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**“ON ACCOUNT OF SCANDAL . . . ”:
PRIESTS, THEIR CHILDREN, AND THE
ECCLESIASTICAL DEMAND FOR CELIBACY***

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By the late Middle Ages canon law demanded that the higher orders of clerics lead a celibate life. In reality, however, throughout the medieval period and into the early modern era a significant minority fell far from this ideal. Children, born after their fathers had taken vows to the higher orders, were visible evidence of their fathers' failure to uphold these ecclesiastical standards. The anthropologist Mary Douglas argues that cultural systems need to be able to control or restrict anomalous or ambiguous events that might overturn their organizing principles and threaten their integrity. Through an examination of French synodal legislation from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, I will display how the ecclesiastical cultural system worked to maintain the principle of celibacy and its own integrity by turning these children into moral and legal outsiders whose very existence is a source of scandal and moral contagion to be avoided or contained. In this context medieval ecclesiastical officials situated these offspring, particularly the sons of priests, as the source of all cultural contradictions inherent in ideas about clerical celibacy, marriage, and the control of ecclesiastical resources.

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Furthermore, by delegitimizing these sons and then granting them access back into the ecclesiastical system through the mechanism of the dispensation, the advocates of clerical celibacy were able to triumph culturally in spite of the challenges to their ideals that the existence of these children presented.

Christianity in the West has long had an uneasy relationship with the idea that those who are involved in producing the sacraments could possibly be involved in reproducing children (or indeed possibly be involved in any type of sexual relation). For the early Christians as well as their medieval descendants sexual relations put those involved in a dangerous and suspect state. To ensure that Christian rituals were completely separated from the possible dangers of sexuality, both Eusebius and Ambrose proposed that married clergy might remain so after they entered the higher orders only if they maintained chaste relations with their wives. This guaranteed the sanctity and purity of the sacraments performed by the married priest or bishop while permitting the community to benefit still from the wife's labour (and it allowed the wife to remain within a marriage). However, this theory of chaste marriage for the major holy orders (subdeacons and up) was troubled often through the centuries that followed by vivid and unmistakable examples of its being broken—that is, of course, by the birth of children to married clerical couples (McNamara 24-25).

The problematical status of chaste clerical marriage was further undermined by the ambivalent feelings that medieval theologians and canonists had about marriage and sexuality in general. As is well known, Paul had somewhat reluctantly recommended marriage over “burning” and Jerome had said that those married garnered only thirty-fold reward compared to the sixty-fold reward of those widowed or the hundred-fold reward of virgins. Augustine in his tract, “The Good of Marriage,” defends sexuality, reproduction, and marriage as “natural” for humans, but only within carefully and narrowly defined limits where marriage serves as the proper site for sexuality and reproduction. “Marriage,” Augustine states, “itself among all races is for the one purpose of procreating children, whatever will be their station and character afterwards; marriage was instituted for this purpose, so that children might be born properly and decently” (33).

In the minds of many thinkers of late antiquity and the Middle Ages, a dichotomous classificatory system gradually evolved that placed marriage into opposition with ordination to major orders and that juxtaposed the concepts of laity, sexuality, and reproduction against the concepts of priesthood, celibacy, and ritual purity. Marriage increasingly was seen as a sacrament

only for the laity, while ordination to the major holy orders was a call to true celibacy. The chaste marriage of Mary and Joseph, which is used from the twelfth century onward by medieval canonists and theologians to highlight the importance of consent for the creation of the marital bond, functions within this classification system mainly as a paradigm that exists above and beyond the system and thus could not (and indeed should not) easily be duplicated by ordinary married couples. As Dyan Elliott points out, "all of the circumstances around [Mary's and Joseph's] union, particularly their divinely inspired fulfillment of the Augustinian goods, were beyond imitation" (177).¹ Mary and Joseph remain chaste because they have willingly submitted to divine revelation. Devout married Christians could best imitate Mary and Joseph, not in their chastity but in their obedience. Normal marriages were, therefore, always to be open to the payment of the conjugal debt and the possibility of children.

