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THE INVENTION OF SODOMY IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

MARK D. JORDAN

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iconography. As it begins to act out its own worship of the boy-saint, the Christian community seems as much bothered by his beauty as was the caliph.

At the center of these instabilities, in the text of Hrotswitha's life, there appears a word that means to settle matters. It will circumscribe the sin in question by placing it within a precise theological context. It will specify what exactly was guilty in the caliph's act and why it was so outrageous, so grievous a sin. The word in Hrotswitha is "Sodomitic." Raguel spoke of unclean or illicit tastes; the liturgy, of worldly pleasures and temptations. Hrotswitha speaks precisely, with the technical vocabulary of Christian theology: the caliph was disfigured by "Sodomitic vices." With that word, the passions of St. Pelagius enter into the genealogy of the category of "Sodomy"—a term unknown to Hrotswitha, because it had not yet been invented. The Christian attitudes oscillating around the figure of Pelagius will be condensed in that invention.

TWO

The Discovery of Sodomy

The credit—or rather, the blame—for inventing the word *sodomia,* "Sodomy," must go, I think, to the eleventh-century theologian Peter Damian. He coined it quite deliberately on analogy to *blasphemia,* "blasphemy," which is to say, on analogy to the most explicit sin of denying God. Indeed, and from its origin, Sodomy is as much a theological category as trinity, incarnation, sacrament, or papal infallibility. As a category, it is richly invested with specific notions of sin and retribution, responsibility and guilt. The category was never meant to be neutrally descriptive, and it is doubtful whether any operation can purify it of its theological origins. There is no way to make "Sodomy" objective.

Peter's coining of the term is the result of long processes of thinning and condensing. These processes made it almost inevitable that there would be an abstract term for this specific kind of sin, so specifically stigmatized. One process thinned the reading of the Old Testament story of the punishment of Sodom. That complicated and disturbing story was simplified until it became the story of the punishment of a single sin, a sin that could be called eponymously the sin of the Sodomites. Another process, more diffuse but no less important, had to do with grouping together a number of sins under the old Roman category of *luxuria. Luxuria* came to be seen as the source of sinfulness in diverse acts, many of them having to do with the genitals. Peter Damian's coinage can only be understood against these processes.

I said that they were processes of thinning and condensing. The essential thing to notice in the processes by which "Sodomy" was produced is that they first abolish details, qualifications, restrictions in order to enable an excessive simplification in thought. Then they condense a number of these simplifications into a category that looks concrete but that has in fact nothing more concrete about it than the grammatical form of a general noun. The rather dry business of tracking words has in this case a very

specific reward. It allows one to see, in the microcosm of grammatical form, the tyranny of generalization that results in there being a category like the category "Sodomy." The history of the word "Sodomy" is a history of the abuse of grammar, which is a reduction of thought.

Misreading Sodom

Many contemporary exegetes agree that the Old Testament story about the destruction of Sodom cannot be read as a lesson about divine punishment of same-sex copulation.[1] If any lesson is wanted from the story, the lesson would seem to be about hospitality. After all, the story in Genesis 19 is akin to the story of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19. A Levite and his party, on their way home from a trip to the concubine's father, are offered lodging by an old man in the town of Gibeah. The house is surrounded by some townsmen who demand that the Levite be brought out to them (19:22). As he recounts the events later, the Levite understood that they intended to kill him (20:5). The Levite instead pushes out his concubine, who is gang raped throughout the night. She dies on the doorstep in the morning. On returning home, the Levite dismembers her body in order to send its pieces to the tribes of Israel as a bloody call for revenge. The Israelites assemble an army that finally succeeds in killing the inhabitants of Gibeah and nearby towns.

Both of the stories, the one about Sodom and the one about Gibeah, narrate a terrible violation of the obligations of host to traveler. In the case of Sodom, the violation is punished by divine destruction. In the case of the Levite's concubine, the violation becomes an occasion for concerted military revenge. But the story of Judges 19 does not issue in a long tradition of moral reflection, much less in the naming of a special sin. Christian theology did not become preoccupied with a "sin of the Benjamites" (as the inhabitants of Gibeah were called), nor did European countries adopt penal statutes against "Benjamy." This is the more striking because the incidents at Gibeah are more horrible than the events surrounding Lot's hospitality to the angelic messengers in Sodom. The citizens of Sodom do nothing in the end. They are blinded by the angels, who then instruct Lot to hurry his family out of the city in view of its impending destruction. At Gibeah, there are no angels to rescue the sacrificed woman during the dark

1. I will not here repeat the detailed arguments made by Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, and recapped by Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, pp. 93–97.

night of her torture. She has to suffer and then to die of her wounds. Nor does God punish Gibeah with fiery storm. The Israelite armies must do it themselves, after sustaining heavy casualties. Why is it then that the story of Sodom had such a long afterlife? How does it come to be misread so systematically and for so many centuries? The beginning of an answer lies precisely in the dramatic and total divine judgment executed on the city and its neighbors.

Sodom is already used by several books of the Old Testament as an image. It is not always the same image. Most often Sodom is an image of utter destruction, of desolation.[2] It is thus a name for sudden divine judgment.[3] Sometimes Sodom is an image of a poisonous land, a land producing bitter fruit.[4] At other times it is an image for brazen or general sin.[5] When the sin is specified by Old Testament authors, it is a sin of arrogant self-indulgence or self-satisfaction. Thus, the text of Ezekiel says, "This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, overabundance of bread, abundance, and leisure, but they did not extend their hand to the poor. They were raised up and they committed abominations before me" (16:49–50).[6] The two sentences are constructed in the familiar pattern of parallel repetition. The abomination is not a new sin; it is the sin of the previous sentence recapitulated.[7]

Sodom continues to be used as an image for divine judgment or barrenness in the few New Testament texts that mention it.[8] Indeed, there are only two passages in the New Testament that associate Sodom with sexual sins. After invoking Sodom and Gomorrah as examples of divine judgment, 2 Peter adds: "Above all [God] will punish those who walk according to the flesh in the desire of uncleanness (*immunditia*) and who contemn authority" (1:10). The "desire of uncleanness" might be construed as same-sex desire, except that a few verses later the text continues: "They have eyes full of adultery and [are] unceasingly sinful" (2:14).

The other New Testament text is no less problematic. Jude 7–8 reads:

2. Deut 29:23; Isa 13:19; Jer 49:18, 50:40; Zeph 2:9.

3. Lam 4:6; Amos 4:11.

4. Deut 32:32.

5. Isa 3:9; Jer 23:14.

6. Here and in what follows I translate into English from the Latin Bible known to the Middle Ages. My point in doing so is that I am principally interested in the scriptural texts as they were known to Latin theology. It was the Vulgate, and not the Hebrew or the Greek texts, that proved decisive for the construction of the category of Sodomy.

7. A similar interpretation is given in modern versions of Ecclus 16:8: "There was no reprieve for Lot's adopted home, abhorrent in its arrogance." This does not occur in the Vulgate.

8. Matt 10:15, Luke 17:29, Rom 9:29.

"Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the nearby cities, fornicating and going after other flesh in the same way [as the aforementioned angels], were made an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire, so too it will be with those who stain the flesh and spurn authority and blaspheme against majesties." The angels here are, of course, not the good angels who came to stay with Lot in Sodom. They are the evil angels who abandoned heaven and are now imprisoned in hell. The author of Jude understands their sin as sexual, as analogous to fornication and seeking after other flesh. The last, mysterious phrase may be a reference to the sort of legend that appears in Genesis 6:1 about the "sons of God" copulating with "the daughters of men."[9] It seems certainly to reflect nonscriptural traditions that identified the sin of Sodom with sexual irregularity. In neither case does it refer necessarily to same-sex copulation. Moreover, in Jude these same sinners are guilty of taking bribes—a sin that exercises the author at greater length.

What is clear, I think, is that Sodom figures in the Christian Scriptures as the unsurpassed example of divine retribution. The challenge would seem to be that of figuring out what provoked it. The answer, as it appears in these lesser texts of the New Testament, is sexual. But within the Gospels, that is, in the mouth of Jesus, Sodom is not a reminder of a specific sin. It is a trope for divine wrath generally. Indeed, as Jesus is made to say several times, the sin of rejecting the Gospel merits greater punishment than the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah—whatever exactly it was. So Sodom is at this point not yet a geographical name for a particular kind of sin. It is a memorial site that records God's power to judge. It refers not to specific human actions, but to a story that is to be remembered for its present pertinence. What happened at Sodom is not an exotic, foreign vice that cannot be mentioned. It is, on the contrary, a most articulate reminder of the consequences of rebelling against God. We remember the story of Sodom because we need to learn obedience from it.

With these considerations, if not from the simple inspection of passages, it should be clear that there is no text of the Christian Bible that determines the reading of Sodom as a story about same-sex copulation. On the contrary, there is explicit scriptural evidence that the sin of the Sodomites was some combination of arrogance and ingratitude. This evidence was not ignored by patristic exegetes writing in Latin. Indeed, many Latin theologians continue to speak of the inhospitality of Sodom, of its pride and arrogance, even as they speak of its association with forbidden sex. I will not here try to prove that remark by a statistical survey of patristic scriptural

9. See Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, pp. 10–23.

commentary. Views about the sense of a group of texts become convincing not through numbers so much as by self-directed reading. I will instead offer a few highly visible passages from the theologians that would be most authoritative for the Latin Middle Ages. Traditionally, the four "doctors" of the Western church were Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. Each wrote on the story of Sodom many times in different contexts. I select the most extended or instructive treatments as examples.

Jerome, master of the scriptural text and its renowned translator, not surprisingly preserves the widest range of readings. In his commentary on the passage from Ezekiel, for example, he paraphrases the prophetic teaching quoted above quite succinctly. The first of the crimes of Sodom and her daughters is pride.[10] Its primacy is supported by abundant quotation from the New Testament. The seedbed of this pride is abundance with leisure, or, in words that Jerome takes from the Septuagint, "the opulence of delicacies and of luxury." The lesson is summed emphatically: "The Sodomitic sin is pride, bloatedness (*saturitas*), the abundance of all things, leisure and delicacies."[11] In another passage, from his commentary on Isaiah, Jerome adds to this list the feature of brazenness. Princes are said to be Sodomites when they publish their sins abroad, not taking any trouble to conceal them. The princes "publicly proclaim" their sin "without having any shame in blaspheming."[12] On Jerome's reading of these texts, the sin of Sodom is brazen arrogance bred of opulence.

