Ammunition for Profit



HINDUS



CATHOLICS

Diagram III

In this example, it is seen that Hindus tend to see things in black and white. An action is considered either sinful or not sinful. Catholics, on the other hand, make distinctions and caution their answers with clauses and conditional phrases. Thus a skewness statistic can be computed for each of the sinful actions and used as an indicator. The less the skewness, the more casuistic the judgement.<sup>2</sup> Table 17 gives the skewness statistic for Catholics and Hindus for the first six items of the 37 sinful actions rated.

Table 17

Skewness of Distribution By Religion

	<u>Hindu</u>	<u>Catholic</u>
1. Selling guns, ammunition to a people or country for your own profit	-0.65	-0.33
2. Going to a prostitute	-0.03	-0.33
3. Skipping or not performing worship	1.43	0.12
4. Marrying someone from outside caste or religion	3.73	1.70
5. Contraception	2.62	0.34
6. Refusing someone a job because he/she is of low caste	-1.20	-0.87

Table 17 shows clearly that in five out of six cases, the distribution of Hindu responses were far more skewed

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<sup>2</sup> For this analysis a positive or negative skew is irrelevant.

than the distribution of Catholic responses. Except for the item of going to a prostitute, the Hindus generally showed a higher skewness statistic. In fact, out of the list of 37 items, Hindus had a higher skewness statistic for 26 of them. This means that Hindus see sin in more clear-cut terms. There is no grey or shaded area for them as for Catholics. That is why their responses tend to cluster at one end of the scale.

Further, out of the 175 Hindu respondents, only 6 of them added conditional comments in responding to the items, whereas out of the 194 Catholic respondents, 55 of them had comments and phrases to make for at least one of the items, such as "It depends," "I cannot say, it would depend on the circumstances," "I cannot judge as I do not know the whole situation," or "I would need to know more about the person's motives before I make my decision". For example, in answer to the very first question, whether selling guns, ammunition to a people or country for your own profit, 30 of the Catholic respondents had reservations about their answer. One characteristic response was: "I cannot say - it would depend on how many guns, and to whom you sold the guns to! whether to a murderer or to a nation that is going to war!"

The Hindus however did not make these distinctions. They were inclined to see sinful actions as simply reflecting a sinful attitude or not reflecting that attitude. This too is another instance of the empirical

results confirming the historical part of the study, where the casuistic nature of the Catholic notion of sin was established.

I would like to introduce here a word of caution. Since the administrators of the questionnaire were Catholic seminarians it is possible that they had a more familiar rapport with the Catholic respondents and that these latter tended to be more expansive in answering their questionnaires and more open in discussion than the Hindu respondents. Further, aware that their answers were going to be analysed by a Catholic priest, it is possible that Catholics were less succinct and terse than the Hindu respondents. However, I do not think that this slight bias would sway the responses to any great degree.

#### Belief in Original Sin and Belief in Karma

Original Sin is a doctrine of Christianity that arose in the fourth century in very specific conditions. As the historical part of the study showed, it was the formulation of St. Augustine, who was trying to explain the universal condition of sinfulness in human beings. He attributed it to human nature handed down at birth. Augustine's explanation seemed a good defence for the evils within the Roman government, which at the time was an ally of the Church. Hinduism, on the contrary, had no such doctrine of original sin, though there was an ancient belief in Karma and

Rebirth. Hinduism believed that the consequences of a person's sinful actions were transmitted from one life to the next.

To find out the current beliefs of Hindus and Catholics about original sin, respondents were first asked if they believed that sinfulness was a part of human nature and then were asked to explain the reasons for their answer. Seventy-three percent of Catholics and 50 percent of Hindus believed that it was a part of human nature. The larger percentage of Catholics is understandable since the doctrine of original sin is still a dogma of the Catholic Church. Both groups understood 'the sinfulness of human nature' in different ways. Their diverging opinions were evident from the explanations they gave for their belief. Table 18 gives the distribution of their explanations.

Table 18 shows that 71 percent of Hindus believe that circumstances are the explanation for the sinfulness of human nature. Hindus believe in Karma or the law by which the consequences of one's actions are carried over into the next life. Thus, if those actions are bad, the bad karma that is carried over conditions the person negatively in the next life. Conversely, the good karma conditions the person positively. Thus, because of their belief in Karma, Hindus are led to say that circumstances lead to sinfulness.



Table 18

Explanations for the Sinfulness of Human Nature  
Percentage Distribution

	<u>Hindus</u>	<u>Catholics</u>
1. Because we commit sin inspite of ourselves in the pursuit of our selfish goals	10	60
2. Because of circumstances, environment	71	3
3. Becasuse sin is a means of knowing God	1.5	1
4. Because of the evil forces in the world	3.5	0
5. Because of destiny or fate	14	0
6. Because of our 'fallen' nature	0	36

Catholics were divided into two categories: those that said that they sin inspite of themselves and those that attributed sinfulness to human nature. Both explanations fall within the theory of original sin as formulated by St. Augustine. Thus, with regard to the belief in original sin too, the historical findings agree with the empirical findings.

**SPECIFIC SINFUL ACTIONS**

Respondents were asked to look at 37 sinful actions and rate them on a scale, from Very Strongly Sinful (4), Strongly Sinful (3), Moderately Sinful (2) and Not Sinful at all(1). Thus each item, each sinful action was scored in a

uniform manner with scores from 4 to 1 and a mean score for all Hindus and all Catholics obtained for each sinful action. The "sindex" constructed is given below in table 19, ranked by Hindu perception of seriousness, and table 20, ranked by Catholic perception of seriousness. The sindex demonstrates 2 things:

1. Sins against life and person are given top priority by both Hindus and Catholics (rape, murder and instigation of riots taking the first three places for both groups)
2. That there are other categories of sins that are ranked low by one group and at the same time ranked high by the other group. An example in point is abortion and contraception, which have low sinfulness ratings from Hindus (2.04 and 1.34) and relatively high ratings for Catholics (3.37 and 2.24). On the other hand, pollution of air and water by factories and refusing a job to a low-caste person have high ratings for Hindus (2.98 and 3.44) and relatively lower ratings for Catholics (2.32 and 2.91). This confirms my initial hypothesis that sin is not a uni-dimensional, but a multi-dimensional concept.

In order to see the differences between Hindus and Catholics it is necessary to break down the large catalog of sins into subsections or categories of sinful actions. Instead of analyzing the whole catalog as one unit, I broke it up into several units. A total of 369 respondents rating 37 actions on a scale of 1 to 4 creates a fairly large body

of data which needs to be reduced to manageable size. Making use of Factor Analysis I broke down the 36 actions into a few categories of sinful actions.

Table 19

SINDEX (ranked for Hindus)

	Hindus	Catholics
Raping a woman	3.86	3.74
Committing a murder	3.71	3.81
Paying money to start a riot	3.62	3.58
Act of terrorism	3.47	3.37
Refusing a job to a low caste person	3.44	2.91
Stealing from an individual	3.30	3.40
Stealing from a bank	3.14	3.06
Committing adultery	3.14	3.40
Taking drugs	3.12	2.92
Excess profit while workers get low wages	3.09	3.16
Forcing someone to get married	3.06	3.02
Taking or giving a bribe	3.02	2.82
Selling guns, ammunition for profit	3.00	2.71
Pollution of air and water by factories	2.98	2.32
Showing disrespect to elder	2.97	2.89
Not paying servants a decent wage	2.95	2.97
Lying about oneself to others	2.93	2.60
Keeping quiet when you see an injustice	2.93	2.86
Practising homosexuality	2.78	2.93
Cursing or swearing against God	2.77	3.37
Giving in to pride or jealousy	2.70	2.70
Going to a prostitute	2.62	2.92
Gambling	2.60	2.55
Travelling ticketless in the train	2.56	2.44
Being dishonest about taxes	2.55	2.47
Premarital sex	2.53	2.82
Wasting one's time in laziness	2.52	2.38
Telling lies to get a job	2.41	2.30
Not believing in God	2.23	3.22
Getting drunk	2.18	2.04
Having an abortion	2.04	3.37
Overeating (being gluttonous)	2.00	2.16
Getting angry and shouting	1.89	2.05
Eating beef or pork (on Fridays in Lent)	1.78	1.48
Skipping or not performing Worship	1.54	2.41
Practising contraception	1.34	2.29
Marrying someone not of one's caste	1.18	1.52

Table 20SINDEX (Ranked for Catholics)