These dichotomous classificatory systems of marriage/celibacy, laity/priest, impurity/purity, and so on, which surround medieval ideas about sexuality and reproduction, require, in the words of Douglas, "that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong . . . and . . . different classes of things shall not be confused," in order that the whole cultural symbolic system might function smoothly (53). Married priests and bishops, particularly those with children, do confuse these categories, and their marriages, unlike that of Mary and Joseph, could not be classified as unique and admirable. Douglas states that anomalous or ambiguous events, which disrupt a cultural system's way of organizing human experiences, must be accommodated or the cultural system risks "forfeiting confidence" (39). One way of handling the anomalous event is to interpret what is symbolically valuable in it as a cultural ideal whose uniqueness and specialness is signalled by the very ways it does not conform to the cultural pattern, while simultaneously marking off the repetitions of this event as imitations that are potentially dangerous or abhorrent abominations to be placed outside the cultural system. Increasingly, the ideal of chaste marriage was seen to be the union of Mary and Joseph; whereas the priestly marriage was viewed as an impurity.

And this is what happened to priestly marriages and the offspring produced within these marriages—they were denied status within the ecclesiastical legal system and declared to be anathema. In a letter to bishop Otto of Constance, dated December 1074, Gregory VII, the implacable reformer pope, explains that "the whole body of the Catholic Church consists of virgins or married persons or those holding themselves in restraint.

Whoever, therefore, is outside those three classes is not to be counted among the sons of Church or within the bounds of the Christian religion" (52-53). The married priest and his family do not belong to any of these sexually chaste or pure categories, and so for Gregory they are not true members of the Christian community (Brundage, "Sexuality" 71). A few decades after Gregory, the position of those demanding clerical celibacy was strengthened greatly by the ecumenical councils of Lateran I (1123) and Lateran II (1139), which rule that the major holy orders are an impediment to marriage, that all priestly marriages are to be dissolved, and that insubordinate priests who resist are to be deprived of their positions and benefices.

An examination of synodal legislation from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries throughout northern France reveals that the French ecclesiastical hierarchy recognized, at least on a normative, legal level, that being a religious or in major orders is a clear impediment to marriage.² Within the codes of medieval canon law there is no room for the priest and his family — his wife has become at best a concubine and his children are bastards. Yet we know from contemporary witnesses such as Odo Rigaldus, bishop of Rouen (1248-1276), and the ecclesiastical court records of Cerisy in Normandy that a significant minority of priests were not celibate and did have children (Taglia 56, 72-73). There appears thus to be a tension between the normative ordering of the cultural system and the reality of practice.

In a Coutances synod from the thirteenth century it is demanded that those who enter into holy orders

ought to respect the [holy] orders undertaken . . . because it is written, *be holy because I am holy and be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord*. Thus they should preserve chastity in their heart before the Lord and [chastity] in their bodies before men; for incorruptibility of body means nothing unless there exists integrity of mind and there is no value in being clean in body who is polluted in mind.

[Restat videre quomodo debeant Ordinem susceptum observare . . . quia scriptum est, *Sancti estote quia ego sanctus sum*. Et, *Mundamini qui fertis vasa domini*. Ut videlicet castitatem servent coram Domino in corde, & coram nominibus in corpore: nihil enim valet incorruptio corporis, nisi sit integritas mentis: nihil valet esse mundum in corpore, qui pollutus est in mente.] (Mansi 25: 51)

Legislators in Bayeux (1300) agree with this sentiment and further point out that the wrath of God will fall upon defilers; only those pure and clean of heart in the sight of the Lord are strong enough to minister in His eyes: "Continenter et caste vivere studeant universi, praesertim in sacris ordinibus

constituti, ab omni vitio libidinis præcavescentes, maxime ab illo, propter quod venit ira Dei in filios diffidentia, ut in conspectu Dei puro corde, et mundo corde valeant ministrare" (Mansi 25: 67).