Elsewhere Jerome acknowledges that Sodom has taken on a variety of allegorical or spiritual meanings. So, for example, he reports a reading according to which Samaria and Sodom mean respectively "heretics and Gentiles."[13] He contests the heretical interpretation according to which Jerusalem, Samaria, and Sodom signify spiritual, animal, and earthly. Again, in defending the literal sense of Jude 7–8, he refuses to let Sodom mean this visible world.[14] But Jerome's most striking reference to Sodom comes in a letter on a practical matter. Can a woman whose husband is an adulterer and "a Sodomite" count her marriage to him as dissolved?[15] Jerome's answer is a strong no. His phrasing of the question and his answer to it both make clear that to be an adulterer is different from being a Sodomite. They do not make clear what a Sodomite is. It clearly involves some form

10. Jerome *Commentaria in Hiezechielem* 5.16.48–51 (Glorie 75:205.663–664).
11. Jerome *Commentaria in Hiezechielem* 5.16.48–51 (Glorie 75:206.683– 685).
12. Jerome *Commentaria in Esaiam* 2.3.8–9 (Adriaen 73:51.19–21).
13. Jerome *Commentaria in Hiezechielem* 5.16 (Glorie 75:204.597).
14. Jerome *Epistulae* 46.7 (Hilberg 336–338).
15. Jerome *Epistulae* 55.4(3) (Hilberg 492–493).

of sexual irregularity, but it might well be irregularity in the mode of copulation with the man's wife or with his mistress. With Jerome, then, we run the full range from the prophetic use of Sodom's arrogance through scriptural allegorizations of it to its use to refer to a specific but unstated sexual act.

In Ambrose the moral sense of Sodom begins to narrow around sexual or at least bodily sin. He does recognize that the threat against the angels was a violation of hospitality.[16] Elsewhere, though, and especially in his treatise *On Abraham*, he identifies Sodom straightforwardly with fleshly indulgence and lasciviousness.[17] The Sodomites were, he says, fierce and sinful, given to crimes beyond the mean of human wickedness. Their special province seems to be that of luxury (*luxuria*) and disordered desire (*libido*).[18] When Lot's wife turns back to look at the burning city, she is turning back to the impure region of lust.[19]

The evidence from Augustine is, as always, complicated. On the one hand, there are passages in which Sodom is understood as a sign of human depravity generally—of "the pernicious society of humankind."[20] The Sodomites were unclean and proud; they were blasphemers.[21] On the other hand, Augustine is quite clear that the citizens of Sodom wanted to rape the male angels. In his narrative of Old Testament history within the *City of God*, Augustine gives as reason for the destruction of Sodom that it was a place where "debaucheries in men" (*stupra in masculos*) flourished by custom.[22] That is why Lot tried to offer his daughters instead. Better for men to violate women than to violate other men.[23] Another passage from the *Confessions* is much quoted by medieval theologians as being equally explicit, since Augustine there mentions the Sodomites in a condemnation of iniquities done against nature (*flagitia contra naturam*).[24] In fact, Augustine uses the story of Sodom in the *Confessions* only as an illustration of divine punishment. The crimes being discussed, the exact nature of which is unclear, are always and everywhere to be published as harshly as the Sodomites were punished.

16. Ambrose of Milan *Hexaëmeron* 5.16.54 (Schenkl 32/1:181.10).
17. Ambrose of Milan *De Abraham* 1.3.14 (Schenkl 32/1:512.9), 1.6.55 (538.25), 2.6.25 (582.4).
18. Ambrose of Milan *De Abraham* 2.8.45 (Schenkl 32/1:599.9).
19. Ambrose of Milan *Explanatio psalmorum XII* ps.43 34.1 (Petschenig 64:286.18); *Epistulae* 4.11.21 (Faller 82/1:90.230).
20. Augustine *Quaestiones XVI in Matthaeum* 3 (Mutzenbecher 44B:120).
21. Augustine *Sermo* 100 (Demeulenaere 83 = Migne *PL* 38:604).
22. Augustine *De ciuitate Dei* 16.30 (Dombart-Kalb 48:535.3–5).
23. Augustine *De mendacio* 7.10 (Zycha 41:429.4).
24. Augustine *Confessiones* 3.8.15 (Skutella-Verheijen 27:35.3–7).

With Augustine, then, we reach an explicit description of the sin of the Sodomites as the desire for same-sex copulation. It was a custom among them, and it was immediately understood by Lot as the reason for the demand that he hand over his guests. But even in Augustine the sin of the Sodomites is not merely same-sex desire. That desire is a symptom of the madness of their fleshly appetites, of the underlying delirium of their passions. The root sin of the Sodomites is not the desire for same-sex copulation. It is rather the violent eruption of disordered desire itself. The distinction is crucial for Augustine but quickly lost in the readings of him.

One piece of evidence for the sexual fixation of the reading of Sodom comes in a poem written by an unknown author in fifth-century Gaul.[25] The poem narrates the whole story of destruction—from the infamy of Sodom's sin and the mission of the angels through the city's conflagration. The poem makes absolutely clear that Sodom was known for sexual irregularities and, indeed, for same-sex copulation. No male visitor could enter the city without fearing damage to his sex from a citizenry known for its "mixed," incestuous marriages, its rebellion against nature.[26] Lot even tries to reason with the crowd, a foretaste of theological reasonings to come, by arguing that no other animal gives way to same-sex desire. "A woman is spouse to every [man]," he pleads, "and never has anyone's mother been other than a woman."[27] For the author of this poem, the men of Sodom not only like to rape strangers, they like to marry each other. In short, the sexual interpretation of Genesis 19 is now assumed. It has begun to fuel more and more vivid imaginations about what happened that night within the doomed city.

The last of the four Latin "doctors," Gregory the Great, treats of Sodom theologically in two prominent passages. Together they show that alternate readings have been pushed out of the way by the sexual ones. Gregory knows the reading that Ezekiel gives to Sodom. He reproduces it as scriptural commentator and applies it in his own voice.[28] But when Gregory thinks of Sodom, his first thought is of sexual sin, not of pride or inhospitality. This is clearest in his *Moral Readings of Job*, a book that would enormously influence medieval moral theology. At one point in explicating Job, Gregory wants to gloss the image of sulfur. He thinks at once of the destruction of Sodom. "That we should understand sulfur as signifying the

25. There is a very "free" and rather precious English rendering by S. Thelwall reprinted in Hallam, *The Book of Sodom*, pp. 191–197.
26. *De Sodoma* (Peiper 23:213.20–23).
27. *De Sodoma* (Peiper 23:215.49–50).
28. For example, *Moralia in Job* 30.18.60 (Adriaen 143B:1532.79).

stench of the flesh, the history of the holy Scriptures itself testifies, when it narrates that God rained down fire and sulfur upon Sodom."[29] Sodom is punished for "crimes of the flesh" (*scelera carnis*), for "perverse desires from the stench of the flesh" (*peruersa desideria ex fetore carnis*), for "what they did from unjust desire" (*ex iniusto desiderio*). In his *Pastoral Rule*, Gregory makes the moral explicit: "To flee from burning Sodom is to refuse the illicit fires of the flesh."[30]

One other passage from Gregory must be mentioned. It is not theological so much as legal or administrative. The passage comes in a letter in which Gregory instructs one of his subordinates how to deal with a case of a priest who is accused of idolatry and of being "stained by the crime of the Sodomite."[31] Here, as in the earlier letter from Jerome, the meaning of the accusation is presumed. In both cases, it is interesting that it accompanies an accusation of idolatry. But I mention the letter now in order to emphasize a terminological point. Gregory writes "the crime of the Sodomite." In two tenth-century copies of the text, there is a telling scribal error. "Of the Sodomite" becomes "of Sodomy."[32] This slip is the reason a number of dictionaries will record Gregory's letter as the first appearance of the abstract term "Sodomy."[33] In fact it is not. The term appears after Gregory, and then as a scribal error. But its absence here is worth noting. If patristic readers of the Christian Bible fixed on a sexual interpretation of the sin of Sodom, they did not yet make up a word to single it out. The entire Latin interpretation proceeds through Gregory and beyond without the help—or hindrance—of that kind of abstraction. You would not know this from the English translations, of course, which tend to become particularly irresponsible when translating terms having to do with same-sex copulation. Some translators disappear into prim vagueness; others apply an overly precise and definitely modern vocabulary. Either tactic will obscure important features in the history of moral theology, such as the entire absence of an abstract category "Sodomy" for some ten centuries of Christian theology.

29. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 14.19.23 (Adriaen 143A:711.8).

30. Gregory the Great *Regula pastoralis* 3.27 (Rommel 382:452.80).

31. Gregory the Great *Registrum epistolarum* 10.2 (Norberg 140A:827.7–9).

32. The manuscripts called *e1* (Milan, Bibl. Ambrosiana MS C 238 inferior, tenth century, from Bobbio) and *e2* (Paris, Bibl. Nationale MS Nouvelles acquis. lat. 1452, tenth or eleventh century, from Cluny). See the apparatus for 10.2 (Norberg 140A:827.9).

33. Most authoritatively, Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, s.v. "Sodomia." The article "Sodomy" in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* confidently asserts that *sodomia* appeared "around 1180 as a designation for the 'crime against nature.'" As will be seen, it appeared a century and a half earlier and preceded the preference for the term "crime against nature."

We need to move forward in order to witness the birth of the term. But before we can do so responsibly, we have to notice one other process that has run parallel to the misreading of Sodom. The passages from Gregory make two things clear. The first is that Latin exegesis had by the end of the patristic period fixed on a sexual interpretation of Sodomitic sin, even if it kept repeating the other interpretations offered by the Scriptures. In some passages, though not in all, the sin is specified as that of same-sex copulation. In most passages, it is stigmatized as a sin of corrupted, luxurious flesh. The second point, the one yet to be investigated, is that the interpretation of Genesis 19 has been taken up into a much larger system of moral teaching about a sin called *luxuria*. The scope of the teaching can be seen especially in Gregory. When Gregory speaks of Sodom and *luxuria*, he says something quite specific. For Gregory, *luxuria* is one of seven principal or capital sins. It has a certain rank among sins, as it has certain properties or consequences. The misreading of Sodom has intersected with the formation of Christian moral categorizations in the Latin-speaking West.

Baptizing Luxury

When Jerome chose the Latin *luxuria* to translate several different terms in the Old and New Testaments, he imported into Christian theology a moral category with an ancient Roman pedigree. That pedigree is more important than the sense of the Hebrew or Greek terms that *luxuria* displaced. *Luxuria* recurs in Latin moral texts as the opposite of the stern virtues of the Republic.[34] It is often coupled with *licentia*, with the threat of a general social dissolution, the loosening of bonds necessary to keep the city and then its empire intact. Whatever may have been the original Christian teaching on the dangers of the flesh, it arrived in the Latin-speaking portions of the empire both reinforced and distorted by the teaching of Rome itself.

The results of Jerome's choices appear in a number of passages. In the Latin Old Testament, *luxuria* is associated with drunkenness or gluttony and with sexual excess.[35] In the Gospels, it appears only once—in the description of the life of the prodigal son when he has run away from home to dissipate his wealth.[36] But the most important uses for later writers occur

34. For some Roman texts on *luxuria* and a reading of them, see Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, pp. 176–206.

35. For example, Deut 21:20, gluttony and drunkenness; Prov 20:1, drunkenness; 2 Macc 6:4, gluttony; Jer 5:7, prostitution.