	Hindus	Catholics
Committing a murder	3.71	3.81
Raping a woman	3.86	3.74
Paying money to start a riot	3.62	3.58
Committing adultery	3.14	3.40
Stealing from an individual	3.30	3.40
Cursing or swearing against God	2.77	3.37
Having an abortion	2.04	3.37
Act of terrorism	3.47	3.37
Not believing in God	2.23	3.22
Excess profit while workers get low wages	3.09	3.16
Stealing from a bank	3.14	3.06
Forcing someone to get married	3.06	3.02
Not paying servants a decent wage	2.95	2.97
Practising homosexuality	2.78	2.93
Taking drugs	3.12	2.92
Going to a prostitute	2.62	2.92
Refusing a job to a low caste person	3.41	2.91
Showing disrespect to elders	2.97	2.89
Keeping quiet when you see an injustice	2.93	2.86
Premarital sex	2.53	2.82
Taking or giving a bribe	3.02	2.82
Selling guns, ammunition for profit	3.00	2.71
Giving in to pride or jealousy	2.70	2.70
Lying about oneself to others	2.93	2.60
Gambling	2.60	2.55
Being dishonest about taxes	2.55	2.47
Travelling ticketless in the train	2.56	2.44
Skipping or not performing Worship	1.54	2.41
Wasting one's time in laziness	2.52	2.38
Pollution of air and water by factories	2.98	2.32
Telling lies to get a job	2.41	2.30
Practising contraception	1.34	2.29
Overeating (being gluttonous)	2.00	2.16
Getting angry and shouting	1.89	2.05
Getting drunk	2.18	2.04
Marrying someone not of one's caste	1.18	1.52
Eating beef or pork (on Fridays in Lent)	1.78	1.48

## Factor Analysis

Treating the 37 actions as 37 variables I ran a factor analysis to see if they were loading on specific factors. As a result of iteration and orthogonal rotation, I found six factors with eigen values greater than one. A scree test was also done to determine whether the factors were trivial or not by plotting the variance explained by each factor. According to the scree test, the curve flattened out at the seventh factor and hence I worked with six factors. Each factor had a unique set of variables (sinful actions) that could be identified by their salient loadings on that particular factor. On further iteration however I found that the last two factors had relatively low communalities, so in the final analysis, I retained only 4 factors.

The four factors identified are as follows:

Sins Against Sexuality Under this factor, the following actions are included, since they have a communality of greater than 0.4:

- a. Going to a prostitute
- b. Contraception
- c. Premarital sex
- d. Homosexuality
- e. Abortion
- f. Adultery

Sins Against Faith: Under this factor the following items are grouped together with high communalities.

- a. Skipping or not performing temple worship/Sunday worship.
- b. Marrying someone from outside your caste/religion.
- c. Eating beef or pork/on Fridays in Lent.

- d. Not believing in God
- e. Cursing or swearing against God.

Sins Against Truth: Under this category too those actions are selected that have a communality greater than 0.4. These are:

- a. Taking or giving a bribe
- b. Being dishonest about one's taxes
- c. Lying about oneself to others
- d. Telling lies to get a job
- e. Travelling ticketless in the train

Sins Against the Public Good: The actions/variables that loaded under this factor are as follows:

- a. Refusing someone a job because he/she is low caste.
- b. Pollution of air and water by factories.
- c. Forcing someone to get married.
- d. Making excess profits for yourself while your workers receive low wages.
- e. Not paying your servants a decent wage.
- f. Keeping quiet when you hear of an injustice done to someone else.

Having determined these 4 factors, for each respondent a total score was computed for each factor. Thus, there is a sexuality score, a truth score, a public good score and a faith score. These are the dependent variables for my Analysis of Variance. The independent variables in my model are age, gender, marital status, religiosity, type of upbringing, geographic location, education, income and religion.

### Analysis of Variance

I used the analysis of variance to see whether there are major differences between males and females on their rating of the four types of sins, between married and unmarried, between Hindus and Catholics, between rural and urban respondents and so on for all the independent variables. My findings showed that the following variables are not significant: gender, marital status, religiosity, and type of upbringing.

The overall sin scores on sexuality, faith, truth and public good were not significantly different for males or females. Marital status too did not show any significant differences. Married persons however did have higher scores on sins of sexuality than unmarried persons, but even these differences were not very substantial. Finally, persons who had a strongly disciplined type of upbringing showed very little differences on the scores from persons who had a more liberal upbringing. Between persons faithful to religious practices and persons less faithful the only difference was in the scores on sins against faith.

Religiosity and type of upbringing were two of my major hypotheses and the fact that they are disproved shows that social psychological variables have less explanatory powers than the structural variables of morphology, stratification and religious tradition.

The real striking differences appeared in the variables of religion, education, income, geographic origin and cultural cohort. These were the only variables significantly different for all four sin-types (see tables 21 through 24) and these were the same variables found to be prominent in the historical study.

In the next section I will discuss the impact of my main independent variables on the four sin-types, sexuality, faith, truth and public good. Geographic origin is my morphological variable. Income and education are my stratification variables. The Cultural cohort is an aspect of the historical-cultural variable, while religion is the main historical-cultural variable. My findings show that while the morphological and stratification variables are significant in explaining the perception of seriousness for one or two sin-types, it is only the historical-cultural variable that is significant in explaining perception of seriousness for all four sin-types.

#### The Morphological Variable: Urban Dishonesty

Geographic origin or extent of rural/urban exposure was the variable that corresponded to the morphological factor. In the historical study they were tribal and agricultural communities (Thapar 1978, p. 195). Since I



TABLE 21SEXUALITYMean Scores, R<sup>2</sup> and Significance by Different Variables

	Mean Score	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance
<u>Religion</u>			
Hindu	14.46	.24	significant at 0.01 F=51.1, p>=.0001
Catholic	17.73		
<u>Cultural Cohort</u>			
Pre War	19.17	.10	significant at 0.01 F=18.40, p>=.0001
Post War	15.51		
<u>Geographic Origin</u>			
Rural	17.84	.06	significant at .05 but not at 0.01 F=6.35, p>=.0134
Urban	16.43		
<u>Income</u>			
High	17.94	.14	significant at .01 F=12.61, p>=.0001
Medium	15.54		
Low	14.94		
<u>Education</u>			
High	16.85	.08	significant at .01 F=7.67, p>=.0005
Medium	15.92		
Low	14.54		

TABLE 22FAITHMean Scores, R<sup>2</sup> and Significance by Different Variables

	Mean Score	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance
<u>Religion</u>			
Hindu	9.5	.12	significant at 0.01 F=54.0, p>=.0001
Catholic	12.0		
<u>Cultural Cohort</u>			
Pre War	12.70	.09	significant at 0.01 F=13.0, p>=.0004
Post War	10.50		
<u>Geographic Origin</u>			
Rural	11.34		not significant F=2.07, p>=.1533
Urban	10.54		
<u>Income</u>			
High	11.63	.02	significant at .05 but not at 0.01 F=4.16, p>=.0163
Medium	10.55		
Low	10.27		
<u>Education</u>			
High	11.64	.05	significant at .01 F=10.28, p>=.0001
Medium	10.66		
Low	9.60		

TABLE 23

TRUTHMean Scores, R<sup>2</sup> and Significance by Different Variables

	Mean Score	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance
<u>Religion</u>			
Hindu	13.45	.09	significant at 0.01 F=5.36, p>=.0072
Catholic	12.63		
<u>Cultural Cohort</u>			
Pre War	12.78	.06	significant at .05 but not at 0.01 F=2.47, p>=.0472
Post War	11.20		
<u>Geographic Origin</u>			
Rural	11.53	.07	significant at 0.01 F=11.73, p>=.0011
Urban	10.20		
<u>Income</u>			
High	11.68		not significant F=2.44, p>=.0885
Medium	11.32		
Low	10.67		
<u>Education</u>			
High	11.99		not significant F=2.83, p>=.0601
Medium	11.17		
Low	10.94		

TABLE 24PUBLIC GOODMean Scores, R<sup>2</sup> and Significance by Different Variables

	Mean Score	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance
<u>Religion</u>			
Hindu	18.35	.07	significant at 0.01 F=10.25, p>=.0003
Catholic	17.24		
<u>Cultural Cohort</u>			
Pre War	18.90	.06	significant at .01 F=9.81, p>=.0019
Post War	16.76		
<u>Geographic Origin</u>			
Rural	15.46	.04	significant at 0.05 but not at the 0.01 F=6.47, p>=.0126
Urban	17.37		
<u>Income</u>			
High	17.31	.04	significant at .05 but not at 0.01 F=3.80, p>=.0233
Medium	17.01		
Low	15.87		
<u>Education</u>			
High	17.07		not significant F=0.034, p>=.7085
Medium	17.01		
Low	16.68		

could not reproduce communities of the historical past, I used a similar category of variable. I compared persons who came from a rural background, who had very little urban exposure, to persons born and brought up in an urban culture. Rural culture was significant for sins against truth. For the other sin categories, it was either not significant or significant only at the 0.05 level, but not at the 0.01 level. For sins against truth, rural culture explained 11 percent of the variance. The mean scores on truth for rural persons were higher than those for urban persons.