Some of the French synodal legislation merely calls for the offspring of the erring priest to be removed from their priest-father's home. These children, born after their father had taken his vows, are all too visible evidence that their father is not pure in heart or incorruptible in body—that he does not guard himself from passion's every defect. Such children, decree the great synod of Paris (c. 1180–1205) and the Anger synod of 1220, are not to live in their father's home, as they give rise to scandal in the same way that possession of a chess or dice game does (Pontel 82, 164). The legislators of the 1495 Théroüanne synod rule that a priest's "natural" sons and daughters are as out of place in his residence as the women or laymen (*mulieres vel laicos*) whom a priest wrongly permits to be at the altar with him (St. Omer, *Bibl. mun.* 580, 5^r). There is a group of synodal statutes that focus on punishing the priest as well as driving the children out of the father's house. Legislators from Cambrai in a synod held between 1300–1307 (Martène, *Veterum* 7: 1302) point out that the infant son's squalling (*vagientibus*) attests to his priest-father being a notorious fornicator, as do neighbourly observations of the priest's domestic relationship with his concubine. Such a notorious fornicator, whose shame is exhibited by these noisy offspring, is to be suspended from his office. In a 1296 synodal statute Arras legislators order that beneficed clerics be removed from their benefices if they allow their children born during the time they are holding their benefices to live with them (Gosse 607–08). Another Arras synod from the second half of the fifteenth century (Schannat 8: 271) forbids strictly under the pain of excommunication and a fine of 100 Paris shillings any priest presuming to keep in his house or even within the parish sons or daughters born from his fornicating, "since the people are scandalized about this" [*quoniam ex hoc scandalizatur populus*]. Around 1334 a Tréguier synod forbids the priest who is a "shameless father" [*impudico patri*] from having his son reside with him. Offending priests will be fined £10 at once (Martène, *Thesaurus* 4: 1102). Priests' children are forbidden to be in his residence just like games such as dice or chess because they give rise to suspicions about the priest's character and moral worth, and because their very existence could corrupt other members of the community down the same wrong path that the priest had taken. These children thus corrupt the moral system, but they also corrupt the integrity of the cultural system, because they are anomalous, that is, they are children who are where children should not be.

The child whose "squalling" vocalizes his father's dishonour is also voicing his/her own shame — that is the stigma of illegitimacy. The priest's son or daughter is in a way a non-child, born to a father who is not supposed to be a biological parent and therefore born outside of wedlock. This lack of personal status for these children is articulated as early as the seventh century, when the ninth council of Toledo, in an attempt to ensure that priestly marriages remain chaste, not only disinherits children born after their fathers' ordination to the higher clerical orders, but also orders that they are to become slaves to the fathers' churches. While in the high and later Middle Ages children are no longer placed in slavery to their father's church, reformers have taken up with enthusiasm the idea that the child's illegitimate status puts it in an anomalous position both morally and legally, seeing this as a way to put more pressure on the sinning parent (Brundage, *Law* 216). The focus of ecclesiastical legislation and canonical disapprobation is primarily on the male offspring — their fathers' fornication, which has caused their legal disability, also gives these sons a moral disability, and thus makes them unsuitable candidates for ordination. Bernhard Schimmelpfenning, in his study of priests' sons, points out that the argument that illegitimacy makes priests' sons morally dubious candidates for the holy orders is soon applied to all illegitimately born male children (12). The evidence from the synodal legislation bears this out as various French synods point out that priests' sons as well as other males illegitimately born are not to be admitted to holy orders.³ The legal condition of illegitimacy here becomes a serious character flaw in all males born out of wedlock, who must then prove, according to a late twelfth-century Cambrai synod, that they are dissimilar from their dissolute fathers, leading a morally sound life before they come before a bishop for ordination (Avril, "Precepta" 11). Many canonists of this period are even more disapproving; Berhard of Pavia (late twelfth century) makes it clear that not only priests' sons, but all males who are the issues of fornication should be denied any type of clerical careers, while Johannes Andreae comments in the *Glossa ordinaria* that although adulterers can do penance and be forgiven, their offspring cannot. "The irregularity which is based on origin is greater than one which has its origin in a misdeed, since the first comes from nature, while the second comes from action, and natural irregularities cannot be changed as easily" (qtd. in Schimmelpfenning 29).⁴