36. Luke 15:13.

in the New Testament letters. *Luxuria* appears as one term in Paul's lists of sins in Galatians. It follows immediately after fornication and uncleanness, just before idolatry.[37] In the letters ascribed to Peter, *luxuria* gets connected with blasphemy and the desires of the flesh.[38] And in Jude, just before the text that links the sin of Sodomy with lusting for alien flesh, *luxuria* is named as the sin of certain false teachers who have corrupted the word of God.[39] Already in Jerome's Latin Bible, then, *luxuria* covers an enormous range even as it begins to condense around the flesh as the site of opposition to God.

I jump forward from Latin Scripture to Gregory the Great's *Moral Readings of Job*. That text will fix for medieval moral theology a certain view of *luxuria* and its place among the principal and most lethal sins. Gregory's schemes of classification are fairly straightforward. Seven chief sins spring from the malignant root of pride: vainglory, envy, wrath, sadness, avarice, gluttony of the stomach, and *luxuria*.[40] *Luxuria* comes last, not because it is least important, but because Gregory means to emphasize it. With malice and pride, it forms a trio of sins that particularly attack the human race.[41] It leads to idolatry and to one or another of its sibling sins along various causal chains.[42] The "daughters" or consequences of *luxuria* are identified by Gregory as mental blindness, inconsiderateness, inconstancy, haste, self-love, hatred of God, passionate attachment to the present, and horror or despair over the future.[43]

These schemes and causal connections hardly suggest the flexibility of *luxuria* in Gregory's thought. It agitates the soul in countless ways—burns it, beats it, stimulates it, rushes through it.[44] *Luxuria* seems in such passages to mean self-indulgence, self-gratification. It is both of the flesh and of the heart, of the deed and of thought.[45] Many fall because they rid themselves

37. Gal 5:19.

38. 1 Pet 4:4, 2 Pet 2:18.

39. Jude 4.

40. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 31.45.87 (Adriaen 143B:1610.15). There is a complicated history before this list and a more complicated posterity after it. For the briefest introduction, see Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues*, especially pp. 180–202.

41. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 33.15.30 (Adriaen 143B:1700.22).

42. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 33.38.67 (Adriaen 143B:1730.13); compare 25.9.24 (143B:1249.79).

43. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 31.45.88 (Adriaen 143B:1610.34).

44. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 3.31.60 (Adriaen 143:153.32), "inflammat"; 9.65.98 (143:526.54), "ignis"; 26.32.58 (143B:1311.6), "pulsat"; 30.10.38 (143B:1518.87), "stimulis"; 30.3.9 (143B:1497.20), "fluxa". Compare 32.14.20 (143B:1645.14–15) and 32.14.21 (143B:1645.40).

45. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 21.2.5 (Adriaen 143A:1067.65).

of fleshly *luxuria* only to lapse into the inward *luxuria* of pride. So long as *luxuria* agitates the soul, salvation is impossible.[46]

At the same time, in adjacent texts, Gregory teaches that *luxuria* is what we would call a sexual sin. It is linked to the genitals.[47] More symbolically, Gregory says that it is tied to the "loins" in men, to the "umbilical," that is, the center in women.[48] The devil holds these members in subjection and from them produces the salacious images and the physiological pulses that lead to acts of *luxuria*, outward or inward.[49] The sin is connected with effeminacy and animality.[50] It is symbolized by the ass, the pig, and the worm. Considered as fleshly sin, *luxuria* is described as staining, polluting, stinking.

Gregory's teaching on *luxuria* doubles the sin. On the one hand, it is a sin subject to indefinite modulation through the chambers of the body and the soul. It appears in one guise, then in another. Beaten down in the flesh, it returns through images projected from memory. If the memory of one kind of pleasure is successfully controlled, control itself may become an occasion for *luxuria*. On the other hand, the sin is housed in the genitals as in a part of the body that has been given over to demonic control. It flames out of those organs through specific channels of desire. It reaches out to fornication, adultery, to every perverse ordering of the flesh.

One way to ease this duality is to believe that Gregory means to elevate sexual sins to a unique prominence as cause of sin. The "loins" would become the source of the whole of *luxuria*. There is something to this belief, but it ignores the different logic implicit in the two views of *luxuria*. The logic of generalized *luxuria* is the logic of mutation, infiltration, reactivation; the logic of genital *luxuria* is the logic of disruption, direct assault. This dual logic is not accidental. It is important to Gregory's argumentative strategy. To have a category that bridges the two logics, the two models of causality, is to have a category that can be used to prevent troublesome sins from being subjected to corrective analysis. *Luxuria* has two logics built into it by Gregory. If one is attacked, it can be retired and the other brought into play.

There is more. The two logics are not deployed symmetrically. It is rather the case that the generalized *luxuria* is used to defend the genital

46. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 21.12.19 (Adriaen 143A:1079.19–24).

47. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 7.28.36 (Adriaen 143:361.131); 31.45.89 (143B:1611.57).

48. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 32.14.20–21 (Adriaen 143B:1645.10– 37).

49. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 21.2.5 (Adriaen 143A:1067.87–96).

50. Gregory the Great *Moralia in Job* 26.17.29 (Adriaen 143B:1287.86); 26.35.63 (143B:1314.7).

one from criticism. To the charge that Gregory's teaching gives too much weight to genital sins, it can be replied that *luxuria* is much broader than that. It is more like Augustine's notion of disordered desire, a fundamental inversion in the will that shows itself in dozens of secondary disorders. But as soon as this expansive doctrine is advanced, Gregory will bring all of its weight to bear on genital sins, as if they just were the fundamental inversion. Certain sins of the flesh are brought into the system of moral teaching at one level, then linked by the term *luxuria* to much graver dysfunction. It is easy enough then to transfer the sense of gravity out, down to the sins of the flesh.

Whatever the doublings of Gregory's notion of *luxuria,* it is a relatively less potent device for moral reorganization—for moral condemnation—than the term "Sodomy." "Sodomy" represents a level of abstraction beyond the slippage encoded within *luxuria*. Indeed, "Sodomy" will have the advantage of carrying within it all the polemical resources of *luxuria* and more besides.

Fighting Words

We have followed so far two textual processes. The first is a thinning down of the reading of the story of Sodom. The other is a condensation of the ancient category of *luxuria* around what we would call sexual sins. The two processes intersect and then reinforce each other. The story of Sodom becomes a story about one particular form of *luxuria*. Still, the abstraction of the sin from the story and the moral explanation has not yet taken place. There has so far been no mention of the term *sodomia*, "Sodomy."

The exact form of the name is important, both for what it says and for what is suggests. Abstract nouns based on proper names are rarer in classical Latin than a speaker of modern English might think. We routinely speak of "Platonism" and "Aristotelianism," thinking that we are using terms that would be recognized at once within ancient Latin philosophy. But neither *Platonismus* nor *Aristotelismus* is found in Latin before the modern period. The nearest Latin comes is *Platonicus* and *Aristotelicus*—adjectival forms, like our "Platonic" and "Aristotelian." The difference might seem negligible. It is not. An adjectival form always applies to some kind of thing, expressed or implied. There can be Platonic philosophy or Platonic customs or Platonic books, but not just the abstract, untethered essence "Platonism." It is the same with the word "Sodomitic." It has to be affixed to something, has to qualify some underlying thing. Most often in

Christian theology it qualifies a sin or a crime, which is then blamed and analyzed, depicted and condemned. The discourse proceeds not by studying a free-floating essence, but by looking to particular things in the world.

The immediate ground for abstracting the essence of Sodomy was provided by attempts to classify particular acts for the sake of punishing them. The attempts are recorded in the early medieval books of penances. These penitentials seem to have been first compiled in Irish and Anglo-Saxon monasteries for the use of confessors.[51] They typically group together certain sins, which are carefully described, in order to assign appropriately graded penances for each kind. The books were popular from the seventh century onward, and they spread widely. They certainly spread into the church schools and administrative circles of Italy, where they seemed important enough to Peter Damian to require an extended refutation. If their influence was much diminished by the twelfth century, it was in part because their project of moral classification had been entirely appropriated by the common theological traditions.

It is no easy thing to draw inferences from the penitentials about sexual attitudes or practices, much less about theological reasoning on sexual matters. As Peter Damian will delight in pointing out, the penances assigned are hardly consistent indications of the gravity of the sin committed. More generally, penitentials were written for use in a comprehensive system of spiritual practices, monastic and nonmonastic. They had important relations to liturgy, and they need to be read with an eye to ritual functions as much as to juridical or descriptive ones. So I mention the penitentials here not as social records or even as pieces of coherent theology, but rather as samples of theological speech about same-sex acts.

Their speech is pertinent because it shows that by the seventh or eighth century Sodom and its inhabitants were being mentioned as a way of designating a particular kind of sexual intercourse.[52] Some sections of the penitentials refer simply to "Sodomites" as a class meriting a certain punishment.[53] Others speak more precisely of fornication "in the Sodomitic manner" (*sodomitico more*), where the immediate context suggests a contrast with simple fornication.[54] Yet other passages speak more cryptically

51. For a convenient survey of different studies of the genre, see Driscoll, "Penance in Transition: Popular Piety and Practice."

52. For a survey of the teaching of many of the penitentials on sexual matters, see Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials,* which contains a very useful list of passages on same-sex relations at pp. 135–139.

53. To cite only a few examples, Wasserschleben, *Die Bußordnung der abendländischen Kirche,* pp. 222 (Bede), 234 (Egbert), 599 (ps-Theodore); and Bieler, *Irish Penitentials,* p. 68 (Grove of Victory), 100 (Columbanus), 114 (Cummean).

54. Wasserschleben, *Die Bußordnung der abendländischen Kirche,* p. 532 (Vigilia).

of the "Sodomitic sin."[55] There are a few lines in which descriptions of this sin are attempted, but they are not particularly helpful. The so-called *Penitential of Columbanus* describes fornication "according to the Sodomitic custom [or style]" (*sodomitico ritu*) as sinning by having "female intercourse" with a man.[56] This would seem to be an allusion to the Latin of Leviticus 18:21. Other passages do speak frankly of fornication "in the rear" or "between the legs," but passages in which these frank descriptions are equated with the Sodomitic manner of fornication are not easy to find. Even in the penitentials, which are noted for their blunt speaking about sexual matters, references to Sodom or Sodomites are used both to conceal and to reveal. They reveal to those who already know what the geographico-biblical reference means. Otherwise they conceal.

There is a more important point about the speech of the penitentials. The prescriptions against Sodomitic intercourse are not the same as the construction of the category *sodomia,* for which the appearance of the abstract noun serves as an important index. What are the implications of abstracting an essence from a proper name? Again, what are the implications of abstracting from a historical name? To abstract an essence from a proper name is to reduce the person named to a single quality. All that you need to know about the Sodomites is that they practiced Sodomy. In this way, abstraction from a proper name is deeply connected with the project of essentializing persons. A term like Sodomy suggests, by its very grammatical form, that it is possible to reduce persons to a single essence, which can then be found in other persons, remote from them in time or place. This kind of essentialism is necessarily antihistorical. The isolated essence is to recur across time, like an Aristotelian species, never subject to evolution. As a recurring essence, it would seem to justify recourse to the same means of control in every case—to a punishment as near as one can get to the divine fires that poured down on Sodom. If such dramatic punishments are not available, then at least the sin should be subjected to relentless denunciation.