It is easy to understand why sins against truth are less a concern for urban respondents. Gunnar Myrdal calls Third World countries "soft states" because corruption and bribery take place at all levels of the bureaucracy (Myrdal 1971). People living in urban areas of India experience this nearly every day of their lives. Whether they want admission for their children in school or college, whether they want a house, or a phone or a motorcycle, or even 'rationed' foods, they are aware that they will not satisfy their wants unless they grease the palm of officials. Hence, city folk have to face dishonesty and untruthfulness in their daily lives and have come to see it as 'a way of life' that is necessary in order to achieve one's goals. Life in rural India is very different in this regard; cut off as they are from the competitiveness of city life, in their

face-to-face relations, rural villagers seldom witness blatant dishonesty or insincerity and therefore are more strict about sins of truth.

### The Stratification Variable: Sexuality an Upper-Middle Class Phenomenon

Education and income are my socio-economic or stratification variables. In the historical study I found that different kinds of sin were emphasized depending on whether the "framers" of the definition of sin belonged to the powerful upper strata or not. In my empirical survey, I checked whether the fact of belonging to the upper economic and educational strata influenced one's thinking about sin differently than if a person belonged to the lower economic or less educated strata. My findings showed that the more educated and higher the income, the greater the consciousness of sexual sins.

Tables 21 through 24 show that education is significant in explaining perception of the seriousness of sins of sexuality and faith. The  $r^2$  or amount of variance it explained is 8 percent and 5 percent respectively. Education is not significant for sins of truth and sins of public good.

Income too is very significant for sins of sexuality, explaining 14 percent of the variance. For the other sin categories however, it is significant at the 0.05 level, but

not at the 0.01 level or, in the case of sins against truth, it is not significant at all.

This supports the idea that both income and education are significant variables for sins of sexuality. Higher educated and higher income persons showed a greater awareness of sins of sexuality. Put simply, sexual morality in the city of Bombay is a middle or upper class morality. One notices that for people in the slums, contraception, premarital sex and abortion are not the "big" issues that they are for middle and upper class people. The big problems for lower income, less educated persons are poverty and survival issues and in the words of Fred Doolittle in Bernard Shaw's classic Pygmalion, "they couldn't be bothered with middle class morality."

The Weberian principle states that the material circumstances of a particular stratum in society will influence the shape of its morality. Just as much as the stratification variable played a role in the development of sins of sexuality in the Middle Ages, it still plays a role in the understanding of sins of sexuality today.

Education was also found to be significant for sins of faith. The more educated one is, the more he/she is concerned with sins against faith. This may be a phenomenon peculiar to India. Among Catholics, the whole tenor of moral and religious instruction is in English, 90 percent of all church services are in English, and the medium of

instruction in Catholic schools is also English. The religious doctrine, the liturgies, the theology and the clergy cater largely to the English speaking, educated strata. Among Hindus too, the revival of classical Hinduism, began among highly-educated persons. Societies like the Arya Samaj are made up of predominantly educated Hindus. So education is an important variable not only for understanding those who wrote up the moral codes in the past but also to comprehend why people today consider sins against faith important.

#### The Cultural Cohort Variable: Metamorphic Change in the Last Five Decades

Cultural cohort or the variable modified from age was also significant. When studying the different age groups and their scores on the four sin types, I found that there were minuscule differences between the individual age groups. The real differences were between the above 50 age group and all other age groups; in other words between the pre-war group and the post-war group. So age is regarded as defining a culturally-influenced cohort rather than in the chronological sense. The two cohorts are the group that was affected by the cultural factors in the last 40 years and the group that was not so affected.

The cultural-cohort variable was significant for sins of sexuality, for sins against public good and sins against



faith. For sins of truth, it was significant at the 0.05 level but not at the 0.01 level. The variance explained was 10 percent for sexuality, 8 percent for public good and 9 percent for faith. The pre-war group had consistently higher scores than the post-war group.

One can simply explain the difference by saying that that it is due to the 'generation gap'. What is remarkable however is that the differences between the 20-30, 30-40 and 40-50 group are not as striking as the differences between the over 50 group and the other groups combined. The last 50 years have experienced a world war, the onset of industrialization and modernization in India, the 'secularization' phenomenon with its corresponding revolution in theology and morality, and the changes in neighborhoods with consequent loss of community feeling. Persons who grew up before all these changes have a much more stable world-view, fixed values and a clear-cut scheme of morality, of what is right and wrong. On the other hand, persons who grew up along with these changes are much more amenable to change and flexibility, especially in moral and religious values.

In my opinion, the cultural cohort influences are not opposed to the influences of the age factor. It is a well-known fact that older persons are more conservative in their moral values than persons of a younger generations. Thus the conservative values of aging interacting with the

cultural cohort influences only serve to make the differences between the two cohorts more pronounced.

#### The Historical Cultural Variable: The Religious Tradition

Of all the variables, the most significant was the Religious tradition one was brought up in. Religion was significant for all sin types and at all levels. This is observable in tables 21,22,23 and 24. The  $r^2$  or amount of variance explained was higher than for the other independent variables and the mean scores of Hindus and Catholics were consistently and appreciably different on sins of sexuality, faith, truth and public good. I now explore these differences in turn.

#### THE RELIGIOUS TRADITION AND SINS AGAINST SEXUALITY

The Analysis of Variance, as displayed in table 21, showed a significant difference between Hindus and Catholics in the area of sins of sexuality. ( $F = 51.10$ ,  $PR > F = 0.001$ ). The Scheffe test revealed that out of a total possible score of 24, the Hindus had a mean score of 14.46, while Catholics had a mean score of 17.73.

This means that Catholics view sins of sexuality as more strongly sinful than Hindus. Table 25 shows that on all six sexual sin items Catholics had higher mean scores than Hindus.

This is also confirmed by the frequency tables for

individual sinful actions. Approximately 79 percent of Hindus felt that contraception is not sinful at all, compared to 36 percent of Catholics. At the other end of the scale, 22 percent of Catholics placed contraception in the 'Very Strongly Sinful' category as compared to just 4 percent of Hindus. With regard to abortion, 46 percent of Hindus felt it was not sinful at all compared to just 6 percent of Catholics. Again at the other end of the scale, 59 percent of Catholics felt that abortion was very strongly sinful, whereas only 15 percent Hindus felt it was very strongly sinful.

Table 25

Mean Scores for Sins Against Sexuality by Religion

	Hindus	Catholics
Having an abortion	2.04	3.37
Committing adultery	3.14	3.40
Practising homosexuality	2.78	2.93
Going to a prostitute	2.62	2.92
Premarital sex	2.53	2.82
Practising contraception	1.34	2.29
Total	14.46	17.73

These differences are best explained from the historical research. It was the authority and power of the celibate clergy in the Catholic Church that helped develop, over the centuries, a vast literature on sexual morality, initially to keep in check the 'barbarians' but later to

establish for themselves their own area of control. Since the time of the penitentials, the summas and manuals, and more recently encyclicals and repeated formulations by the Pope, Catholic teaching on sexual morality has been regular, rigid and consistent. It is not that Hindus are amoral or sexually licentious. It is just that the Brahmin writers who wrote up the moral codes simply did not stress or emphasize sexual morality. It was a normal part of the other codes. The Brahmins formed an entire class of people and their priests did not adopt celibacy as a way of life. They tried to establish their control through the institution of caste. Since the erosion of Brahmin superiority, there has been no central body or controlling force that enunciates doctrine or morality. Today Hindus have no religious body or authority that gives timely teaching on moral or topical issues.

#### THE RELIGIOUS TRADITION AND SINS AGAINST FAITH

The Analysis of Variance, as displayed in Table 22, revealed a significant difference between Hindus and Catholics in the area of sins against faith ( $F = 54$ ,  $PR > F = 0.001$ ). The Scheffe test displayed a mean score of 9.5 for Hindus and a score of 12 for Catholics. Table 26 shows that on 4 out of the 5 items Catholics showed consistently higher scores than Hindus.

Table 26Mean Scores for Sins Against Faith by Religion

	Hindus	Catholics
Cursing or swearing against God	2.77	3.37
Not believing in God	2.23	3.22
Skipping or not performing Worship	1.54	2.41
Marrying someone not of one's caste	1.18	1.52
Eating beef or pork (on Fridays in Lent)	1.78	1.48
Total	9.50	12.00

The simple frequencies for the individual items confirmed this result. Forty-two percent of Hindus hold that not believing in God is not at all sinful, as compared to just 12 percent of Catholics. With regard to temple worship, 65 percent of Hindus believe that it is not at all sinful if skipped. For Catholics, on the other hand, only 19 percent felt that missing Sunday Worship was not a sinful action. Catholics have traditionally interpreted the third commandment "Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath" as an obligation to go to Church on Sundays, failing which one commits a mortal sin. In general, Catholics take a stricter and more serious view of sins against faith.

