

Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789

CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF EUROPE, 2ND EDITION

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Primary Sources

CHAPTER ELEVEN: RELIGIOUS CONSOLIDATION AND RENEWAL, 1600-1789

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1. Choosing a Pastor in Lutheran Germany, 1606

Electing a pastor was sometimes done directly, with representatives from a village or parish approaching an approved candidate themselves. Sometimes this was handled through regional church officials. The following is a 1606 petition from the (male) villagers of Ebsdorf parish in central Germany to a superintendent, asking that he approve a new pastor. The villagers always refer to the superintendent politely and indirectly as “your honor,” but they are very clear about their wishes. Stadtarchiv Marburg 4i 153, quoted in David Mayes, *Communal Christianity: The Life and Loss of a Peasant Vision in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 102. Translation by Merry Wiesner-Hanks.

We respectfully affirm the following: One of our neighbors, Balthasar Fischer, sent his son, whose name is Heinrich Fischer, to study at great expense. By God’s grace he continued until he had learned all the duties of the pastoral office well, and was given a position as the regular pastor in the congregation of Altenhassell in the duchy of Hanau. We then fervently asked that he would be given to us as a pastor because he was the son of one of our neighbors. ... But because of his duties there, the above-mentioned Heinrich Fisher could not be freed from his position, so we asked your honor if there was another person who would be suitable. We came to an agreement, which your honor approved, that the pastor of Walgern should give a sermon at our church, so that we could see if we approved of him. Not only was this to happen, but the village mayor was to order every citizen in each village of this parish, man for man, to attend this service and listen to the sermon. After the end of the service, the mayor was to speak with each man individually to get a clear idea of whether each of them was happy with this pastor or not. This then happened as it was supposed to. Not only did everyone individually said yes, but the whole parish did communally as well. In addition, the parish said that they were

also satisfied with the other actions that their elected representatives had already taken in regards to this matter, as well as actions that they would take in the future for the good of this poor parish. So we ask, both as a group and individually, that you appoint this pastor as a teacher and pastoral shepherd. Hopefully, it will honor God, be of good to you and yield the most good to us poor people.



A Benedictine nun in a typical seventeenth-century habit.

2. Two versions of the history of a Catholic confraternity, 1600

In 1547 a group of women in Bologna, Italy staged a public protest against their exclusion from the confraternity of S. Maria della Pietà, an organized religious group that supervised a very popular public shrine that held an image of the Virgin Mary. The women practiced their devotions at the shrine, but wanted to be allowed to join the confraternity as well. Their protest achieved this to a degree, because they gained their own subordinate company within the confraternity. But it was a hollow victory. From the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries women had been fully integrated as members into Bolognese confraternities (though without authority to hold office). In the fifteenth century, they were shut out as “temptresses.” After the Pietà protest, women were brought back into many confraternities, but always in these “separate but equal” sub-groups. The general statutes of the confraternity (Document A) give one version of the events, and the separate statutes for the women’s company (Document B) give a slightly different version.

A. The men’s version:

Our company was formed under the emblem of ... the Madonna della Pietà in 1502, under the pontificate of Julius II [sic], in our city of Bologna. (...) The image was found in an old ruined house by the city wall by some young girls, and from them it was bought by some pious and devout men. They fixed it here with highest devotion, whereupon a great devotion began, with infinite favors, miracles, and good deeds that Christ performed here for them in order to ensure that this holy place would be visited by many. For which reason the devotion grew with great alms ... such that in the shortest time there was built the oratory and the portico to the amazement and wonder of all. A little afterwards Francia, a most famous painter in those times, made the picture of the middle altar with beautiful ornament. And because the Blessed Virgin in this place demonstrated gracious favor as much to one as to the other sex, many honored and celebrated it. Many

women by their particular devotion gathered together and demanded that they too be numbered among those of the confraternity in service of the Madonna. This was graciously granted by a public vote of the whole confraternity, as it appears in their books... .