Even as legislators and canonists deny priests' sons the legal or moral standing to receive holy orders freely, these illegitimate sons often form an integral part of the organization of the Church throughout western Christendom, as Schimmelpfenning proves. Synodal legislation from around northern

France confirms that priests' sons, in spite of what canonists and ecclesiastical officials demand, apprentice, as it were, under their fathers, becoming clerics in training. Rouen, c. 1231–1235, taking up the statement from the synod of Paris about no children or dice in the priests' houses, changes it slightly to:

It is forbidden strictly to priests to have their offspring which were born of fornication with them because of the scandal. And it is forbidden that they should assist or minister with them in the churches and that they [the priests] should have dice or chess in their homes.

[Prohibetur Sacerdotibus districte ne secum habeant prolem quam in fornicatione genuerunt, propter scandalum. Et ne eis in ecclesiis assistant vel ministrent, & in domibus suis aleas vel decios habeant prohibetur.] (Bessin 2: 58)

The Rouen synod moves beyond the Paris one, as it wants to keep the children out of the priest's house and out of the priest's ecclesiastical duties. Other synods also draft statutes demanding that priests not have their sons serving with them at the altar.⁵ A thirteenth-century Coutances synod directs priests not to have their illegitimate sons living with them, lest the sons help their fathers at the altar. It would be "shameful," the legislators noted, "to have the illegitimate son serve with his unchaste father at the altar on which the only begotten son of God is sacrificed for the salvation of the humanity to the eternal Father." ["Prohibemus etiam ne Sacerdotes habeant filios suos secum illegitime natos, propter scandalum: et ne eis ministrent in Altari, cum sit indecorum ut in altaris officio illegitimus filius impudico patri ministret, in quo unigenitus Dei Filius pro salute humani generis aeterno Patri vidimatur"] (Mansi 25: 33). In a statute from a 1455 Amiens synod no priest is to allow his illegitimate son to serve at the office; "moreover . . . no one is to presume to celebrate or say the canonical hours or some other ecclesiastical office without [wearing] his surplice." ["Omnibus sacerdotibus, ne filius illegitimus sibi ad altare ministrantibus divina officia celebrare praesumant: insuper omnibus curam gerentibus praecipimus, ne horas canonicas vel aliud quoque ecclesiasticum officium sine superpelliceo in ecclesiis dicere vel celebrare praesumant"] (Martène, *Veterum* 7: 1246–1247). The visibility of the surplice and the invisibility of the priest's son are linked together as part of what should occur in order for the priest to perform his duties correctly.

This concern over the purity, rectitude, and suitability of clergy certainly goes hand in hand with concerns over safeguarding the Church's economic