A polemical character is suggested in a curious way by the form of the word *sodomia.* Its ending is not a native Latin ending; it is borrowed from the Greek. Now *sodomia* is unattested in theological Greek, but the habit of coining abstract nouns from names was a habit the Latins learned from Greek theological polemics. Most of the name abstractions that appear before the Middle Ages are specifically Christian and specifically polemical.

55. Bieler, *Irish Penitentials,* p. 96 (Columbanus).
56. Bieler, *Irish Penitentials,* p. 102.

"Christian" itself is a nominalized proper name, and one that was originally applied as a term of derision. Christian authors picked up the naming habit, it seems, and began to speak of such heresies as "Arianism" or "Sabellianism." The abstractions serve an obvious polemical purpose. They allow a writer to reduce an opponent to a schematic caricature. Arian authors could protest that they did not recognize themselves in the caricatures of their views given by pro-Nicean polemicists. But the damage was done. The nuances and dialectical complexities of a teaching, the circumstances and motivations of particular teachers could be swept away in an attack upon a malignant essence, everywhere the same and everywhere to be combated.

I say "malignant" deliberately, because the kind of transhistorical essentializing that goes into a name like "Arianism" is much like bad medical reasoning. Ancient medicine in the Hippocratic and Galenic traditions, whether empirical or dogmatic, was marvelously attentive to variations of individual body, custom, season, situation. The diagnosis of a disease was not an excuse to import a reductive explanation or to employ a prefabricated therapy. But the Hippocratic and Galenic traditions were for that very reason difficult to learn. The reaction against them, most famously expressed in the methodist or methodical school, wanted to make things easy by reducing complexities or particularities to a small scheme of invariant causes of disease. A disease, once identified, could be treated by the same treatment every time—and the treatments themselves would be few in number. The same logic of willed simplification is at work in coining terms like "Arianism." Such words are in effect slogans. They reduce an opposing position to an easy caricature, one that can be ridiculed or refuted memorably because briefly.

It is hard to say how many of these considerations were in Peter Damian's mind when he coined the term. Certainly he was thinking of analogies to Greek names for sins, because the sentence in which *sodomia* first appears is built around that kind of analogy: "If blasphemy is the worst sin, I do not know in what way Sodomy is any better."[57] *Blasphemia, sodomia.* Linked grammatically, linked by the seriousness of the sin, linked by being terms most useful in polemic. *Sodomia* does not make its appearance as a neutral description of acts. It is a brand that burns condemnation into certain acts. It burns into them as well the presumption of a stable essence, a sameness found wherever the acts are performed. The sameness links those who perform them back to the criminals who suffered the most severe divine punishment.

57. Peter Damian *Liber Gomorrhianus* (Reindel 328.2–3).

That transition from acts to persons is perhaps what an essence does best. By coining an abstract term to group together a series of acts, Peter Damian has made the inference from acts to agent almost automatic. The acts display an essence, the essence of Sodomy. Where is that essence? Derivatively in the acts, fundamentally in the actor—the Sodomite who expresses his essence, his identity, by acting. The unity of the abstract essence, Sodomy, points back to the unity of the identity in Sodomites. They are no longer persons who perform a few similar acts from a myriad of motives and in incalculably different circumstances. They are Sodomites doing Sodomy. The abstractive power of the word abolishes motives and circumstances.

Of course, it is one thing to coin a word, to project an essence in discrete acts, to assert a unitary identity that binds together persons across time. It is another thing to keep the essence and the identity from generating equivocations, paradoxes. "Sodomy" was no sooner coined than it began to be bent. Indeed, it was coined in the middle of a text ripped apart by the pressures of its dialectic. In order to see this, we must go to Peter Damian's little book.

THREE

Peter Damian

Books in Gomorrah

"Outstanding warrior" his first biographer would call him.[1] The battles were church controversies and the weapons most often letters, tracts, and treatises. In these, Peter Damian shows himself a superb polemicist—not to say a constant one. From first to last, he displays a talent and a taste for attack.

One early battle is waged against a "vice" and a "hot disgrace" (*flagitium*) that Peter Damian calls "most wicked" and "most shameful." The attack comes in a booklet titled by some of its first manuscript witnesses *Book of Gomorrah* or, more literally, *Gomorran Book*.[2] This booklet risks excesses not only of polemic, but of obscenity. Peter Damian claims to be worried that the frankness of his remarks will offend readers. It certainly offended later editors, who bowdlerized the text.[3] While there is no convincing case that its first readers were scandalized, it is true that the text was not embraced by its immediate recipient or his successors.[4]

The booklet as we have it is addressed to Pope Leo IX, who reigned from 1048 to 1054. Peter Damian was then in his forties.[5] He continued in office as prior of the community of hermits at Fonte Avellana, a community

1. John of Lodi *Vita Petri Damiani* 16 (Migne *PL* 144:133A): "egregius bellator."

2. I follow the edition by Reindel, who prints the *Liber* as *Epistola* 31 in *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani* 1. I will cite this edition by volume, page, and line numbers. For testimonies to the title, see p. 286, note *k*. An English translation of this edition is available in Peter Damian *Letters* 2, pp. 3–53.

3. See the edition reprinted in Migne *PL* 154, columns 159–190. An earlier English translation by Pierre Payer was based on this censored version. Modern scholars have also been reluctant to discuss the booklet. Jean Leclercq, for example, says that it discusses "a delicate subject . . . with precision and clarity, without any vulgarity. . . . It introduces with tact all of the required nuances" (*Saint Pierre Damien*, p. 70). Whatever the *Liber Gomorrhianus* might be, it is neither tactful nor nuanced.

4. I do not think that Alexander II stole the book from Peter Damian to prevent its circulation. Compare Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, pp. 212–213, especially note 17.

5. The dates and ages are to be treated with the kind of cautions spoken by Little, "The Personal Development of Peter Damian," pp. 319–322.

FIVE

The Care of Sodomites

Medieval practices of penance, of confession and reconciliation, lent themselves for use by many motives. So now do their histories. It is easy enough to tell a story about the development of confessional practice as the growth of ecclesiastical control over population, as the construction of new and more manipulable subjects, as the encroachment of persecution into the life of every believer. It is also easy to tell the story as one of pastoral seriousness for populations too long left untended, of the bringing of the Gospel to the people. Whatever the master narrative, it remains true that the writings for and about confessors reveal as few others can the detailed application of moral categories. This is especially true for the category of Sodomy.

Manuals or treatises about confession appear abundantly in the early decades of the thirteenth century. They do not appear out of nothing. Many are applications or simplifications of the moral and legal teaching accomplished in the twelfth century by masters such as Alan of Lille, to name one of dozens. The interest in pastoral care would issue in and be invigorated by the fourth church council held at the Lateran (1215). Innocent III's call for the council listed among its first tasks "to extirpate vices and to plant virtues, to correct abuses and to reform morals."[1] The council passed a number of constitutions encouraging pastoral care, of which the most important was one specifying already customary expectations for annual confession and communion. Every believer, male and female, was now required to confess sins "faithfully" at least once a year to his or her own priest. The priest hearing these confessions was to be "discreet and cautious, so that in the manner of an expert physician he might 'pour wine and

1. Innocent III *Vineam Domini Sabaoth* = Epistle 16.30 (Migne *PL* 216:823d–825c).

oil' on the wounds of the injured."[2] He should conduct a full diagnostic investigation before trying various experiments to heal the sick soul. Above all, he was to take every care not to reveal what the penitent had disclosed in the confessional.

The strictures on confessional secrecy are certainly one reason the good confessor must be "discreet and cautious." Others are acknowledged more or less candidly in writings on confession. One danger is that the confessor's questions will suggest to the penitent sins that the penitent might not otherwise have imagined. This danger is obvious enough, especially in sexual matters. Another danger, equally apparent, is that the very attempt to instruct penitents about sins will raise questions about the reasons for certain prohibitions. Robert of Flamborough's *Penitential Book,* for example, contains any number of exchanges in which the penitent asks the confessor to justify a certain rule or to explain what seems a contradiction between some rule and some authoritative opinion. So far as the renewal of confession was meant to rationalize the moral life of Christians, it risked revealing any inconsistencies in traditional moral teaching.

These risks are evident. A third danger, somewhat more subtle, is that the teaching in the confessional would serve to reinforce a particular sin by tacitly admitting its commonness. To give a penitent a technical name for a forbidden act is to tell the penitent that the act occurs frequently enough to have been named. The penitent's act is not a solitary, unspeakable deed. It is one of a number of such deeds, the ongoing existence of which has been recognized by theology. This is related to a fourth danger, the subtlest and most interesting. It is the danger that the penitent will come to feel a kinship with others guilty of the same sin. To be told, "What you have done is what the Sodomites do," is to be invited to search out the Sodomites, your concealed brethren. The confessional risks becoming one station in a network of sinful communication. The confessor himself might serve as unwitting go-between.

Taking Sodomy Seriously

Paul of Hungary's *Summa of Penance* was written shortly after and because of the Fourth Lateran Council. The treatise was meant to summarize and make applicable the council's constitution on regular confession. It may have been suggested by St. Dominic, whom Paul quotes as "Master Domi-

2. Lateran IV *Omnis utriusque sexus* (Alberigo 245); the reference is to Luke 10:34.

nic, our prior."[3] The reference would place the writing of the *Summa* between 1219 and 1221, when Dominic served as prior of St. Nicholas in Bologna up to his death.[4] Whether because of its intrinsic usefulness, its seniority, or its connection with Dominic, Paul's treatise circulated widely. It remained popular enough to attract revisers. Cardinal Berengar Fredoli was producing a third version of the work about a century after its original composition.

As Paul wrote it, the *Summa of Penance* is divided into two parts.[5] The first treats the practice of confession: who is obliged to confess, when, and to whom; what the confessor should say to elicit a full confession; how absolution of sins works and how it is limited. The second part of the *Summa* is a synopsis of the principal vices and virtues. The vices are organized, following Gregory's classification, around the seven capital vices, listed here in the order vainglory, anger, envy, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and luxury. The virtues are the three theological and the four cardinal, but they are intermingled in an odd way: prudence, justice, faith, hope, charity, fortitude, and temperance. Each of the principal vices and virtues is subdivided by Paul into further categories, yet these categories are given no more than a brief definition. Indeed, most of the separately titled sections in the second part of the *Summa* consist of no more than a few lines: "Impatience is not restraining an impetuous motion of the soul" or "Drunkenness is excess in drink."[6] The principal vices are given slightly more attention, and three subvices occupy Paul for more than the usual handful of lines. He deals with contempt and perjury at a length usually reserved for principal vices, and he devotes three separate sections to mendacity. But these are small dilations in the pattern of the text.