Prologue to the 1600 Statutes of the Confraternity of S. Maria della Pietà (Bologna).
Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Fondo Demaniale, 10/7696, #4, fol. 3r.

B. The women's version:

... the above mentioned women with proper permission entered the oratory, and in order to make their petition elected Mona Lucia, wife and consort of M. Guaspere Bolza. They gathered together before Daily Office, and Mona Lucia on behalf of all her sisters demanded first of God on high, and then of the officials and men gathered, that they also be counted under the mantle of the virgin Mary, and that they be able to gather in this holy place to her service, honor, and glory, and to do all that the statutes commanded of them. And hearing all this, the men put it to a vote and all the votes were in favor, and so they accepted them as good mothers and sisters. The women then asked the men to give them a head and guide to keep them from error, and after prayer and by the will of God, they elected and confirmed the above mentioned Lucia for the whole of the following year of 1548... .

Prologue to the 1600 Statutes of the Women's Company of the Confraternity of S. Maria della Pietà (Bologna). Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Fondo Demaniale, 10/7696, #3, fol. 2r. Translations by Nicholas Terpstra.



A Carthusian monk, in a typical seventeenth-century habit.

3. Letter from Louise de Marillac (Mademoiselle de Gras) to Vincent de Paul, April 1650

Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul founded the Daughters of Charity, a women's community dedicated to service to the poor. In this letter, de Marillac discusses some of the issues facing the Daughters, and describes a meeting she has just had with the Procurator General, an appointee of the King, explaining why she wants the Daughters of Charity to be a secular company and not a religious order. From *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac: Correspondence and Thoughts*, Edited and translated by Sr. Louise Sullivan, S.C. New York: New City Press, 1991), pp. 317-18.

My Most Honored Father,

Yesterday I had the honor of seeing Madame de Lamoignon [a member of the Daughters]; her daughter asked me what the Ladies had done at Bicetre [a foundling home and orphanage run by the Daughters] She is aware of their resolution to move the boys to an annex in an effort to effect the necessary separation, but she tells me that this is not the solution that your Charity had ordered. She clearly sees the problems for the boys, as well as for the nurses, of leaving the girls there. Although we try to employ good women, the majority of them are forced to leave because of bad conduct rather than on account of the necessities of the times. Moreover, these women, who have been gathered from all over and who are of all types, use coarse language and exhibit licentious conduct. This good young lady told me that you must stand firm so that the proposal that your Charity so strongly supported will be carried out. She also asked that it be put into effect for this Jubilee year and not be put off until a later date. I added that these delays give rise to second thoughts, and Mademoiselle de Lamoignon said that there will be no way to come back to the matter if you miss your opportunity now.

However, I also believe, my Most Honored Father, that you should be firm about taking one or two of your houses, at most, in order to save rent; otherwise, if they make the choice that I think they will, the direction of them will be entirely and permanently given to others, and in this event their plans will come entirely to light. It occurred to me that they believe that we cannot abandon the service of the children, and that we are committed to it because of the 1000 pounds we were given. You know how we have been wronged. Originally, it was the intention of the benefactors that half the donation come to us purely and simply for the support of the Company and that it not oblige us to the service of the children anymore than we are now committed to the service of the poor and of the galley

slaves. If they have any intention of disputing it with us one day, it would be better now than later.