interests. Clerical families are a problem because they can bring the Church into their web of priorities, controlling or influencing decisions concerning ecclesiastical property and promotions. There certainly is an anxiety that decisions within the Church could end up not being based on ecclesiastical institutional and spiritual priorities but on familial and secular priorities and there is no doubt in the legislators' minds that priests' children could become an economic problem for the Church and its property. Legislation similar to that in the *Liber Extra* (x 1.17.15, 16) is found in Rouen's provincial council of 1223 (Bessin 1: 131), which forbids the sons of canons, especially their bastard sons (*spurii*), from taking up appointments in the same church as their fathers; clearly this is an attempt to keep families from consolidating their control over a particular church or cathedral.⁶ No cleric may try to claim that tithes are his by hereditary right, the great synod of Paris proclaims, for it is "by the authority of the bishop clerics could have the fruits; moreover they always labor for that which they return to the church."⁷ ["Nullus sibi clericus potest retinere decimas jure hereditario possessas sed auctoritate episcopi fructus possunt clerici percipere ita tamen quod semper laborent ad hoc quod ad ecclesiam revertantur"] (Pontel 76). Nor can a priest try to leave his church's immovable goods as legacy to his natural children, concubine(s), nephews, relatives, brothers, or other such persons or even strangers. Nor is he to try to get around this by seeking to leave resources that he "obtained" through the management or investment of the church's property or goods. All these goods and property whether immovable or moveable belong to the church, not to the individual priest.⁸ The synod of Rouen from around 1231-1235 rules that, concerning his own personal moveable goods, a priest may within reason leave them to someone (including illegitimate offspring); however, he must remember that these must be his own personal property and not derived from church property in any way. It is demanded also that the priest "must relinquish to his successor the house, with its utensils and furnishings, [or] at the least that which is properly suitable for them." ["Domus autem utensilia et supellectilia successoribus suis relinquuntur, saltem quod eis conveniat competenter"] (Bessin 2: 60). Arras legislators allow in the late fifteenth century that a priest can make a moderate gift (*curialitatem*) to someone for the purpose of relieving poverty or for a service rendered or for alms—just so long as the gift does not cause the church grave inconvenience or injury (Schannat 8: 269). A thirteenth-century Coutances synod (Mansi 25: 27) makes it clear that charity is not to begin at home. Alms and other donations given to the church are not to be taken by anyone or to be converted into a lay fief

beyond ecclesiastical jurisdiction or to be put to use in any other unspecified manner. Should any priest, desirous of money for his sons or grandsons, try to enfeoff church property he is to be removed from his benefice. Tréguier legislators in a synod held around 1334 do not allow priests or clerics holding benefices to will any type of property to their sons born after they had been ordained to holy orders. Legacies left to these sons are to be given either to the church where the father had his living or to the church that the son now attends (Martène, *Thesaurus* 4: 1102). Ecclesiastical legislators clearly do not want anyone to assume that he or she has claim upon a benefice, alms, or other ecclesiastical goods by right of inheritance. Punishments for those who attempt to claim by inheritance ecclesiastical benefices, lands, or goods or those who attempt to give such property to their offspring range from fines to suspension from office to excommunication for all concerned.

Priests' children are also disadvantaged when it comes to looking for marriage partners from the local neighborhood. A statute from a thirteenth-century Coutances synod points out pragmatically:

A priest who baptizes a child, is [the child's] spiritual father, whence the natural son of the same priest ought not and cannot marry a woman whom the same priest has baptized; and similarly with the natural daughter of the priest and his spiritual son. And if by chance they were to marry, they must separate.

[Sacerdos qui baptizat puerum, fit ejus pater spiritualis: unde filius ejusdem Presbyteri naturalis non debet, nec potest matrimonium contrahere cum foemina, quam idem Presbyter baptizabit; nec similiter filia naturalis Presbyteris cum filio spirituali. Et si forte fuerint matrimonialiter personae hujusmodi copulatæ, debent ab invicem saparari [sic].] (Mansi 25: 31)

Although denial of inheritance or marriage partners is in many ways economically driven to prevent priests' children from making dowry or estate claims upon church property and to prevent families from entrenching themselves within the offices and benefices of the Church, to reduce these concerns to economics is to simplify the picture. The medieval Church does indeed strive to place itself above the secular world's network of families, to make itself an eternal institution whose power and property can not be alienated (Goody 81; Brundage, *Law* 215); however, at the same time it is striving to maintain a confident and integral cultural system. It is during this period of the high and later Middle Ages that, as Miri Rubin states, "Christianity became the overarching language of medieval society" (44). To do this, Christianity needed to have a cultural system that, as Douglas indicates, could inspire confidence and handle ambiguous and anomalous events.