This is explained best by historical-cultural reasons. Since the time of its own persecution Catholicism developed a very rigid position against those who fall away from the faith or hold heretical views. By means of excommunications, denial of sacraments, banning of books, silencing or suspension of theologians, the Catholic Church maintained

this very strong stance of dealing with lapses against the faith or sins against the first three commandments.

Hinduism, on the other hand, was never a persecuted religion. It was always the majority religion. Hindu kings have welcomed missionaries and envoys from other religions to their courts and assimilated some of their tenets. In fact that is how the Portuguese, British and French expeditions came to India. Hinduism has never feared heterodoxies and many values of the reformist sects of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism have been absorbed into Hinduism. That is why the only item on which Hindus had a higher score than Catholics was the item of eating beef or pork. Even though this item is not, strictly speaking, comparable for Hindus and Catholics, it is indicative of the high value that Hindus still place on non-violence and sanctity of the cow, both values taken over from Buddhism and Jainism.

One other item from the frequency tables is revealing. Eighty-eight percent of Hindus consider marrying someone from outside their caste not to be sinful. This is in direct contrast to the teaching of Manu, where everyone is expected to marry within his/her own caste. Evidently then, at least in the mind of the urban, educated Hindus these caste restrictions seem to be breaking down.

THE RELIGIOUS TRADITION AND SINS AGAINST TRUTH:

The Analysis of Variance, as displayed in Table 23, showed a significant difference between Hindus and Catholics in the area of the sins against truth. ( $F = 5.36$ ,  $PR > F = 0.007$ ). The Scheffe test revealed that Hindus had a higher average score than Catholics. For Hindus the mean score was 13.45, for Catholics it was 12.63. Table 27 shows that on all the 5 items differences between Hindus and Catholics were small but consistent.

Table 27Mean Scores for Sins Against Truth by Religion

	Hindus	Catholics
Taking or giving a bribe	3.02	2.82
Lying about oneself to others	2.93	2.60
Being dishonest about taxes	2.55	2.47
Telling lies to get a job	2.41	2.30
Travelling ticketless in the train	2.56	2.44
Total	13.45	12.63

To cite the two examples of bribery and lying from the simple frequency tables, 37 percent of Hindus placed the taking or giving of a bribe in the 'Very strongly sinful' category. Only 24 percent of Catholics felt the same way. Again, with regard to lying about oneself to others 28 percent of Hindus felt it was very strongly sinful as compared to only 14 percent of Catholics. Once again the differences are not big but significant and consistent.

This means that Hindus feel very strongly about sins against truth, whether they be in the form of bribery, cheating, black marketeering, hypocrisy, disloyalty, insincerity or plain telling lies. The explanation for this must be looked for in historical-cultural factors. During the latter part of the Vedic period, when the prevalent mood of Hinduism was ritualism, there was a strong protest from the Buddhist and Jain renouncers, who stressed individual values of truth, non-violence and asceticism. This was the period when mercantilism and trading began to flourish and truth and honesty were ideal qualities for the businessman and trader. Following the right path and doing one's duty became synonymous with being truthful and this was the path to salvation. The words satya or truth were equated with dharma (duty) and rta (the right order). Patanjali made truth and nonviolence the first two of his 5 rules of good living.

One of the well known stories of the Mahabharata (written after the Buddhist-Jaina reaction) is the story of Yudhishtira, enshrining, as it does, a lesson in truth. This emperor had a reputation for never having told a lie in his entire life, but for the sake of his family is forced to tell a lie and then punished for it. For the average Hindu failure to speak or be truthful incites the wrath of the Gods and he/she fears that some terrible harm will come to the untruthful person. Rama, the hero of the other great



epic, the Ramayana, is also a model of truth. Manu and Yajnavalkya, the Brahmin law givers, also list truth among the common duties of a Hindu. More recently, Mahatma Gandhi titled his autobiography An Experiment with Truth and made Satyagraha or truth-force, the energising principle of his movement for freedom.

#### THE RELIGIOUS TRADITION AND SINS AGAINST THE PUBLIC GOOD

The Analysis of Variance, as displayed in Table 24, showed a significant difference between Hindus and Catholics in the area of sins against the public good. ( $F = 4.25$ ,  $PR > F = 0.003$ ). The Scheffe test indicated that Hindus had a slightly higher mean score than the Catholics. It was 18.35 for Hindus and 17.24 for Catholics. The variance explained was 9 percent. The difference is small, but given the sample and the standard deviation, the difference is significant. Table 28 shows that for four of the six items Hindus had higher scores than Catholics.

Table 28

#### Mean Scores for Sins Against Public Good by Religion

	Hindus	Catholics
Refusing a job to a low caste person	3.41	2.91
Pollution of air and water by factories	2.98	2.32
Forcing someone to get married	3.06	3.02
Keeping quiet when you see an injustice	2.93	2.86
Excess profit while workers get low wages	3.09	3.16
Not paying servants a decent wage	2.95	2.97
Total	18.35	17.24

The simple frequencies for individual items confirmed the same higher percentages for Hindus. Fifty-seven percent of Hindus felt it was very strongly sinful to refuse a job to a person of a low caste, while 46 percent of Catholics felt the same way. On the issue of pollution, respondents were asked whether pollution of air and water by factories was sinful or not. Thirty-two percent of Hindus considered it to be 'very strongly sinful,' while a mere 19 percent of Catholics felt the same way. Again, with regard to the question of "keeping quiet when you see an injustice" 40 percent of Hindus think this is 'very strongly sinful,' while only 24 percent of Catholics state it to be 'very strongly sinful.'

These results would seem to indicate that Catholics have a less developed social conscience than Hindus. This is surprising in view of the fact that the last 20 years has seen the rise of a new movement called Liberation Theology within the Catholic Church, a movement which tends to emphasize social sins and the development of a social conscience. At the synod of priests in Bombay 1980, the clergy took a "preferential option for the poor". The survey suggests that this movement has not really taken root in the Catholic population, though it might be very popular among the Catholic clergy.

The slightly higher mean scores of Hindus have to be explained by historical-cultural factors. On the one hand,

the caste laws of Manu and Yajnavalkya have always given a certain prominence to the public good, even if that good, in the long run, redounded to the benefit of the upper caste. On the other hand, within Hinduism, and possibly because of the atrocities of the caste system, there has arisen alongside a strong 'gut' feeling against social injustices. Buddhism, Jainism and to a certain extent even Sikhism, have been reactions to the caste structure and ritualism of Hinduism. The Bhakti movement, the Reform movements of the nineteenth century and more recently the Backward Classes movements have all been part of this social reaction to the caste system. Many educated Hindus have associated themselves with these movements and hence have grown up with a sense of social consciousness.

The above analysis indicates that the religious tradition, or the historical-cultural variable, more than any other, affects the notion of sin in a forceful and significant way. The other independent variables do have an impact on sins of truth and sexuality, but not in any consistent way. The differences between Hindus and Catholics are more striking than the differences between rural and urban or the differences between upper and lower socio-economic status. The next most important variable, after religion, was the cultural-cohort variable, which is, in effect, an extension of the historical-cultural factor and supports the significance of the historical-cultural

variable.

My empirical survey has demonstrated clear differences between Hindus and Catholics. While Catholics view sin within the context of a personal relationship with God, Hindus view sin more impersonally, within a societal or cosmic perspective. Catholics are casuistic in their understanding of sin, Hindus are not so casuistic. Catholics believe in original sin and the transference of 'sinful human nature' from Adam and Eve. Hindus believe in the transference of the evil consequences of sin from one life to the next. Catholics emphasize sins of sexuality and faith, Hindus emphasize sins against truth and sins against the public good.

These differences are partly due to morphological factors, partly stratification factors, but they are mainly the result of historical-cultural factors.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

Ideas of sin and deviance are an important form of social control; yet they are constructed realities. While there are several studies in sociology showing how the idea of deviance is formed, the purpose of my study is to show that the notion of sin is culturally bound, that it does not derive directly from the Scriptures, but there are very material and sociological factors in history which gave rise to the specific definitions of sin in Catholicism and Hinduism.

In the historical study I surveyed the various factors that influenced the notion and definitions of sin in the Catholic and Hindu historical traditions. In doing so, I discovered the differences between the Hindu and Catholic traditions of sin and found that the determining factors were of three kinds: the community structure or the morphological factor, the stratification or power variable, and the historical-cultural variable, which is the interaction of the morphological and power variables with historical and cultural factors.

In the Catholic tradition, it was the morphological factor of the Hebrew tribe which gave rise to the very "exclusivist" and "rigoristic" definition of sin with its strong emphasis on sexual sins and its personalistic flavor.