Yesterday I had an opportunity to see the Procurator General. He did me the honor of receiving me most courteously. He immediately asked me if I was there concerning some business he had at hand. I told him that I had come to refresh his memory on the matter. He asked me if we considered ourselves regular or secular. I told him that we aspired only to the latter. He told me that such a thing was without precedent. I cited for him Madame de Villeneuve's Daughters [the daughters of the Cross, another secular congregation founded earlier] and pointed out to him that they go everywhere. He said many good things about the Company and added that he did not disapprove of our plan. However, he said that something of such importance merited much thought. I expressed my joy that he felt as he did about the matter, and I begged him, if he thought that the Company was unworthy to be, or for some reason should not be continued, to destroy it entirely. But if he considered it good, I said that we begged him to establish it on a solid foundation. I explained that it was this thought that had motivated us to give it a trial for at least 12 or 15 years, and that during this period, by the grace of God, no insurmountable obstacles have appeared. He replied, "Let me reflect on this, I do not say for months, but at least for a few weeks." He took the trouble to escort us to our carriage and showed us great cordiality in the courtyard. He asked us to extend his very humble greetings to you. He added that he would consider himself a usurer if he accepted the very humble gratitude that we offered him for the honor he shows to all our sisters when they dare to approach him with their needs for the poor galley slaves or for the little children...



4. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* 1670

The French mathematician Blaise Pascal accepted the Jansenist call for personal spiritual regeneration, and turned to religious writings after a mystical experience. In his unfinished work *Pensées* (Thoughts), published from his notes after his death, he presents a defense of the Christian faith. Included in this work is what has come to be known as “Pascal’s wager,” in which he argues that it is a better bet to believe, because the consequences of believing if it turns out there is no God are so much less than the consequences of not believing if there is a God. The entire text can be found at:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/pascal/pensees.html>

[Section III: Of the Necessity of the Wager]

... If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no affinity to us. We are then incapable of knowing

either what He is or if He is. This being so, who will dare to undertake the decision of the question? Not we, who have no affinity to Him.

Who then will blame Christians for not being able to give a reason for their belief, since they profess a religion for which they cannot give a reason? They declare, in expounding it to the world, that it is a foolishness; and then you complain that they do not prove it! If they proved it, they would not keep their word; it is in lacking proofs that they are not lacking in sense. "Yes, but although this excuses those who offer it as such and takes away from them the blame of putting it forward without reason, it does not excuse those who receive it." Let us then examine this point, and say, "God is, or He is not." But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.

Do not, then, reprove for error those who have made a choice; for you know nothing about it. "No, but I blame them for having made, not this choice, but a choice; for again both he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are equally at fault, they are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all."

Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let

us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.

[SECTION VIII: THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION]

.... The Christian religion, then, teaches men these two truths; that there is a God whom men can know, and that there is a corruption in their nature which renders them unworthy of Him. It is equally important to men to know both these points; and it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness, and to know his own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can free him from it. The knowledge of only one of these points gives rise either to the pride of philosophers, who have known God, and not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of atheists, who know their own wretchedness, but not the Redeemer.

And, as it is alike necessary to man to know these two points, so is it alike merciful of God to have made us know them. The Christian religion does this; it is in this that it consists.

Let us herein examine the order of the world and see if all things do not tend to establish these two chief points of this religion: Jesus Christ is end of all, and the centre to which all tends. Whoever knows Him knows the reason of everything.

Those who fall into error err only through failure to see one of these two things. We can, then, have an excellent knowledge of God without that of our own wretchedness and of our own wretchedness without that of God. But we cannot know Jesus Christ without knowing at the same time both God and our own wretchedness.

Therefore I shall not undertake here to prove by natural reasons either the existence of God, or the Trinity, or the immortality of the soul, or anything of that nature; not only because I should not feel myself sufficiently able to find in nature arguments to convince hardened atheists, but also because such knowledge without Jesus Christ is useless and barren. Though a man should be convinced that numerical proportions are immaterial truths, eternal and dependent on a first truth, in which they subsist and which is called God, I should not think him far advanced towards his own salvation.

The God of Christians is not a God who is simply the author of mathematical truths, or of the order of the elements; that is the view of heathens and Epicureans. He is not merely a God who exercises His providence over the life and fortunes of men, to bestow on those who worship Him a long and happy life. That was the portion of the Jews. But the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Christians, is a God of love and of comfort, a God who fills the soul and heart of those whom He possesses, a God who makes them conscious of their inward wretchedness, and His infinite mercy, who unites Himself to their inmost soul, who fills it with humility and joy, with confidence and love, who renders them incapable of any other end than Himself....