For all the condemnation rained upon these illegitimate sons, the Church hierarchy needs them to help run the very ecclesiastical system that is working to deny them rights. According to Schimmelpfenning, a significant minority of the clergy are recruited from the ranks of priests' sons and without these recruits, "the organization of the Church would have collapsed" (38). And yet to let priests' sons, the fruit of illicit and invalid relations according to ecclesiastical law, freely take positions of authority within the ecclesiastical framework is damaging to that very ecclesiastical framework and its claims of sacramental (and symbolic) powers. For by calling into question the erring priest's fitness for his office and denying his son legitimate social or moral standing, the Church is left vulnerable to the charge of having its own legitimacy questioned, since these sinful priests and their sons often end up still ministering at the altar, as the Coutances legislators noted.

Ecclesiastical authorities needed a way to direct and contain the ambiguities and anomalies caused by priestly misbehaviour and still be able to maintain the hierarchy by recruiting the needed candidates to the higher clergy without allowing economic or inheritance claims to be made against Church property. The way this is done is through the mechanism of dispensations, especially papal dispensations. Dispensations in fact increase and reinforce the power structure that is trying to enforce celibacy, for they remind everyone that profaners of the system are "polluted" and cannot participate in the system until they have been granted dispensation. According to several synodal statutes both priests' sons and other illegitimate males need dispensations to receive holy orders or to take up a benefice.⁹ It is important that these problematical candidates be carefully checked to make sure that irregularity in their birth does not mean that they will follow in their father's sinful footsteps. Schimmelpfenning has pointed out that by the fourteenth century a papal dispensation "no longer indicated, as it had done in the reform period, an exceptional case based on extra-ordinary circumstances, but it had now become part of the daily routine of curial business" (38). This is true, but by decreeing that celibacy is a necessary condition for the major orders and then finding a way of controlling the anomalies that continue to arise, the reformers and their supporters are able to move the ecclesiastical norms in the direction that they desire, retain the sons of priests they need to support the ecclesiastical hierarchy, strengthen papal control over the priesthood, maintain institutional control of the economic resources, and keep clerics as much as possible out of familial and worldly entanglements. Making dispensations necessary (even if routine) undercuts the standing of priests' sons by calling attention to the fact that illegitimacy

is a bar to the clerical life and that celibacy is to be the standard for the priesthood. This is all done by turning priests' children, especially their male offspring, into threats to the delineated cultural boundaries.

Unhappily, if little is known about priests' sons, even less is known about their daughters; it is suggested that they, following in their mothers' footsteps, became priests' concubines (Brundage, *Law* 216–17; Schimmelpfenning 33, 44).¹⁰ While their brothers' existence is acknowledged and accommodated within the ecclesiastical legal system, theirs is ignored almost totally. If they can be found anywhere in the synodal legislation, it is lumped indifferently together with their mothers and all the rest of womenkind in the statutes that forbid priests to associate with women in any way that might cause scandal or suspicions to arise.¹¹ For many of the legislators, all women are dangerous, no matter what their relationship is to the priest.

As we have seen, most of the French synodal legislation specifically devoted to priests' children is gender specific and aimed directly at denying male offspring either legal or moral standing in regard to church resources and offices. At the same time canonists, legislators, and other ecclesiastical thinkers realize that it is important that the ecclesiastical system be able to utilize and accommodate these sons, who, whatever is decreed in theory, do exist in practice. This ability to redefine and reinscribe how these priests' sons are to be seen culturally is what made it possible for the reformers and their demands for priestly celibacy to triumph in the face of the seeming scandal of the "squalling" male infant.

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NOTES

¹ For Elliott's argument about medieval concerns over the status of chaste marriages and the marriage of Mary and Joseph, see especially 132–55, 176–83; for added discussion on the marriage of Mary and Joseph, see Gold.