In the centuries that followed Christ, it was the morphological factor again, this time interacting with the historical-cultural factor, that was seen in evidence. When Catholicism was a persecuted minority religion, it became sharply conscious of the outlines of its own faith, which in turn, gave rise to its own heresy-hunting and its strong emphasis on sins against faith.

After the Constantinian era, the notion of sin was defined through the prism of the power structure. Since Catholicism was allied to the mighty Roman empire, going to war for Christians, was no longer seen as sinful and original sin (universal sinfulness) became understandable as an explanation for the evils of the individuals in government.

The stratification factor is seen again in the fifth and sixth centuries with the development of the penitentials and the rising power of the clergy. With the meteoric rise of sacerdotalism (clergy power), individual confession came into prominence and with it a renewed sense of sexual sins and the beginning of a detailed classification and division of sins. Here stratification factors are seen interacting with historical-cultural factors.

The late Middle Ages were also the period of the sacerdotal legal minds. Sexual sins continued to be re-emphasized and the process of individualizing the sinful act was a reflection of the control that the clergy exercised, in the only area which was their sphere of domain, the private and internal area of morality. As legal minds tried to determine exactly the moment of sinfulness, the degree of sinfulness and the different types of sinful acts, casuistry had reached its peak and sin had become a science. The development of casuistry is another instance of the confluence of the power variable and the historical-cultural variables.

From the Council of Trent to the twentieth century, this casuistic, individualistic flavor of sin with its emphasis on sins of sex, remained dominant until the last few decades when Liberation Theology has begun to stress the social-structural aspects of sin.

In the Hindu tradition, there were at least four notions of sin that developed which correspond to the Christian concept of sin. The notion of anrta or cosmic disharmony is the result of morphological factors at work. The settled agricultural existence with its dependence on the rhythms of nature, gave rise to a cosmic, impersonal notion of sin. Sin is not considered as an insult to a personal God, but as going against the laws of nature, of society and the cosmos.

A second notion of sin arose within Hinduism from the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. Partly as a result of the reaction to ritualism and partly as a result of new socio-economic conditions (the new upward-moving business classes) the reformist sects of Jainism and Buddhism stressed values of truth and non-violence and these were assimilated by Hinduism, the majority religion. In this is seen the interaction of morphological and historical-cultural variables.

The confluence of power and historico-cultural variables is apparent in the way in which the class of Brahmins defined their caste understanding of sin. Belonging to the uppermost rung in the hierarchy, they saw to it that their notion of sin was hierarchy-respecting. However, being part of that same society (and not living apart from it) they also emphasized sins against the public good. Not being celibates, they laid no stress on sins of sexuality. Their form of control was exercised in an institutional manner, through the enactment of legal codes stressing social duty.

The effects of the historical-cultural variable are seen in clear light as the modern Hindu notion of sin or papa arose, in reaction to the caste-laws. As the power of the Brahmins came under attack in various ways, the caste notion of sin went into decline and the general, societal notion of sin, which stresses the public good came back into prominence.



CHART ONE  
COMPARISON OF CATHOLIC AND HINDU NOTION OF SIN  
FROM HISTORY

Catholic	Hindu
Tribal Background	Agricultural Background
Personalistic Notion of Sin	Cosmic Notion of Sin
Emphasis on Sins of Faith	Emphasis on Sins of Truth
Belief in Original Sin	Belief in Rebirth and Karma
Growth of Priestly Power	Growth of Brahmin Class Power
System of Private Penance	Social Institution of Caste
Emphasis on Sins Against Sex	Emphasis on Sins Against Public Good
Casuistic Notion	Non-Casuistic Notion

Thus, in the Hindu tradition as in the Catholic tradition, sin is the result of historical-cultural factors rather than purely morphological or purely stratifcational factors.

The historical part of the study also brought out the differences between the Hindu and Catholic traditions of sin. The differences can be described as a set or syndrome of characteristics that are opposed to each other. Chart One shows the differences between the Hindu and Catholic views of sin as found in the historical traditions.

The historical differences documented in the first part of the study are confirmed by the empirical survey of contemporary Hindus and Catholics. (See Chart Two) In the survey I found that Catholics have a very personalistic notion of sin. They generally understand sin as a personal affront to God and believe that God will be personally angry with them when they sin. Hindus understand sin as breaking the laws of "the Gods" and of society, going against the public good, going against the laws of the cosmos in general, and therefore, as a result, some harm will redound to them.

While Catholics tend to make analytical distinctions between their sins, mortal and venial, intentional and non-intentional, partial and full responsibility, Hindus do not make any of these distinctions and tend to see sinfulness more simply as reflective of an attitude, which is sinful or

CHART TWO  
COMPARISON OF CATHOLIC AND HINDU NOTION OF SIN  
FROM SURVEY

Catholic

Personalistic (Sin = Insult to God)  
High Scores on Sins Against Faith  
High Scores on Sins Against Sex  
Priests Tell What is Right and Wrong  
Belief in Universal Sinfulness

Hindu

Cosmic (Sin = Breaking of Laws, Causing Harm)  
High Scores on Sins Against Truth  
High Scores on Sins Against Public Good  
Parents Tell What is Right and Wrong  
Belief in Karma and Rebirth

not sinful.

The source of authority telling Catholics what is right or wrong are the priests; the source of authority for Hindus telling them what is sinful or not sinful are their parents.

While Catholics had high scores for sins against sexuality and sins against faith, Hindus had high scores for sins against truth and sins against the public good. These findings clearly confirm the historical part of the study, where the reasons why Catholics have emphasized sins against faith and sex were revealed, and why Hindus have a tradition of emphasizing sins against truth and the public good.

While many Catholics believe in Original sin and the transmission of universal sinfulness through heredity, Hindus do not believe in the transmission of universal sinfulness but in the transmission of individual karma from one birth to another.

My historical study also illustrated the roots of these differences, the material factors that played a pivotal part in giving rise to the two distinct notions of sin in Hinduism and Catholicism. These material factors can be described as the morphological, stratification and historical-cultural factors.

My empirical research confirms the fact that the same type of variables that played a pivotal part in defining the notions of sin in the past traditions are similar to the

variables that currently influence the modern Hindu and Catholic ways of stressing certain types of sins. The dependent variables for this part of the study are the scores on sexual sins, on sins against faith, sins against the public good and scores on sins against truth.

For my sample of 369 respondents I did a multi-variate analysis of variance. I found that the individual variables of gender, marital status, faithfulness to religious practices and type of family upbringing, whether strongly disciplined or not, did not display significant differences in their sin scores. On the other hand, the socio-structural variables, morphological, stratificational and historico-cultural variables, showed significant differences.

The morphological variable was represented by the socio-geographic community one was placed in, whether rural or urban. Although rural/urban classification is not the same as tribal/agricultural categories of ancient times, nevertheless they both belong to the same type of category. The analysis of variance showed that there was a significant difference between rural and urban respondents in their scores on sins of truth.

The socio-economic variable also indicated a meaningful difference. Education and income were my representative variables. There were significant differences among the three income groups and the three education groups in their scores on sexuality and faith.

The most profound differences however were displayed in the Religion variable. The differences between Hindus and Catholics were significant for all the categories of sin - sexuality, faith, truth and public good - proving my point that the religious tradition, a result of historical cultural variables, is by far the most significant.

One other significant variable was age. When considered as a simple chronological variable, there was no significant pattern of differences between the different age groups. When considered however as a cohort variable, and the group over age 50 was considered as one cohort and compared to those under age 50, significant differences were found in the scores on sexuality, truth, and faith. This would imply that cultural factors were at work here and the historical and cultural influences affecting the senior age group are markedly different from the historical-cultural influences that affect the younger respondents.

The empirical survey has confirmed the results of the historical study. However, I must point out that the empirical study comprised only a small sample of Hindus and Catholics in the city of Bombay and may not be used to generalize to all Hindus or all Catholics. Had I procured a larger sample of rural respondents as well as a larger proportion of less educated persons, I would have been more confident of generalizing. As it stands however, the study does illumine our understanding of sin and social control.

It points out the differences between the Hindu and Catholic way of thinking about sin, the factors that cause these differences and has gone a long way in demonstrating how social control operates in the religious sphere.

Since the historical-cultural variable has been found to be the most significant in my study, I use this as a prism to predict the future trends of morality in Hinduism and Catholicism.

Analysing the history and culture of India in the last five decades, the glaring reality that hits every Indian or non-Indian, is the stark, staring poverty and the ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor. Concomitantly one finds several grass roots organizations that are struggling for a more just distribution in Indian society. If historical-cultural forces are operative in shaping the definitions of sin, then I would expect that both Hinduism and Catholicism will move toward an emphasis on sins against the public good and notably toward the structural aspect of those sins. I would expect an emphasis on societal sin and the sinful social structures of society.