... There are two ways of proving the truths of our religion; one by the power of reason, the other by the authority of him who speaks.

We do not make use of the latter, but of the former. We do not say, "This must be believed, for Scripture, which says it, is divine." But we say that it must be believed for such and such a reason, which are feeble arguments, as reason may be bent to everything.

There is nothing on earth that does not show either the wretchedness of man, or the mercy of God; either the weakness of man without God, or the strength of man with God.

It will be one of the confusions of the damned to see that they are condemned by their own reason, by which they claimed to condemn the Christian religion.

The prophecies, the very miracles and proofs of our religion, are not of such a nature that they can be said to be absolutely convincing. But they are also of such a kind that it cannot be said that it is unreasonable to believe them. Thus there is both evidence and obscurity to enlighten some and confuse others. But the evidence is such that it surpasses, or at least equals, the evidence to the contrary; so that it is not reason which can determine men not to follow it, and thus it can only be lust or malice of heart. And by this means there is sufficient evidence to condemn, and insufficient to convince; so that it appears in those who follow it that it is grace, and not reason, which makes them follow it; and in those who shun it, that it is lust, not reason, which makes them shun it.



A recent Chinese-language translation of Madame Guyon's guide to prayer

5. Madame Guyon, *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*, 1685

Madam Guyon was a French mystic and the center of a group of intensely religious individuals. She felt called to spread the idea that prayer could bring inner peace and allow the individual soul to be lost in God. This idea, called “quietism,” was opposed by Bishop Bossuet, the most powerful church official in France, who thought it might cause people to rely more on themselves than on the institutional church. Madame Guyon spent eight years in prison for her ideas, though her brief guide to prayer is still widely read. The entire text can be found at:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/guyon/prayer.html>

CHAPTER I

The Universal Call to Prayer

What a dreadful delusion hath prevailed over the greater part of mankind, in supposing that they are not called to a state of prayer! whereas all are capable of prayer, and are called thereto, as all are called to and are capable of salvation.

Prayer is the application of the heart to God, and the internal exercise of love. S. Paul hath enjoined us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. v 17), and our Lord saith, “I say unto you all, watch and pray” (Mark xiii. 33, 37): all therefore may, and all ought to practice prayer. I grant that meditation is attainable but by few, for few are capable of it; and therefore, my beloved brethren who are athirst for salvation, meditative prayer is not the prayer which God requires of you, nor which we would recommend.

Let all pray: we should live by prayer, as we should live by love. “I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that ye may be rich” (Rev. iii. 8), this is much more easily obtained than we can conceive. “Come, all ye that are athirst, to these living waters”; nor lose your precious moments in “hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that will hold no water” (John vii. 37; Jer ii. 13). Come, ye famished souls, who find naught whereon to feed; come, and ye shall be fully satisfied!

Come, ye poor afflicted ones, who groan beneath your load of wretchedness and pain, and ye shall find ease and comfort! Come, ye sick, to your Physician, and be not fearful of approaching Him because ye are filled with diseases; expose them to His view and they shall be healed!

Children, draw near to your Father, and He will embrace you in the arms of love! Come, ye poor, stray, wandering sheep, return to your Shepherd! Come, sinners, to your Saviour! Come, ye dull, ignorant, and illiterate, ye who think yourselves the most incapable of prayer! ye are more peculiarly called and adapted thereto. Let all without exception come, for Jesus Christ hath called all.

Yet let not those come who are without a heart; they are not asked; for there must be a heart, that there may be love. But who is without a heart? O come, then, give this heart to God; and here learn how to make the donation.

All who are desirous of prayer may easily pray, enabled by those ordinary graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit which are common to all men.

Prayer is the guide to perfection and the sovereign good; it delivers us from every vice, and obtains us every virtue; for the one great means to become perfect, is to walk in the presence of God: He Himself hath said, “walk in my presence and be ye perfect” (Gen. xvii. 1). It is by prayer alone, that we are brought into this presence, and maintained in it without interruption.