There is nothing to prepare the reader for Paul's enormous digression on the sin against nature. The digression makes up ten sections, one of which is the longest section in the entire treatise. Taken together, the sections on the sin against nature make up about 40 percent of the treatise on

3. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (*Bibliotheca Casinensis* 4:197a). For Paul's place among the first Dominican authors of confessors' manuals, see Boyle, "Notes on the Education on the Fratres Communes in the Dominican Order in the Thirteenth Century," pp. 252–253.

4. See Mandonnet, "La *Summa de poenitentia mag. Pauli presb. S. Nicolai*," pp. 525–544; Diekstra, "The *Supplementum*," pp. 34–35; and Kaeppeli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum medii aevi*, 3:207–209.

5. The third section in the printed edition is clearly not part of Paul's original plan. He says early on that he will conclude the treatise with the discussion of vices and virtues: "in fine tamen totius huius tractatus si potero et tempus habuero tractabo de istis vitiis principalibus ponendo descriptiones que ex ipsis procedunt et de virtutibus cardinalibus" (p. 195a–b). In what follows, I will thus not consider the last three columns of the printed edition as part of the *Summa*.

6. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (pp. 203b and 206b).

all the vices. To say this differently, Paul gives the sin against nature more attention than the capital sins of vainglory, anger, envy, sloth, and gluttony combined. What ought to be no more than a subcategory of the capital sin of *luxuria* comes to dominate the whole taxonomy of vice and to rival in length the whole discussion of virtue. It is not surprising then that medieval readers excerpted Paul on the sin against nature and counted it a freestanding work.[7] Certainly its detail and its vehemence seem out of place in the plan of his *Summa*.

The careful reader may have noted how seriously Paul regards the sin. It is first mentioned in a section on whether a husband who has sexual intercourse with his wife sins in doing so.[8] The answer depends in part on the motive for intercourse. There is no sin if the motive is begetting children or paying the marriage debt, that is, fulfilling the sexual obligation to one's spouse entailed by marriage. There is venial sin if the motive is avoiding incontinence, that is, preventing oneself from committing a worse sin out of sexual desire. Sexual intercourse within marriage is a mortal sin if the cause is either an excess of desire produced by aphrodisiacs or a habit of copulation when there is little desire. The most lethal sin of all arises when a man "knows his wife against nature."[9]

As is his custom, Paul tethers the remark with a citation from Gratian's *Decretum*, one of several compilations of church law that serve as his constant sources, even for quotations from patristic writers. The reference here is to a passage imputed to Augustine, which had already been noticed by earlier collections of theological authorities.[10] As it appears in Gratian, the passage is attributed to Augustine's *On Adulterous Couplings*, but it is in fact manufactured from fragments of his *On the Conjugal Good*.[11] The conflated passage does suggest, if it does not define, what is meant by "against nature." But Paul turns to it here and repeatedly later on for its startling assertion that unnatural copulation with one's wife is worse than incest with one's mother.

Augustine is made to say this:

> The evil of adultery outweighs that of fornication, but is outweighed by the evil of incest. *It is worse to lie with one's mother, than with the wife of another*

7. Diekstra, "The *Supplementum*," pp. 33–34.

8. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (pp. 198b–199a).

9. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 198b): "aut cognoscit uxorem suam contra naturam et tunc mortalissime peccat."

10. Gratian *Decretum* pars 2 causa 32 q.7 cap.11 *Adulterii malum* (Richter-Friedberg 1:1143). Compare Ivo of Chartres *Decretum* 9.10; and Peter Lombard *Sententiae* 4.38.10 (Grottaferrata 2:481–482).

11. The text conflates passages from *De bono coniugali* 8.8 and 11.12, but it cites *De adulterinis coniugiis*. Compare the reference in Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* (Grottaferrata 2:481).

> [*On the Conjugal Good,* 8.8 beginning]. But worse than all of these is what is done against nature, as when *a man would want to use a woman's member not given for this* [11.2 middle]. Now the natural use if done beyond measure *is something venial with a wife, something damnable with a prostitute. What is against nature is execrable if done with a prostitute, but more execrable if done with a wife. The ordering of the creator and the order of the creature holds so far, that it is much more tolerable to exceed the mean in things given to be used, than in those things which were not so given* [11.2 from beginning].[12]

I have italicized the words in the conflated passage that are taken from Augustine, and I have indicated their relative positions in the two chapters of his text. Augustine's mention of fornication and adultery in the first chapter is part of a *reductio* argument about the gradation of evils or goods. His main point is that both marriage and virginity can be good, even if virginity is better. His argument in the second chapter is that it is less serious to sin by having vaginal intercourse than to sin by having nonvaginal intercourse. Hence, it is less sinful for a wife to permit her husband to engage in nonvaginal intercourse with a prostitute than for her to permit him to do it with her. In neither passage does Augustine say or suggest that nonvaginal intercourse is worse than maternal incest.

That is just the lesson that Paul reads in his legal authorities. It is a lesson more powerful to him than to a modern reader. The medieval Latin church is famous for its preoccupation with avoiding incest. Much of the ecclesiastical regulation of marriage was concerned to map out the exact limits of permissible kinship between spouses. The kinship could often be quite remote, as it could be spiritual. Various marriage taboos were created by baptismal sponsorship or other sacramental performance. Recall Peter Damian's horror at the "incestuous" copulations of priests who seduce those whom they have baptized. Within this realm of fear over remote possibilities of incest, Paul of Hungary reads that nonvaginal intercourse is worse than the worst imaginable incest—the physical incest of son and mother.

Paul carries the comparison with incest into his next section, on the gradation of sins. A sin may be great because of its horror and cruelty, such as murder, or because of its stench and stain, as fornication, or because of detestation, abomination, and penalty, as with the vice against nature.

12. Adulterii malum vincit fornicationem, vincitur autem ab incestu. *Peius est cum matre, quam cum aliena uxore concumbere.* . . . Sed omnium horum pessimum est quod contra naturam fit, ut si *vir membro mulieris non ad hoc concesso voluerit uti.* . . . Usus enim naturalis si ultra modum *prolabitur, in uxore quidem veniale est, in meretrice dampnabile. Iste, qui est contra naturam, execrabiliter fit in meretrice, sed execrabilius in uxore. Tantum valet ordinatio creatoris et ordo creaturae, ut in rebus ad utendum concessis, etiam cum modus exceditur, longe sit tollerabilius, quam in eis, que concessa non sunt.*

"Because we never read in the Old or New Testament that any sin was so gravely punished, and no one doubts that something more wicked has been committed when it is more gravely punished."[13] A bit later he emphasizes the point from another direction: "Note the degree in fornication, because an adulterer sins more gravely than a fornicator, and someone committing incest than an adulterer. But graver than all of this is the delinquent against nature. Thus it is less a sin to know your own mother than to sin against nature, as Augustine expressly says."[14] The conflated passage in Gratian is cited again.

Paul has made his view of the gravity of the sin clear enough, but the reader should still be surprised that the sin against nature comes to fill almost half of the whole treatise of vices. Indeed, it makes up the treatise's latter half, because Paul's arrangement of the capital vices puts *luxuria* last among the seven. The sin against nature comes last in *luxuria*. None of its other species merits more than a few words. Even incest is treated in three lines of simple definition. By contrast, the sin against nature requires more than three hundred lines. So the final, the lengthiest, and the most vehement words that the reader hears on the matter of human vice are an attack upon this one sexual sin.

Paul announces that he will divide his discussion according to four topics: how detestable the sin is, what evils arise from it, what punishments are assigned to it, and what its cause was. As it turns out, Paul interpolates between the second and third topics an unannounced section explaining "the water of Sodom and Gomorrah." He also prefaces the discussion with a definition: "The vice or sin against nature is when someone spills semen outside the place specified for this."[15] This definition is, of course, much wider than the definition used in Paul's authorities. Even the "Augustinian" passage had counted as sin against nature nonvaginal heterosexual intercourse. Paul's definition includes any seminal emission outside the vagina—with or without partners, whatever the sex of the partners. It is clear, I think, that Paul himself recognizes the shift in definition, because when he now quotes the "Augustinian" passage, he omits the phrase "as when a man would want to use a woman's member not given for this" (*ut si vir membro mulieris non ad hoc concesso voluerit uti*). He omits the heterosexual specification. The deliberation blurring of definitions is essential to Paul's strategy in the attack on the sin against nature.

13. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 199a).

14. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 199a).

15. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 207b): "Vitium sive peccatum contra naturam est quando aliquis extra locum ad hoc deputatum effudit semen."

There are, he begins, five reasons for detesting this sin. The first is that it is worse than incest with one's mother—here figures the abbreviated quotation from Augustine. The second reason is that the sin ruptures the community (*societas*) that we ought to have with God. The authority here is another passage from Augustine via Gratian. This time the passage is taken more or less whole from the *Confessions*, though again out of context.[16] The decisive thing is that it introduces the Sodomites, who have so far been absent: "Crimes against nature are everywhere and always to be detested and to be punished, as the Sodomites were." If Augustine invokes the punishment of the Sodomites as an indication of the severity of punishment, Paul will use it as grounds for equating crimes against nature with the crimes of the Sodomites simply speaking. The third reason for detesting vice against nature is that it cannot even be spoken without polluting the mouth of those speaking and the ears of those listening. Paul invokes through Gratian a passage from Jerome.[17] He adds that he remembers hearing that some saint wrote that good angels flee as far away from those speaking about this sin as the sound of their voices carry. This is connected with the fourth reason. The sin against nature cannot be forgiven anyone unless it is confessed by name, and yet its acts are so bestial that they can hardly be named. As Haymo of Auxerre says, they are left unnamed even by nature.[18] Not to speak them is to entomb oneself in hell, and yet nature itself seems to abhor the speaking. So, fifth, the Epistle of Jude speaks of the eternal burning of those who go after "alien flesh"—a burning just like that of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Paul adds a gloss: "alien flesh" means "man polluted with man, woman with woman."[19] If traditional, the gloss is still necessary. The copulation of same with same would hardly seem to be the embrace of "alien" flesh. On the contrary, it would seem to be less "alien" than the flesh of the opposite sex.[20]

Such is Paul's list of reasons for detesting the sin against nature, now

16. Augustine *Confessiones* 3.8.15 (Skutella-Verheijen 33:56.16–22). I will discuss this passage at greater length below, in connection with Thomas Aquinas's use of it.

17. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (pp. 207b–208a). The reference is to Gratian *Decretum* 2.32.4.12 (Richter-Friedberg 1:1130).

18. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 208a). The reference is to Haymo's commentary on Rom 1:26, as in Migne *PL* 117:376.

19. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 208a). The reference is to Jude 7.