One of the questions I asked my respondents was "whether they considered social inequality in society to be sinful". Seventy-eight percent of Hindus and sixty-seven percent of the Catholics answered this question affirmatively and in their subsequent comments it was clear that by social inequality they meant poverty. The high

proportions reflect a rising trend in Indian society of awareness of the concept of societal sin.

By "societal sin" is meant "the injustices and dehumanizing trends built into the various institutions - social, political, economic, ecological and religious - which embody people's collective life" (Baum 1975, p.201). These dehumanising trends could be in the form of ideologies, structural and collective policy decisions, rules and regulations. For example, an unjust labor law, which prevents workers from protesting lay-offs would be an example of structural or institutional sin. Rather than put the blame of sin on workers, who strike or get violent, the real sin lies within the repressive organization.

Structures and institutions are not neutral. They embody value relationships and these values are either destructive or constructive. To the extent that they are destructive, they embody structural sin, even though personnel in these institutions may be unaware of the harm they are causing. What is proper to societal sin is that its subject is a collectivity. Further, it is not necessarily produced by deliberation and free choice. It produces evil consequences, but no guilt in the ordinary sense. People are involved in destructive action without being aware of it.

Thus, the whole focus of the new development in theology is to look not at the individual, or at the actor -



but at the organization or society - a focus, which is definitely sociological and reflective of the new trend in the sociology of sin.

A second sociological reality of India is the constant osmosis and assimilation that goes on between Hindus and Catholics, who quite often are living side by side and experience the growing trend of inter-religious marriages. As a result the distinctive features of a religion tend to be less delineated. I would imagine that Catholicism, if it continues to move into the mainstream of Indian life, as present trends seem to indicate, would drop its strong emphasis and insistence on sins against faith and absorb some of Hinduism's emphasis on sins of truth. Likewise the cultural interaction between Hinduism and Catholicism would result in the mowing down of concepts of original sin and karma, resulting in a more simplistic doctrine of the cultural transmission of the consequences of sin.

By this I understand original sin as transmitting a vitiated culture. It is not really the original sin that is handed down, but the cultural disorganization or the consequences of sin. When a person sins, his/her sins have a negative impact on the environment. A milieu is created where values are diminished and it is this vitiated socio-cultural milieu in which his/her offspring will grow (Schoonenberg 1965).

A third reality of India is the increasing growth of

spontaneous, popularistic trends in religion. This is evident both in Hinduism, with the frequency of pilgrimages and visits to shrines and in Catholicism, with an upsurge in devotional practices like novenas. While, at the present time, the religious clergy have still an important part to play in defining morality, I would expect a greater involvement of lay people in the future in the shaping of moral ideas. If this is so, then casuistry and legalism will be on the decline and the concept of the fundamental option, a recent development in Catholic theology, will play a greater role in moral theology.

According to this concept of fundamental option, sin does not lie in a particular thought, word or action, but lies in the underlying orientation or attitude which lies behind the whole series of thoughts, words and actions. Thus for instance, the sin of telling lies does not consist in the few words, the few exaggerated statements, but it lies in the whole attitude of one's being which wants to be hypocritical, which wants to deceive others, which wants to play a false or double game. The malice of sin does not lie in external words or actions, but lies in the Fundamental Option of one's being (Monden 1965).

These seem to be the future trends for Catholicism and Hinduism in India as indicated by my sociological study of sin. The purpose of the comparative approach was not primarily to highlight the differences between Hinduism and

Catholicism (though these are apparent) as to bring to light the similar manner in which the notion of sin was defined historically in the respective cultures. The social history of sin, is in this sense, an explanation of the present and therefore a liberating force and guide for the future. So also the interdisciplinary nature of the study was not merely to debunk or demystify the purely religious notion of sin as something dictated by God, but its true aim was to help broaden our conception of the social base of sin and by combining the disciplines of sociology and comparative religion to pave the way for the beginnings of a bridge between culture and religion.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
PL	Patrologia Latina (Migne)
PG	Patrologia Greca (Migne)

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## APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is John D'Mello and I am completing my doctoral dissertation at Loyola University, Chicago. My topic is a comparative study of what different religious communities think about sin. I am therefore interested in knowing what you, and others like you, think about sin. I would be grateful if you would take off some of your time to answer this questionnaire. Your answers are entirely confidential. At no point will you be asked to give your name or address. Ultimately your answers will be compiled in numerical form to produce a general result. These results will be an important part of my dissertation. If you are interested in the final results of this survey, copies will be available at the address given below after July 1, 1989.

1. Circle the one idea(s) that first come to mind when you think about sin.
  - a. A breaking of the law ....
  - b. Causing harm to others....
  - c. An insult to God....
  - d. Going against the wishes of one's elders...
  - e. Doing something that 'society' is against...
  - f. Any other....(Please describe).....
  
2. Name the three actions which you think are most sinful.
  1. ....
  2. ....
  3. ....
  
3. Of the following, which three are the most important in telling you what is sinful or not sinful ? Rank these three in order of importance by placing the appropriate rank (1, 2 or 3) on the left hand side.
  - ( ) Sacred Books
  - ( ) Other secular books
  - ( ) Religious authorities or holy men
  - ( ) Your own conscience
  - ( ) The laws of the State
  - ( ) Your parents
  - ( ) Your teachers
  - ( ) Your peers
  - ( ) Other..... (Please indicate)
  
4. How would you rate the following actions. Please remember to consider what is sinful in your judgement: (CIRCLE ONE)
  - a. Selling guns, ammunition to a people or country purely for your own profit
    1. Not sinful at all...
    2. Moderately sinful...
    3. Strongly sinful...
    4. Very strongly sinful...

b. Going to a prostitute

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

c. Skipping temple worship or Sunday Mass

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

d. Marrying someone from outside your caste or religion

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

e. Practising Contraception (artificial birth control)

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

f. Refusing someone a job because he/she is low caste.

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

g. Pollution of air and water by factories

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

h. Eating beef or pork (on Ash Wednesday or Good Friday)

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

i. Forcing someone to get married.

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

j. Premarital sex

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

k. Making excess profits for yourself while your workers receive low wages

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

l. Practising homosexuality

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

5. Do you believe that 'sinfulness' is part of our human nature? CIRCLE ONE

1. Yes
2. No

Explain....

6. Do you think the 'sense of sin' in today's society has become stronger or weaker? CIRCLE ONE

1. Stronger
2. Weaker

Explain....



7. Do you think the 'inequality in our society' is sinful? CIRCLE ONE and give reasons for your answer.

1. Yes
2. No

Explain...

8. Can you give me now some information about yourself. Can you tell me how old you are?

..... years old

9. Please circle the appropriate response.

- Are you
1. Male
  2. Female

10. And regarding your marital status, are you: Please CIRCLE ONE:

1. Married
2. Single
3. Divorced
4. Separated
5. Widowed

11. Here is another set of actions for you to rate in a similar way as you did for question 4. Please take a moment to study these actions and rate them very carefully. CIRCLE ONE:

a. Stealing a sum of Rs. 500 from a bank

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

b. Stealing a sum of Rs. 500 from an individual family

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

c. Getting angry and shouting, losing one's temper

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

d. Taking or giving a bribe

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

e. Having an abortion

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

f. Being dishonest about one's taxes

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

g. Lying about oneself to others

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

h. Getting drunk.

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

i. Showing disrespect to your elders, parents

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

j. Not believing in God

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

k. Raping a woman

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

l. Gambling

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

m. Wasting one's time in laziness

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

12. Do you believe in God? CIRCLE ONE:

1. Yes            2. No            3. Other

13. Do you believe in an after-life? CIRCLE ONE:

1. Yes            2. No            3. Other

14. How often do you go to the temple or Church?  
CIRCLE ONE:

1. Once a week.....
2. About once a month.....
3. Occasionally
4. About once a year.....
5. Never.....

15. How often do you read the Holy Books? CIRCLE ONE:

1. Everyday.....
2. Several times a week.....
3. About once a week.....
4. Occasionally.....
5. Never.....

16. Do you pray? CIRCLE ONE:

1. Yes
2. No

IF YES, how often: CIRCLE ONE:

1. Several times a day.....
2. About once a day.....
3. Several times a week.....
4. Once a week.....
5. Occasionally.....
6. Never.....

17. How often do you do 'puja' in your home? CIRCLE ONE:

1. Everyday.....
2. Several times a week....
3. Once a week.....
4. Occasionally.....
5. Never.....

18. Finally, the last set of actions for you to rate:

CIRCLE ONE:

a. Cursing or swearing against God

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

b. Not paying your servants a decent wage

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

c. An act of terrorism eg. taking a hostage for ransom

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

d. Paying money to someone to start a riot

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

e. Telling lies to get a job

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

f. Committing adultery

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

g. Keeping quiet when you hear of an injustice done to someone else

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

h. Giving in to pride or jealousy

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

i. Over-eating (being gluttonous)

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

j. Taking drugs

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

k. Committing a murder

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

l. Travelling ticketless in the train.