You must then learn a species of prayer, which may be exercised at all times; which doth not obstruct outward employments; and which may be equally practiced by princes, kings, prelates, priests and magistrates, soldiers and children, tradesmen, labourers, women and sick persons: it cannot, therefore, be the prayer of the head, but of the heart; not a prayer of the understanding alone, which is so limited in its operations that it can have but one object at one time; but the prayer of the heart is not interrupted by the exercises of reason: indeed nothing can interrupt this prayer, but irregular and disordered affections: and when once we have tasted of God, and the sweetness of His love, we shall find it impossible to relish aught but Himself?

Nothing is so easily obtained as the possession and enjoyment of God, for “in him we live, move, and have our being;” and He is more desirous to give Himself into us, than we can be to receive Him.

All consists in the manner of seeking Him; and to seek aright, is easier and more natural to us than breathing. Though you think yourselves ever so stupid, dull, and incapable of sublime attainments, yet, by prayer, you may live in God Himself with less difficulty or interruption than you live in the vital air. Will it not then be highly sinful to neglect prayer? But this I trust you will not, when you have learnt the method, which is exceedingly easy.

CHAPTER II

The Method of Prayer

There are two ways of introducing a soul into prayer, which should for some time be pursued; the one is Meditation, the other is Reading accompanied with Meditation.

Meditative Reading is the choosing some important practical or speculative truth, always preferring the practical, and proceeding thus: whatever truth you have chosen, read only a small portion of it, endeavouring to taste and digest it, to extract the essence and substance thereof, and proceed no farther while any savour or relish remains in the passage: when this subsides, take up your book again and proceed as before, seldom reading more than half a page at a time, for it is not the quantity that is read, but the manner of reading, that yields us profit.

Those who read fast reap no more advantage than a bee would by only skimming over the surface of the flower, instead of waiting to penetrate into it, and extract its sweets. Much reading is rather for scholastic subjects than divine truths: indeed, to receive real profit from spiritual books, we must read as I have described; and I am certain, if that method were pursued, we should become gradually habituated to, and more fully disposed for prayer.

Meditation, which is the other method, is to be practiced at an appropriated season, and not in the time of reading. I believe the best manner of meditating is as follows:—When, by an act of lively faith, you are placed in the Presence of God, recollect some truth wherein there is substance and food; pause gently and sweetly thereon, not to employ the reason, but merely to calm and fix the mind: for you must observe, that your principal exercise should ever be the Presence of God; your subject,

therefore, should rather serve to stay the mind, than exercise the understanding.

From this procedure, it will necessarily follow, that the lively faith in a God immediately present in our inmost soul, will produce an eager and vehement pressing inwardly into ourselves, and a restraining all our senses from wandering abroad: this serves to extricate us speedily from numberless distractions, to remove us far from external objects, and to bring us nigh unto our God, Who is only to be found in our inmost centre, which is the Holy of Holies wherein He dwelleth...

Prayer is the effusion of the heart in the Presence of God: "I have poured out my soul before God" saith the mother of Samuel. (1 Sam. i. 15) The prayer of the wise men at the feet of Christ in the stable of Bethlehem, was signified by the incense they offered: for prayer being the energy and fire of love, melting, dissolving, and sublimating the soul, and causing it to ascend unto God; therefore, in proportion as the soul is melted and dissolved, in like proportion do odours issue from it; and these odours proceed from the intense fire of love within...

Thus doth the soul ascend unto God, by giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of Divine Love: this, indeed, is a most essential and necessary sacrifice in the Christian religion, and that alone by which we pay true homage to the sovereignty of God; as it is written, "The power of the Lord is great, and he is honoured only by the humble" (Eccles. iii. 20). By the destruction of the existence of self within us, we truly acknowledge the supreme existence of our God; for unless we cease to exist in self, the Spirit of the Eternal Word cannot exist in us: now it is by the giving up of our own life, that we give place for His coming; and "in dying to ourselves, He liveth and abideth in us."