20. The passage in Jude is notoriously difficult. Bailey suggests that it might be connected, through intertestamental rabbinic traditions, with the equally obscure passage in Gen 6:1–4 on the copulation of between "sons of God" and "daughters of men." See Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, pp. 10–18.

revealed as the sin of the Sodomites. It is not clear for whom the list is intended. Are these reasons meant to supply the confessor with arguments for use in the confessional, with terrifying scriptural passages and *exempla* involving the revulsions of angels? Or are they meant to prove for the confessor that the sin is a serious one? Paul had conceded in his first paragraph that "some count the sin as nothing and . . . in some regions men are abused almost publicly as if from a sort of urbanity (literally, "courtliness," *curialitas*), and those with whom they perpetrate this terrible and abominable vice are called charming (*gratiosos*)."[21] Note the implications. There is a world in which the sin against nature is publicly accepted and freely spoken. Far from being silent, it speaks artfully and even coyly about itself. Moreover, the sin is the sin of those who master speech, the learned, the inhabitants of courts. If "terrible and abominable," it is also worldly and attractive.

If Paul's concern is to rebut these views, to root them out in the mind of any of his readers, then the context suggested by the original "Augustinian" sense of sin against nature has been entirely reversed. Paul is worried not about nonvaginal intercourse between married couples, but about what seems to be either a common opinion or a public and perhaps privileged practice. The opinion is unspecific enough to cover a number of sins. The practice, as he describes it, is concerned only with men. The reference to "certain regions" might suggest that he has in mind non-Christian regimes, perhaps especially Islamic ones. But then this is a confessor's manual, not a missionary handbook. If the opinion and the practice stigmatized here were only distant threats, there would be little reason to digress at such length on the reasons for detesting this sin. And since the whole of the treatise is directed to the confessor rather than to the penitent, we must assume that some of the urgency in Paul's arguments is an urgency about convincing confessors to treat the sin as the serious thing it is.

Paul turns to evils that have arisen and that "arise daily" from the "sin of Sodomy." Two things are striking. The first is the presence of the sin from day to day. The second is that the sin has now changed its name from the sin against nature to Sodomy. The scriptural associations invoked in the five arguments are now made into an equation. The equation makes it possible to transfer to an unspecified variety of nonprocreative sexual acts the full force of the biblical description of the judgment on the cities of the plain. It gives to these sins an apocalyptic dimension. This makes some-

21. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 207a).

what plausible Paul's list of evils resulting from the sin of Sodomy. It was one of the causes of the Flood.[22] It destroys humankind by destroying semen, as Onan did. Its denial of life so outraged God that he turned Sodom and Gomorrah into a sea within which nothing can live and over which no manned boat can cross.

This third evil resulting from Sodomy seems to be what launches Paul into his unannounced discussion of the properties of the water of Sodom and Gomorrah.[23] It is a discussion that he places explicitly between the evils that arose from Sodomy and that evils that daily arise from it. The properties of the Sodomitic water are so many metaphors for the unnaturalness, sterility, and repulsiveness of Sodomy itself. The water over the burned-out cities bears up pieces of iron while a feather sinks. Alongside it are found apples that are beautiful on the outside but filled inside with cinders and ashes. Other trees bear apples that disappear at the touch, exploding into dust and yet more cinders. The imaginary botany concedes again how attractive the allegedly repulsive act of Sodomy is. The apples may be cauterized inwardly; outwardly they are beautiful. Beautiful enough to attract touch, because it is only when touched that they explode.

The fate of Lot's wife should remind us that God wants no trace of this sin to survive because it is the greatest of all sins. "[Sinners] of this kind are hepatic and enervated weaklings (*epatici et enervati molles*), and are effeminate, as if reserved to the delicacies of Pharaoh." They are "hepatic" because in the medicine that Paul knows the liver is the principal organ of the system of "natural" powers within which generative power is included. Sodomites seem to have a disordered reproductive desire, correlated with a dysfunction of the liver. They are "enervated" because they exhibit a physiological susceptibility associated with women—here it becomes clear that Paul is thinking of male Sodomites. Finally, their effeminacy is associated with that of the Egyptian court, known in the medieval imagination for its oriental luxury and its calamitous punishment by the God of Israel. As an Oriental court, Egypt was also imagined to house eunuchs.

From the continued presence of sinners against nature there come in the present any number of catastrophes. "The [church] law says that because of this crime there come about famine and plagues, and earthquakes. . . . Again Sodomites are the adversaries of God, and murderers and destroyers of humankind. They seem to say to God, 'You created human beings to

22. Paul cites Methodius *Historia Scholastica* cap. De causis diluviis. The same passage is understood by Peter of Poitiers to refer to male-female copulation with the woman on top. See his *Compilatio praesens* cap. 12 (ed. Longère p. 16, lines 41–43).

23. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 208b).

multiply. But we work so that your work may be destroyed.'"[24] The Sodomite is the anticreator, the one who spurns God's offer of the power of procreation. Of course, the same charge, if not the same speech, could be imputed to any vowed celibate. Anyone who freely renounces procreation would seem to reject God's command to multiply—indeed, would seem to reject God's gift of a sexed body. This is a point to which we will return.

The radical rejection of God makes it fitting that Sodomy be punished by the maximum penalty. According to Paul, both divine and human law make the sin a capital offense. He links Leviticus 18:22 with a passage from legislation attributed to Constantine. There may be some mitigation for partial or incomplete acts. Someone who corrupts a youth "completely" is to be executed, but if the corruption is only incomplete, then the penalty is exile to an island. The canonical penalty for this is perpetual penance in a monastery. Paul also notes that deposition is for clerics what beheading is in civil law. But none of these is comparable to the divine punishment of the Sodomites. God's patience exhausted, God burned them alive in this life and then cast them down into hell where they could be punished without end.

Paul turns finally and at greatest length to the cause of "the Sodomitic sin." A number causes are given without any attempt to explain their connection. The first cause, supported by Ezekiel, is that of abundance of food, wine, oil, leisure, foreign foods, and pride of life.[25] The second cause, described by St. Paul and noted by two commentators on him, is idolatry.[26] But then Paul of Hungary seems to change direction. He uses a quotation from Gregory the Great to suggest that the sins of Sodom were so novel and outrageous that God was somehow surprised by them. God had to go down and look at these incredible events.[27] The mention of Genesis leads Paul to list the four sins that cry out to heaven: Sodomy, homicide, oppression, and bribery (or perhaps usury). Each is a violation of nature, but the worst violation is that of Sodomy.

Paul returns to the question of its causes, but he speaks now not so much from scriptural authorities as from "learned men and those who are experienced in hearing confessions."[28] We presume that what follows is grounded

24. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (pp. 208b–209a).

25. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 209a). The reference is to Ezek 16:49.

26. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 209b). The reference is to Rom 1:26, with the commentaries of Haymo (Migne *PL* 117:376a–b) and Ambrose *De Abraham* (Schenkl 536–539).

27. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 209b). The reference is to Gen 18:21, with Gregory's remark on it in at *Moralia in Job* 19.25 (Adriaen 992).

28. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 210a).

in observation of the prevailing reality in Christendom. Sodomitic sin is typically found in two groups. The first is certain courtiers (*curiales*) who are not strong enough to have a quantity of women (*copiam mulierum habere non valentes*). I take Paul to refer to the effeminacy of the Sodomite. These half-men do not have the physiological desire or stamina for promiscuity with women. Hence they practice the (less demanding?) sin of Sodomy. The second group comprises clerics and the cloistered who have little devotion in prayer and who detest discipline of the flesh. The association of Sodomy with clerks and monks is hardly novel. We have seen it at least from Peter Damian forward. But Paul wants to explain it in more detail by associating it with lack of spiritual and physical asceticism. So he repeats from Jerome and Matthew that there is no triumph over the flesh except by prayer and fasting. The devil will fight this, of course, by sending stronger temptations. But one ought not to despair; the helping hand of God is omnipotent. Having failed, turn to God through penance.

Paul does not end the chapter or his discussion of Sodomy with that call to repentance. He goes on to restate his conclusion: the vice is most grave. One should reject out of hand the excuse or mitigation of those who say that it is only a kind of pollution, like a nocturnal ejaculation. "It is indeed a pollution that pollutes the soul and the body. Nor is it done in the body of one who sleeps, but rather in one who is awake." It does not have the excuse of sleep. The confessor ought to apply this rule: Any emission outside of the natural vessel, however it is brought about, is a vice against nature, and anyone who commits such an act is to be considered a Sodomite.

With that severe censure, we come to the end of Paul's long digression—and indeed, to the end of his confessional manual. However much he has dilated on the sin of Sodomy, he has said rather little about how the confessor is to address it in the conversation of the confessional. Indeed, it has remained unclear whether Paul is trying to instruct the confessor how to treat the sin or to convince him that it is a sin. The length and vehemence of his digression suggest the latter.

If the scope of Sodomy is so large, and the judgment on it so severe, the confessor will certainly want to exercise care in approaching the topic. On the one side, he will not want to suggest such terrible practices to those who might never have thought of them. On the other side, he will want to ferret out those who have practiced such acts but who would hesitate to admit them. Paul of Hungary does give some general directives for proceeding about sins in general. The confessor is to "lead out the twisted

serpent with an obstetric hand."[29] He is to ask about any of the principal sins "under a certain covering" (*integumentum*, the word used by Alan of Lille for poetic fiction). But the confessor is also to ask after much of the penitent's biography, after his friends and customs, and especially after his temptations. How were these resisted? What thoughts accompanied resistance or succumbing? By such indirect means, the confessor may be able to proceed with sufficient indirectness and caution. More is needed for confidence. We have not heard in any detail how the confessor is to converse with the Sodomite.

Confessional Inquiries

Cautions to confessors appear in a number of other texts, if not always where or as we might expect them. Robert of Flamborough's *Penitential Book* was written a few years before Paul's *Summa* (probably 1208–1213).[30] It became one of the most widely diffused confessor's manuals of the thirteenth century. Robert of Flamborough provides in his section on *luxuria* one of his usual schemata for questioning a penitent.[31] The confessor is to ask whether the penitent has ever committed *luxuria* against nature. If so, with a man? A cleric or a layman? If a layman, married or single? In what ecclesiastical state was the penitent when committing these acts? And so on. The inquiry proceeds only under the general cautions about confession. Matters change when Robert of Flamborough directs the confessor to ask whether the penitent sinned in some other way against nature, whether he "had someone" in a manner out of the ordinary. If the penitent asks for clarification the confessor is not to respond. "For I never make mention to him of something from which he can take the occasion of sin, but only of generalities which all know to be sins. But masturbation (literally, 'softness,' *mollitia*) I extract painfully (*dolorose*) from him, and similarly from a woman, but the manner of extracting it is not to be written down."[32] The anxiety over provoking sin seems for Robert of Flamborough to be most intense around the act of masturbation, not around that of same-sex intercourse. The *Penitential Book* does provide penalties for masturbation, and recognizes that it is typically a sin of boys, but it never reveals the

29. Paul of Hungary *Summa* (p. 195a).
30. Robert of Flamborough *Liber poenitentialis* (Firth 9).
31. Robert of Flamborough *Liber poenitentialis* 4.8 (Firth 195–196, sec. no. 223).
32. Robert of Flamborough *Liber poenitentialis* 4.8 (Firth 196–196, sec. no. 224).

secret of how to extract the confession of masturbation from the penitent.[33]

Peter of Poitiers's *Compilation* also has a chapter of general advice on questions about sexual sins. "Unusual sins, namely against use and nature, are certainly not to be asked about everywhere and indifferently, nor are circumstances of this kind, especially with young persons, whether men or women, who have not had much experience with sliminess of the flesh (*lubricum carnis*) either as regards time or number of partners."[34] If the confessor suspects that the person is guilty of such crimes but is ashamed to confess them or fearful of punishment, he should ask "more securely and more diligently, thus at once more cautiously and more candidly" whether the penitent sinned with a woman "or in some other way than use or nature requires."[35] If the penitent denies it absolutely, then the confessor should not proceed.