1. Not sinful at all...
2. Moderately sinful...
3. Strongly sinful...
4. Very strongly sinful...

19. Is 'sickness' that a person suffers a punishment for his/her sins? CIRCLE ONE:

1. Yes, always
2. Yes, sometimes,
3. No.
4. Other..... (Please specify)

20. a. What is your highest educational or trade qualification?

b. How many years of schooling have you done? Circle the appropriate response:

1. 5 years or fewer.....
2. 6 - 10 years..... (SSC)
3. 11 - 15 years.....
4. 16 - 20 years.....
5. More than 20.....

c. Do you remember the name of the school you went to?

.....High School

21. Are you employed now? If so, please describe the kind of work you do for a living and state exact occupational designation.

If you are retired, looking for a job, a housewife or a student, state what kind of job you did before or describe your husband's or father's job.

22. In what income bracket per month does your family fall? CIRCLE ONE:

1. Less than Rs. 500 .....
2. Between 501 and 1000 .....
3. Between 1000 and 3000 .....
4. Between 3000 and 6000.....
5. More than 6000.....

23. a. How many years have you lived in the city (of Bombay)?

.....number of years

- b. What is your place of origin OR where did you live for the first ten years of your life? (State name of village, town or city)

.....

24. How would you describe your present dwelling unit ? CIRCLE ONE:

1. House
2. Flat
3. Chawl
4. Room
5. Hutment
6. Other

25. The following questions are about your childhood when you were between the ages of 4-15 years.

CIRCLE the appropriate response:

State whether you:    Agree strongly  
                                 Agree moderately  
                                 Disagree moderately  
                                 Disagree strongly

- a. I was afraid of my parents as a child.

1. Agree strongly...
2. Agree moderately...
3. Disagree moderately...
4. Disagree strongly...

- b. My parents beat me as a child.

1. Agree strongly...
2. Agree moderately...
3. Disagree moderately...
4. Disagree strongly...

- c. As a child I was more often in the home than outside the home.

1. Agree strongly...
2. Agree moderately...
3. Disagree moderately...
4. Disagree strongly...

- d. My parents had a say or will have a say in the choice of my profession.

1. Agree strongly...
2. Agree moderately...
3. Disagree moderately...
4. Disagree strongly...

- e. My parents took all the decisions for me as a child.

1. Agree strongly...
2. Agree moderately...
3. Disagree moderately...
4. Disagree strongly...



26. What is your caste and subcaste? (optional question)

1. Caste ..... Subcaste.....

27. What was the primary language you spoke at home as a child? CIRCLE ONE:

- |             |                         |              |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| 1. English  | 2. Hindi                | 3. Marathi   |
| 4. Gujerati | 5. Konkanni             | 6. Malayalam |
| 7. Tamil    | 8. Other (specify)..... |              |

Thank you for answering these questions....

John D'Mello  
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Bombay 400063  
INDIA

**APPENDIX B**

## LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL PENITENTIAL BOOKS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Below is a list of the main penitential books beginning from the earliest Irish, Welsh and Anglo-Saxon books, which were fragmentary in nature, to the more formal and larger Continental penitentials, which borrowed heavily from the former (Source: McNeil and Gamer 1965, p.75 ff).

### Irish Penitentials

The penitential of Vinnian (circa 525-50)  
 The penitential of Cummean (circa 650)  
 The Irish canons (circa 675)  
 The canons of Adamnan (circa 679-704)  
 Irish table of commutations (8th century)  
 The Bigotian Penitential (700-725)

### Welsh penitentials

Canons of Sixth century Welsh synods (ca 500-525)  
 Excerpts from a book of David (ca 500-525)  
 The preface of Gildas (ca 550)

### Anglo Saxon Penitentials

The penitential of Theodore (ca 668-690)  
 The penitential ascribed to Bede (ca 735 according to Poschmann)  
 The penitential of Egbert (ca 750)

### Penitentials composed on the Continent by Irish authors

The penitential of Columban (ca 650)  
 The pseudo Cummean penitential<sup>1</sup> (8th century)

### Frankish and Visigothic penitentials

The Burgundian penitential (ca 700-725)  
 The Paris penitential (ca 750)  
 The Fleury penitential (ca 775-800)  
 The Tripartite St. Gall penitential (ca 800)

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<sup>1</sup> Called pseudo-Cummean because it was originally thought to be Cummean

The Penitential of Silos (ca 800)  
The Penitential of Vigila (ca 800)  
The St. Hubert penitential (ca 850)

Penitentals written or authorized by Frankish ecclesiastics

The Roman penitential of Halitgar (ca 830)  
Regino's ecclesiastical discipline (ca 906)  
The Corrector of Burchard of Worms (ca 1008-1112)

Later penitential documents

The penitential of Bartholomew Iscanus (1161-84)  
Alain de Lille's penitential book (ca 1175-1200)  
The penitential of Robert of Flamesbury (1207-15)  
The Icelandic penitentals (1178-93)

**APPENDIX C**

### LIST OF SUMMAS AND MANUALS

The twelve most famous summas were often entitled Summa de casibus conscientiae, but they are generally known by their nicknames: they are listed here in chronological order.

- Raymundina (1220,1234): (Gloss,1240-1245) Raymond of Penafort, Summa de poenitentia et matrimonio cum glossis Ioannis de Friburg), [i.e.William of Rennes] (Rome 1603)
- Monaldina (before 1274) Johannes Monaldus di Capo d'Istria, Summa in utroque iure.
- Joannina (c.1290) Johannes von Freiburg, Summa Confessorum.
- Summa Johannis,deutsch (c.1300) Berthold von Freiburg, Summa Johannis
- Astesana (c. 1317) Astesanus de Asti, Summa de casibus conscientiae
- Pisanella (c. 1338) Bartholomeus de Sancto Concordio, Summa Casuum
- Supplementum (c. 1444) Nicolaus de Ausimo, Supplementum summae pisanellae
- Rosella (and Baptistina) (1480-90). Baptista Trovamala de Salis, Rosella Casuum (and Summa Baptistina).
- Angelica (1480-90) Angelus Carletus de Clavasio, Summa Angelica de casibus conscientiae.
- Sylvestrina (1516) Sylvester Prierias Mazzolini, Summa Sylvestrina.

#### The Manuals for Confessors:

The list is as follows:

Manipulus curatorum, Guido de Monte Rocherii,curate from Teruel near Madrid, 1503

Confessionale, Godescalc Rosemond, a Dutch churchman, 1518

Confessionale Defecerunt, Antoninus of Florence,1499

Modus confitendi, Andreas de Escobar (of which 'The Interrogations and Teaching By Which a Priest ought to question his Penitent' was the most widely published section),1508

Opus Tripartitum, Jean Gerson (16 printings in the fifteenth century) 1510

Lesser known works

Peycht Spiegel der Sunder, Anonymous, Nuremberg, 1510  
Confessionale, Engelhardt Kunhofer, Nuremberg, 1502  
Penitentiarius, Johannes Romming, Nuremberg, 1522  
Instructiones Succincte or Short Instructions for Validly  
Making Sacramental Confession, Jodocus Winshemius, Erfurt,  
1515  
Manual for Parish Priests, Anonymous, 1512

The above are only a small sample of the many circulating in the decades before the Reformation. Michaud Quantin, 1962 and Tentler, 1977 have a more complete list.

**APPENDIX D**



CHART OF SACRED BOOKS OF HINDUISM

1. Sruti = what is heard. Refers to inspired literature that is eternal and impersonal.
2. Smrti = what is recollected. Refers to literature that is a result of tradition. All other sacred texts that have a human origin.