² At the same time that Gregory VII is complaining to bishop Otto of Constance about priests and their concubines, a synod of Paris proclaims that clerical celibacy is "insufferable and unreasonable" (qtd. in Baldwin 1043 n12). In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries there appears still to have been an anti-celibacy movement at the schools of Paris (Baldwin); however, there is no indication in any of the synodal legislation examined of sympathy to this movement. See for example, Rouen, c. 1231–1235 (Bessin 2: 62); Cambrai, c. 1300–1307 (Martène, *Veterum*, 7: 1303); Orléans, c. 1314 (Martène, *Veterum* 7: 1279–1280); Arras, second half of the fifteenth century (Schannat 8: 257).

³ See for example: Angers, 1220 (Pontel 182); Coutances, thirteenth century (Mansi 25: 50); Council of Tours at Saumur, 1253 (Avril, *Conciles* 199); Arras, c. 1270–1290 (Gosse 585); Arras, second half of the fifteenth century (Schannat 8: 260).

⁴ Usurers' sons also become tainted with the sin of their fathers and so are poor candidates for the clerical orders according to legislation from the Arras synod of 16 October 1296 (Gosse 607) and the Amiens synod of 1455 (Martène, *Veterum* 7: 1255).

⁵ The legislation is from the following synods: Arras, c. 1270-1290 (Gosse 597); Bayeux, 1300 (Mansi 25: 67); Lisieux, 1448 (Bessin 2: 484); Rouen, 15 Dec. 1445 (Mansi 32: 30a).

⁶ Schimmelpfenning notes that up to the era of Lateran IV (1215) illegitimate sons of priests are allowed to become canons regular or monks without needing dispensation. Johannes Teutonicus (d. 1245/46) argues that joining a religious order annuls the impediment created by illegitimacy. As monks or canons regular these sons could take the higher clerical orders but they could not climb the hierarchical ladder and become deans, priors, or abbots (17-18, 24).

⁷ See also the synod of Meaux, c. 1346 (Martène, *Veterum*: 4: 899a).

⁸ Paris, c. 1196-1208 (Pontel 84); Rouen, c. 1231-1235 (Bessin 2: 60); Tours, 1239 (Avril, *Conciles* 173); Council of Tours at Saumur, 1253 (Avril, *Conciles* 207-08); Cambrai, 1 Oct. 1260 (Boeren 3: 387); Cambrai, c. 1287-1288 (Boeren 4: 147); Cambrai, c. 1300-1307 (Martène, *Veterum* 7: 1310), Arras, 16 Oct. 1296 (Gosse 608); Meaux, c. 1346 (Martène, *Thesaurus* 4: 900); Arras, second half fifteenth c. (Schannat 8: 269).

⁹ The two Arras synods, one dated between 1270-1290, the other from the fifteenth century, and the Amiens synod of 1455 simply specify that a dispensation is needed (Gosse 585; Schannat 8: 260; Martène, *Veterum* 7: 1255). The Coutances synod from the thirteenth century demands that the dispensation be obtained from the pope (Mansi 25: 50).

¹⁰ Interestingly, Chaucer, in his satirical "Reeve's Tale," tells of a priest who alienates property from his church to dower his daughter with a set of brass dishes. Here the daughter marries not another priest but a pretentious miller who wanted a "virgin and well bred" wife. The priest also intends to make his granddaughter his heir "[f]or Holy Church's goods should be expended / On Holy Church's blood, so well-descended" (Chaucer, *CT* i.125-26).

¹¹ See for example the constitution of Galon issued in 1208 by the cardinal legate to Paris forbidding priests' concubines and other women from residing in the priests' homes. Even mothers, sisters or other female relations are regarded suspiciously (Pontel 98). Variants of this constitution are taken up by various synods throughout northern France, e.g., Bayeux, 1330 (Mansi 25: 67, 81); Meaux, c. 1346 (Martène, *Thesaurus* 4: 90). Other statutes that regulate priestly behaviour around women include one from Tournai (1366) that forbids priests to invite male parishoners and their wives to dinner. If a priest should dine at a parishoner's house, he is to eat as quickly as possible and not to talk to any women in the household (Le Groux, 50).

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