More detailed and more forthcoming instructions for the examination of sexual sins are given in a little work by Robert of Sorbonne. The work may have been written as many as forty or fifty years after Paul of Hungary's *Summa*.[36] The chronological skip need not be too worrisome. We are not trying to construct a narrative history. Moreover, the treatise's interest lies precisely in its author's mediocrity. Robert was a popular preacher, a friend of the royal court, and an academic founder of some ability. He was hardly an original or experimental theologian. If his pastoral works were widely copied and even plagiarized, it is because they spoke well of familiar truths. This is the case with the little treatise on the confession of sins of *luxuria*. It may be a fragment of some larger, lost work.[37] It may have been intended as a freestanding, practical guide to a particularly difficult area. On either supposition, it is extremely revealing of the care Sodomites could expect to receive in the confessional.

The treatise, which is known merely by its opening words as "If the sinner should say," consists of a series of ideal dialogues between confessor and penitent on sins of *luxuria*.[38] The sins are of various kinds. They range from masturbation through same-sex copulation, bestiality, openmouthed kissing, touching the genitals of another, touching one's own genitals without ejaculation, to showing one's penis to another. The center of concern is clearly the sin of the Sodomites, which serves as a threat in the analysis of lesser sins.

33. Robert of Flamborough *Liber poenitentialis* 5.10 (Firth 243, sec. no. 294).

34. Peter of Poitiers *Compilatio praesens* 19 (Longère 22.1–6).

35. Peter of Poitiers *Compilatio praesens* (Longère 22.9–14).

36. This is the opinion of Glorieux, who places all of Robert's works between 1261 and his death in 1274. See his *Aux origines de la Sorbonne*, 1:54.

37. Glorieux, *Aux origines de la Sorbonne*, 1:57. The work's authenticity is also accepted by Diekstra, "The *Supplementum*," p. 24.

38. I use the text printed as a work of William of Auvergne in *Guilielmi Alverni . . . Opera omnia*, 2:231b–232b.

Robert avoids the issue of how to interrogate penitents about sexual matters by having the penitent begin the imaginary dialogue. The penitent admits to have ejaculated by touching his "nature" (*natura*) with his own hands. (The use of "nature" for penis is a startling reminder how difficult it is to give any strict philosophical sense to this term.) The confessor is to reply as follows: "You sinned most seriously, and it seems more serious to sin by doing this than by knowing one's own mother; for it is more serious to know a relation than to know a stranger, and the closer the person is as relation the more serious the sin done with that person. So someone who pollutes himself in this way sins most seriously." Here Robert transfers the false Augustinian passage from same-sex copulation, where Paul of Hungary had attached it, to masturbation. Quite ingeniously, he makes one's relation to oneself the worst case of incest. Because you are closer to yourself than to anyone else, having sex with yourself is the worst kind of incest.

Robert is not alone. A similar logic about self-relation in masturbation can be found earlier in the pastoral tradition. In the *Compilation*, originally composed just about 1216, Peter of Poitiers devotes a separate chapter to the "monster of masturbation" (*mollitia*).[39] The sin is to be inquired after cautiously, but once it is confessed, it is to be judged harshly. The confessor is to say that this sin is so terrible that it is never plainly named, but rather always referred to under a certain euphemism (*pallatio*) as "softness." It is different from the Sodomitic vice in that it corrupts only one person, but it is also more monstrous than that vice. In masturbation, the same person is both active and passive. The masturbator is "as if man and woman, and as if a hermaphrodite." What is worse, the ordinary advice about sins of the flesh does not work in this case. The confessor can advise in others cases that a penitent avoid bad company or places of temptation. In the case of masturbation, you cannot avoid yourself nor the domestic situations in which the sin is likely to happen.

Turn back to Robert's exemplary dialogue between masturbator and confessor. Once the fact of a single instance has been established, the confessor is to ask whether this sin has been confessed before. If so, no plea of ignorance is to be accepted. The next question is whether the penitent has ejaculated semen outside a womb in some way other than by contact with

39. Peter of Poitiers *Compilatio praesens* (Longère 18–19). For the work's dating, see pp. xiv–xv. Longère dates the revisions to the *Compilatio* by James of St.-Victor shortly after the original composition, that is, around 1220 (p. xviii).

himself. There is contact with the hands of another, which is detestable and worse than masturbation. Then there is same-sex copulation or copulation with an animal, "and so on," all of which are enormous crimes brought together under the term "abuse," and all of which corrupt nature. Those given to such vices are punished with sudden and horrible death. Robert adds a verse: "The bestial man who touches sacred things and who spills semen, rejecting [all] warning, will die a sudden death." The death of the unclean who touch the sacrament is inferred from 1 Corinthians 11; the sudden death of those who emit semen, from the story of Onan. Other cases of immediate death for sin are mentioned from both Old and New Testament. Even if civic and church law were not to count the vices as capital crimes, God does and punishes accordingly.

Robert's confessor is then instructed to add the comparison with maternal incest and the equation with murder. The usual scriptural verses of condemnation are included, along with a traditional etymology that makes "Sodom" mean "mute." Those guilty of the sin that cannot be named, that makes them less than human, are rendered mute as animals before God. So the confessor is to say, "Friend, you should thank God much in so far as you have escaped this [fate], and you should love Him who liberated you from such a passion and from hellish death." The rhetorical strategy here is that of pretending to presume that the sin will be avoided once its full horror has been described. The confessor is to speak as if any sane person would henceforth flee from something so horrible. That is why no particular therapies are suggested for dealing with any relapse.

The treatise moves on to what are presented as male-female sins. First there is disordered kissing—that is, kissing women openmouthed, with the use of the tongue or with nibbling. Next comes touching of the genitals in order to produce lust in a woman. The confessor is instructed to ask whether the penitent has ever touched himself without ejaculating. He is to be warned that this leads very quickly to fornication. Finally the confessor is to ask whether the penitent has ever displayed his "nature" to his companions or to anyone else. If he has, he is to be warned that this is at least a sin of fornication, since it is so obviously productive of lust. The confessor may also add the following admonition, though it is to be used cautiously: "It is the custom of Sodomites to show each other their male members (*virilia*), and they know each other by this sign, and it is most vile to become like the Sodomites." But Robert adds immediately that this is best said only to those who desire women vehemently and who have often sinned with them. The caution suggests that only very virile men, men excessively attached to women, can safely hear about the practices of the Sodomites. Anyone else might learn from the confessor that there is a community of Sodomites with its own customary signals. We see again the anxiety that Sodomy is in fact not repulsive—that it is immensely attractive. We also learn that Sodomites seek each other out in typical ways, that they pass down from generation to generation a language of recognition. The confessor is warning his penitent to avoid places used for cruising.

Placing Sodomy

Robert of Flamborough insists at the beginning of his *Penitential Book* that confessions should be conducted according to a rationalized system of sins. He says in the prologue that the penitent should confess "by steps and in order about all of the seven capital vices, first about the first, second about the second, and so on about single ones according to the single pattern (*propter compendium*)."[40] A little later he speaks more personally: "Almost everyone confesses in a disorderly way. Setting aside the order of vices, they follow the order of age, places, and times. . . . In this way they confuse both themselves and the memory of the priest. I prefer that you confess single vices in sequence together with their species so far as one is born and proceeds from another, starting from pride, which is the root of all evils."[41] Adequate confession depends on an adequate moral theology. It ought ideally to follow the causality of sins, their pattern of genesis.

Confession must then depend upon the preaching of that moral theology. This much is clear already in the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council. Bishops who are, for one reason or another, unable to meet their pastoral obligations are to appoint assistants to help them both in preaching the word of God and in hearing confessions and assigning penances.[42] The juxtaposition of preaching and confessing is hardly coincidental. If the faithful needed to be taught the rudiments of the creed, they also needed to be taught the outlines of Christian morality. So the conciliar decree emphasizes that the preachers must show in their lives what they speak in their sermons. But if the preachers are going to teach a rational pattern of morality, much more if they will live it, then they themselves must be taught. This need was recognized early on. Obviously Paul of Hungary's *Summa* combines instruction in confessional practice with a review of the

40. Robert of Flamborough *Liber poenitentialis* prologue (Firth 55.27– 28).
41. Robert of Flamborough *Liber poenitentialis* 3 (Firth 62.68–76).
42. Lateran IV *Inter cetera* (Alberigo 239–240).

vices and virtues. So it is in earlier and contemporary confessor's manuals. But there was also need for fuller treatments of moral life, treatments that would somehow combine the traditional doctrine of the virtues and vices with the more specific "cases of conscience" that were increasingly discussed among moralists.

Organizations of the virtues and vices reach back through the Eastern monastic traditions and the Fathers to pagan mythographers and philosophers.[43] No exact knowledge of the stages of transmission and elaboration is presupposed by the confessor's books. It is enough to know that by the twelfth century, catalogues of virtues and vices were well established, though the order of their elements was not fixed. Theological variations on these treatises lengthened the catalogue by adding other elements in sequence—virtues, vices, gifts, beatitudes one after another, as in Alan of Lille's *Summa*.[44] The sequences lengthen again as later writers distinguish more carefully between theological and cardinal virtues and as they continue to add new elements, such as the commandments. So William of Auxerre considers in turn the virtues as such, the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues (with their annexes), the gifts, the beatitudes, the properties and comparisons of the virtues, and finally the commandments, with corresponding sins and cases.[45]

The appearance of cases in William of Auxerre, early in the thirteenth century, is significant. Alongside the sequential treatments of academic theology, there had developed the "summa of cases" or confessor's study-book. An early example can be had in the sprawling *Summa of Sacraments and Counsels of the Soul* that goes under the name of Peter the Chanter.[46] The last part of this *Summa* is a *Book of Cases of Conscience* in 64 "chapters." Some of the chapters do report particular cases calling for delicate moral judgments.[47] Others deal with fundamentals—the virtues, merit, and sin as such.[48] The variety of Peter's material is exceeded by its disorder, which worsens near the anthology's end.

By contrast, and with the benefit of intervening decades, the Dominican Raymund of Peñafort codifies the casuistic material by applying a schema of crimes. Crimes are committed either against God or one's neighbor, and

43. The best introduction to the medieval organizations of virtues and vices is now Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues*.