SRUTI

I. The Vedic Period - 1500 - 600 BCE

1300-1000 BCE : RgVeda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda  
 1000-800 BCE : Brahmanas and Aranyakas  
 800-600 BCE : Upanishads

II. The Period of the Reaction : 600 BCE to 300 BCE

Buddhism and Jainism

III. The Period of Brahminic Revival : 300 BCE to 300 CE

300-100 BCE : The Dharma Sutras  
 100 CE : The First Dharma Shastra, the Law of Manu  
 100-300 CE : The Epics : Ramayana and Mahabharata including the Bhagavad Gita.  
 300 CE : Yajnavalkya

IV. Brahminic Consolidation : The Pauranic Period 300-650 CE

1. The minor law books and Prayascitta digests
2. The Puranas - mythical storybooks.
3. The Theological Treatises of the Sects :
  - Samhitas - Vaisnavites
  - Agamas - Shaivaites
  - Tantras - Shaktas
4. The six philosophical systems or darshanas :
  - a. Nyaya
  - b. Vaishesika
  - c. Samkhya
  - d. Yoga
  - e. Mimamsa
  - f. Vedanta

V. The Philosophical Schools: (650 CE to 1500 CE)

Shankara	8th century
Ramanuja	12th century
Meykandar	13th century
Madhva	14th century
Vallabha	15th century

VI. The Bhakti Movement (1500 - 1700 CE)

- Works of the Tamil Saints - Alvars, Adiyars (7th cent)
- Works of the Bengali Vaishnavite sects - the Chaitanyas
- Works of the Maharashtrian saints -
  - Namadeva (13th Cent),
  - Ekanath (16th cent.)
  - Tukaram (17th cent.),
  - Ramadassa (17th cent).
- Works of the northern Indian poets -
  - Kabir (15th cent.),
  - Tulsidass (16th cent.).
  - Mirabhai (16th cent)

VII. The Reform Movements : (1800 CE)

VIII. The Backward Classes Movement : (1900 CE)

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CHART OF DHARMASHASTRA LITERATURE

Below is a complete historical chart of the Dharma Shashtra literature, compiled from 4 authors : Kane, Gharpure, Mueller and Nold.

600 -300 BCE	:	Apastamba, Gautama, Baudhayana and Vasistha Dharma Sutras.
100 - 300 CE	:	Manu and Yajnavalkya smrti
300 CE	:	Vishnu smrti
400 - 500 CE	:	Narada smrti
700 - 900 CE	:	Brhaspati
Dates unknown	:	Usanas, Kasyap, Harita, Sankha, Angiras, Devala, Yama, Samvarta, Parasara, Daksa, Satapa
1300 - 1400 CE:		Books on penance. Prayascitta viveka and Prayascitta prakasa.

**APPENDIX E**

LIST OF MINOR SINS ACCORDING TO

THE LAW OF MANU AND YAJNAVALKYA

Below is a list of the minor sins according to my classification.

Ritual or caste based sins

1. Being a 'vratya' or not performing your 'upanayana' (initiation ceremony) at the prescribed age. (similar to not performing your baptism or confirmation at the prescribed age).
2. Not establishing the 'srauta' (sacred) fires.
3. Not tending one's 'shrauta' or 'smarta' fires.
4. Officiating as a priest at a sacrifice for those not entitled to sacrifice. (eg. Shudras or Vratyas)
5. Officiating as a priest at the marriage of a younger brother when the elder brother is not married.
6. Atheism (denial of the soul and world after death)
7. Giving up the observances peculiar to one's status. (eg. A Vedic student (brahmachari) having sexual intercourse or one guilty of Brahman murder not doing the required expiation).
8. Giving up one's vows voluntarily undertaken.
9. Living outside of the four ashramas.
10. Learning the Vedas from a paid teacher.
11. Teaching the Vedas for payment.
12. Giving up the veda already learnt.
13. Studying the works of false shastras.
14. Sexual intercourse with a woman who drinks wine. (the sin of association)
15. Intercourse with women of a lower caste.
16. Being the servant of a shudra.
17. Friendship with lowcaste persons.

Sins against the common good or sins against Justice

1. Usury (more than allowed by the [shruti] sacred scriptures)
2. Manufacture of salt.
3. Maintaining oneself on condemned wealth.
4. Non payment of debts borrowed
5. Selling what ought not to be sold (eg. salt)
6. Sale of a tank or park intended for the public.
7. Cheating or following crooked ways.

8. Cutting down a big tree for fuel.
9. Maintaining one's self on one's wife's earnings or maintaining one's self by killing animals or using herbs as charms.
10. Setting up machines that cause death or injury. (eg. pressing oil for sesame or for crushing sugarcane)
11. Addiction to the vices.
12. Fattening oneself on food charitably supplied by others.
13. Holding the office of the superintendent of mines.
14. Slaying of cattle
15. Theft of gold (minor quantities)
16. Theft of corn, inferior metals or cattle.
17. Killing a woman (of any caste).
18. Killing a Shudra.
19. Killing a Kshatriya or Vaishya (that were not initiated for a 'shruta' sacrifice)

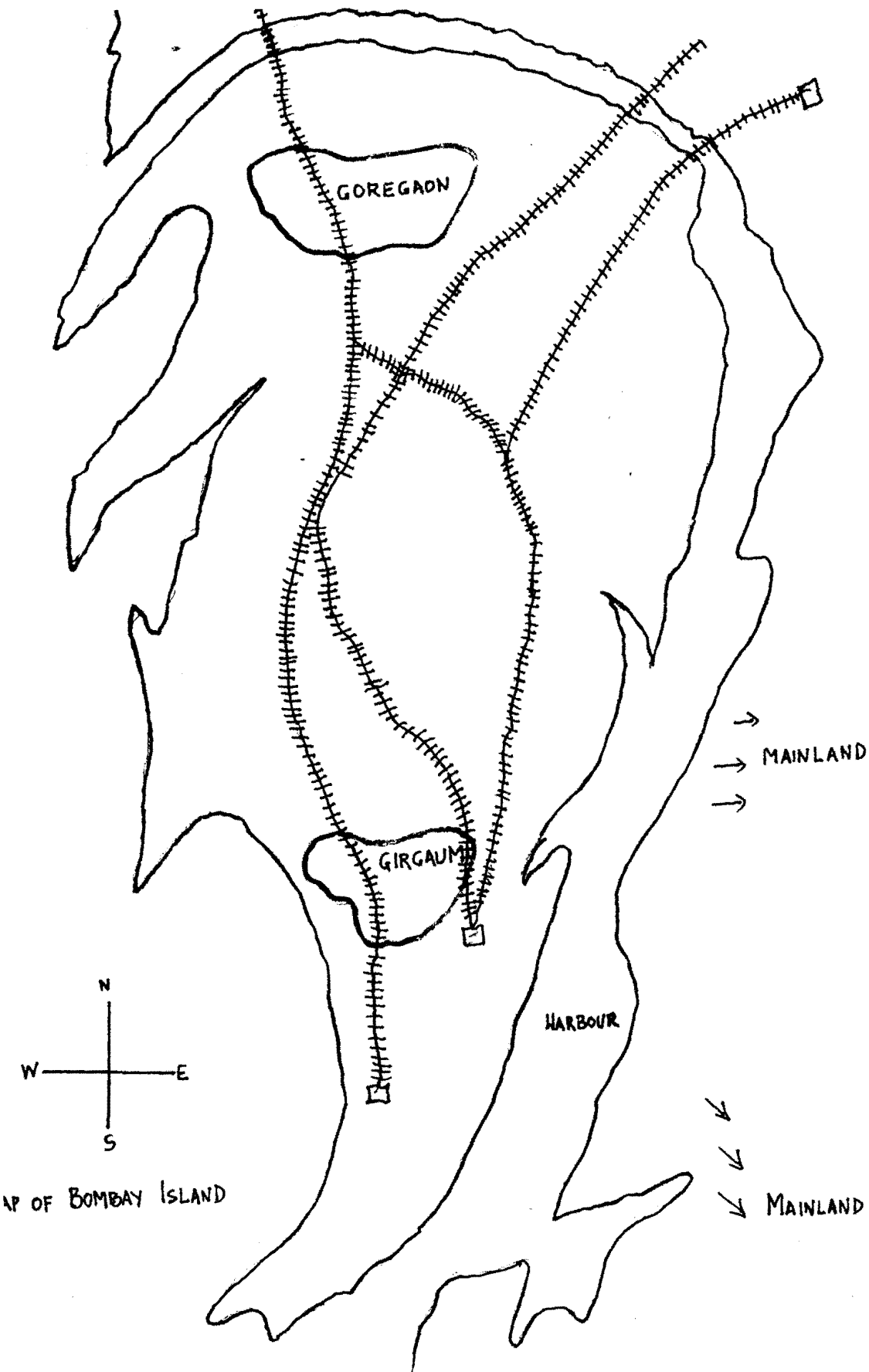
#### Sexual sins

1. Adultery (other than violating the bed of a guru's wife).
2. Selling one's self for money.
3. Fooling around with an unmarried girl.

#### Sins Against Family

1. Parivedna. Younger brother marrying before an older brother
2. Older brother remaining unmarried when a younger brother is married.
3. Selling one's children.
4. Parents giving one's daughter in marriage to one who marries before his older brother.
5. Cooking for the sake of one's self only ( not for guests or deities)
6. Abandoning one's son.
7. Not maintaining one's relatives when one has the means.
8. Sale of one's wife.
9. Driving out of the house one's father, mother or son.

**APPENDIX F**



APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by John C. D'Mello has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the directors of the dissertation and the signature that appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

November 3, 1989

Date

Kathleen McCourt

Director's Signature