44. See above, chapter 4.

45. William of Auxerre *Summa aurea* 3.11, 12–16, 19–29, 30–34, 35, 38–43, and 44–55, respectively.

46. It was finished by his colleagues and students shortly after his death in 1197.

47. Chapters 5, 29, 37, 44, 59, and 61.

48. Chapters 20 and 58, 49, and 60 and 63, respectively.

they are fully direct, less direct, or indirect.[49] Raymund then establishes order within each title, usually by adopting some of a standard list of questions: What is it? Why is it called that? How many senses does the name have? How is it distinguished? What are its kinds? What are its punishments? What doubtful cases are there? Raymund's order is an achievement, I think, and is directly connected with his work as a decretalist. The achievement has its price. The crimes here categorized do not even constitute a complete list of sins, much less a frame for a full account of the moral life. There is no special section on sexual sins. Raymund does mention very briefly Gregory's list of the seven capital sins and their "daughters" or consequences, but he does not even provide a list of their subspecies.[50] The only discussion of Sodomy seems to be one in the discussion of penances to be imposed in confession.[51] The authoritative texts adduced by Raymund are familiar from Paul of Hungary. Indeed, much of Raymund's language echoes Paul or some common source. It is as if Raymund had taken Paul's topics without taking his discussion of them. Thus we have the comparison with matricide, the argument from divine punishment of Sodom, the claim that many evils follow from Sodomy, and the assertion that it includes every kind of act except male-female copulation "in an orderly way" and in the right receptacle. Raymund's only personal note concerns the care to be used in discussing the matter: "Among all crimes, I believe that this one needs inquiries with caution and speaking with fear." However brief the discussion, this caution seems to be required. The fear of Sodomy is omnipresent.

A full account of the sin, indeed a summary of all previous accounts, is given by William Peraldus, whose combined *Summas of the Vices and the Virtues* must count as the great work of Dominican moral systematization before Thomas Aquinas. The combined work is large—about 11 percent longer than the moral section of Thomas's *Summa*. Peraldus returns to the consecutive or sequential treatment of moral topics, but with extraordinary thoroughness. He likes to argue by accumulating authorities, whether from Scripture, the Fathers, the nearly contemporary Masters of Theology, or ancient poets and philosophers. Peraldus deploys these texts so that those

49. Direct crimes against God are simony (1.1–3), simple unbelief (1.4), heresy (1.5), schism (1.6), and the combination of these last two in apostasy (1.7). Less direct crimes against God are breaking vows (1.8), breaking oaths and other perjuries (1.9), mendacity or adulation (1.10), divination (1.11), and disrespect for solemn feasts (1.12). Indirect crimes against God are sacrilege (1.13), crimes against Church sanctuary (1.14), refusal to give tithes, firstfruits, and oblations (1.15), and violations of the laws of burial.

50. Raymund of Peñafort *Summa* 3 tit. 34 "An sit facienae interrogationes . . ." (p. 432a–b).

51. Raymund of Peñafort *Summa* 3 tit. 34 De mensura poenarum (p. 437b).

in sin might be converted, those struggling to live virtuously be confirmed. The result is rich in superlatives and in particular pleas: "Eight points that ought to hold men back from the office of lawyer," "The multiple evil that comes from carnal love in the church of God," "The twelve stupidities of propertied religious."[52] He finds room for every topic within his scheme.

Peraldus's *Summa of the Vices* is organized around the seven capital or "deadly" sins, with pride allotted almost as many sections as the rest combined.[53] A host of lesser sins is attached to the seven. There is also a long appendix on sins of the tongue. In the *Summa of the Virtues,* William Peraldus adopts a familiar serial order: the virtues in common, theological virtues, cardinal virtues, gifts, and beatitudes. There is a regular sequence of subtopics. Each cardinal virtue, for example, is given its several senses, then described, next commended and divided into parts. Before or after the division, mention is made of helps and hindrances to the particular virtue. All of this is not so much a guidebook for use in confessional inquiry as it is a moral teaching within which confessional topics can be properly placed and thoroughly analyzed. The confessor is not to have a copy of Peraldus on his knee in the confessional. He ought to have absorbed its teaching, in whole or in part, through long study before entering the confessional.

Within Peraldus's ample doctrine, there reappear most of the pieces we have seen in the other confessional works. New pieces are added. For example, *luxuria* as such brings in its train seven "worries" or "anxieties," including "stench, filthiness, infamy" (*fetor, foeditas, infamia*).[54] This is the threat of exposure. The sin is repugnant and displeasing to the angels, most damaging to the sinner. And so on. *Luxuria* loosely considered is divided into five species, ranging from soft clothing and bedding to sin with "the members assigned to generation." Only the last are *luxuria* strictly speaking. The species of generative sins is broken down into five subspecies: "simple fornication," "illicit deflowering of virgins," "adultery," "incest," and "sin against nature."[55] The last receives the fullest treatment, though nothing nearly so disproportionate as the tirade in Paul of Hungary.

Peraldus begins blandly enough. "Sometimes [the sin] is against nature as regards manner, as when the woman is on top or when it is done in the

52. *Summae de vitiis* (Venice 1497), folios 235rb [#365], 240vb [#377], 252rb [#403], respectively. The numbers in brackets are sequential chapter numbers assigned according to the divisions of this edition.

53. The sections are allotted as follows: gluttony, 8; luxury, 36; avarice, 96; acedia, 49; pride, 138; envy, 4; and anger, 25.

54. William Peraldus *Summa de vitiis* tract. de luxuria (folio 201vb).

55. I will discuss the genealogy of this standard list below, in chapter 7.

animal manner, but still in the proper vessel. Sometimes it is against nature as regards substance, as when someone procures or consents to spilling semen elsewhere than in the place assigned to this by nature."[56] We recognize the inclusive definition of sin against nature as any ejaculation outside a womb. Having introduced the definition, William adds immediately, "This vice is to be spoken of with great caution, both in preaching and in hearing confessions, so that nothing be revealed to men that might give them occasion to sin." The warning applies to both preaching and confession. It thus poses in acute form a problem that has threatened all of the discussions from Paul of Hungary's *Summa* on.

If the sin against nature is only to be spoken of with great caution, elliptically or not at all, how are the faithful to be instructed about it? How are they to learn about the importance of avoiding it? One answer might be that since the sin is against nature, nature itself teaches that it is not to be done. But if the lessons of nature are so clear, so convincing, then there need be no fear of mentioning what has already denounced by nature. Again, if nature itself teaches that the sin should avoided as something horrible, then there need be no fear of contagion by suggestion—no fear that the least suggestion of the activity will incite to its practice. We have here the paradox of a deadly sin that must be condemned without being mentioned. There is no other sin like this in confessional practice—or Christian theology. With good reason: to hold that there is a very important sin against which the faithful cannot be warned is to make preaching and confession a game of charades.

Peraldus goes on, as is his custom, to offer scriptural and patristic proofs. They are divided into eight ways of showing that sin against nature "is the greatest." Peraldus does not make clear whether he means the greatest sin among sins of *luxuria* or the greatest simply. Some of his arguments go to the second conclusion. His proof texts are those we have already seen in various other authors, here gathered and systematized. Peraldus is able to mobilize so many texts because he assumes two identifications. He first identifies the sinner against nature with the Sodomite. He then finds the Sodomite in any ambiguous mention of heinous crime.

As he deploys the proof texts, Peraldus stresses two consequences of the sin of Sodom. The first is a double silence. This sin of Sodom is "an abomination," that is, "ineffable."[57] It should not be spoken. Again, and Peraldus here invokes the traditional etymology, Sodomy renders its per-

56. William Peraldus *Summa de vitiis* tract. de luxuria (folio 203vb).

57. William Peraldus *Summa de vitiis* tract. de luxuria (folio 204rb).

petrators mute before God at the last judgment. "They cannot seek to excuse themselves on account of ignorance since nature itself taught the law that they transgress to brute animals." The voiceless animals do not do what Sodomites do, so the voices of Sodomites are taken away. The second consequence that Peraldus emphasizes is the destruction of human nature.[58] By choosing to make himself into a woman, a Sodomite shows complete disregard for the nature God has given him. This is the nature for which the Son took flesh and suffered. Sodomy not only denies God's creative intention, it denies God's love as expressed in the incarnation.

Peraldus has offered no startling innovations of classification or condemnation. He does not intend to innovate. The aim of the *Summa* is to collate the traditions of confessional writing in order to provide an exhaustive and systematic teaching on the moral life. It would seem to do just that with regard to the earlier texts on Sodomy. But the reader must wonder after a time whether Peraldus has been as complete as he has promised. What has been omitted from the *Summa* is not only the problematic analyses of the causes of Sodomy, but the problem of clerical Sodomy. Peraldus nowhere suggests that Sodomy is a sin to which confessors themselves might be particularly prone. In a book for clerical readers, he remains silent about the danger to the clergy of this lethal sin. Is the silence deliberate? Is it required as part of the caution he has so often invoked?

These questions would not be so important if Peraldus did not include within his treatment of *luxuria* three sections on the problem of sexual sins among the clergy and members of religious houses.[59] The chapters speak only of sexual sins between men and women. Peraldus quotes Seneca, for example, on the brutishness of giving in to fornication. He quotes Genesis 6 on the "sons of God" who take "wives" from among the "daughters of men." The "sons of God" are, of course, understood to be males under religious vows. Peraldus even gives the reader two long moral stories. Both tell of the demons tempting male clerics to sin with women. In the second story, some demons are overheard boasting to one another about their wickedness.[60] One has spent thirty days killing various men in a province. Another has devoted twenty days to drowning; a third, ten days to killing newlyweds. Then the fourth demon boasts that he has spent eleven years inciting a single monk to sin and just that night he has led him to commit fornication. Satan crows over the fourth demon, saying, "You have done something great."

58. William Peraldus *Summa de vitiis* tract. de luxuria (folio 204va).
59. William Peraldus *Summa de vitiis* tract. de luxuria (folios 205vb–206vb).
60. William Peraldus *Summa de vitiis* tract. de luxuria (folio 206rb–va).

Nowhere in these longish chapters does Peraldus suggest that priests, monks, or nuns are tempted by masturbation or same-sex copulation. Yet Paul of Hungary, his Dominican predecessor, singled out priests and monks as a class in which Sodomy was most often found. He claimed for his evidence the testimony of experienced confessors. Paul even explained the causes for this—and they did not include eleven years of demonic enticement. Does Peraldus not know this? Or does he think it imprudent to say it? The silence of the confessional may have become the silence of the confessor's guide to moral theology.

I have so much emphasized the silences because they are so troubling. They are typically justified by appeal to pastoral need. Confessors are not to mention any of the forms of Sodomy for fear of encouraging them in those who might not know about them. This justification is incoherent as regards its assumptions of sins against nature. It is further incoherent as an expression of pastoral concern. The fear of Sodomy ends up by undoing the pretense of spiritual care for Sodomites. Their sin cannot be spoken plainly. It cannot be preached against. It cannot be broached even within the confession except with utmost indirection. The fanciful etymology recalled by Robert of Sorbonne and William Peraldus claims that "Sodom" means mute. In fact, it is Robert and William who have been made mute on the subject of Sodomy. Incoherent fear of sin has taken away the voice of confessors and preachers. Their silence is an ironic, an unintended testimony to the power of Sodom over the clergy.