6. Margaret Fell Fox, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 1666

Womens Speaking

Justified, Proved and Allowed of by
the SCRIPTURES,

All such as speak by the Spirit and Power
of the Lord JESUS.

And how WOMEN were the first
that preached the Tidings of the Resurrection of
JESUS, and were sent by CHRIST'S
Own Command, before He ascended
to the Father, John 20.17.

by Margaret Fell
Originally Printed in the Year, 1666, in London

The Society of Friends, generally called the Quakers, rejected all social hierarchies and did not show deference to their superiors; they were persecuted for their beliefs in both Europe and the European colonies abroad. Quakers also taught that the spirit of God did not differentiate between men and women, and women preached, taught, and suffered punishment along with men. Margaret Fell was active on behalf of her Quaker beliefs for many years, and eventually married George Fox, the founder of the Quakers. In this pamphlet, she explains why women should not be silent on matters of faith. The entire text can be found at:

<http://www.qhpress.org/texts/fell.html>

...those that speak against this Woman's speaking, speak against the
Church of Christ, and the Seed of the Woman, which Seed is Christ; that is

to say, Those that speak against the Power of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord speaking in a Woman, simply by reason of her Sex, or because she is a Woman, not regarding the Seed, and Spirit, and Power that speaks in her; such speak against Christ and his Church, and are of the Seed of the Serpent, wherein lodgeth Enmity. And as God the Father made no such difference in the first Creation, nor ever since between the Male and the Female, but always out of his Mercy and Loving-kindness, had regard unto the Weak. So also his Son, Christ Jesus, confirms the same thing; when the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, if it were lawful for a Man to put away his Wife? He answered and said unto them, Have you not read, That he that made them in the beginning, made them Male and Female; and said, For this Cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave unto his Wife, and they twain shall be one Flesh; wherefore they are no more twain, but one Flesh? What therefore God hath joyned together, let no Man put asunder, Mat. 19.

Again, Christ Jesus, when he came to the City of Samaria, where Jacob's Well was, where the Woman of Samaria was, you may read in John 4. how he was pleased to preach the Everlasting Gospel to her; and when the Woman said unto him, I know that when the Messiah cometh, (which is called Christ) when he cometh, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. Also he said unto Martha, when she said, she knew that her Brother should rise again in the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet should he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth, shall never die. Believest thou this? She answered, Yea, Lord, I believe thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Here she manifested her true and saving Faith, which few at that day believed so on him, John 11. 25, 26.

Also that Woman, that came unto Jesus with an Alabaster Box of very precious Ointment, and poured it on his Head as he sat at meat; it is manifest that this Woman knew more of the secret Power and Wisdom of God, than his Disciples did, who were filled with Indignation against her; and therefore Jesus saith, Why do ye trouble the Woman, for she hath wrought a good Work upon me? Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole World, there shall also this that this Woman hath done, be told for a Memorial of her, Mat. 26. Mark 14. 3. Luke saith farther, She was a Sinner, and that she stood at his Feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his Feet with her Tears, and did wipe them with the Hair of her Head, and kissed his Feet, and annointed them with Ointment. And when Jesus saw the Heart of the Pharisee that had bidden him to his House, he took occasion to speak unto Simon, as you may read in Luke 7. and he turned to the Woman, and said, Simon, seest thou this Woman? Thou gavest me no Water to my Feet; but she hath washed my Feet with Tears, and wiped them with the Hair of her Head: Thou gavest me no Kiss; but this Woman, since I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my Feet: My Head with Oil thou didst not annoint; but this Woman hath annointed my Feet with Ointment: Wherefore I say unto thee, her Sins, which are many, are forgiven her; for she hath loved much, Luke 7. 37. to the End.

Also, there was many Women which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministring unto him, and stood afar off when he was Crucified, Mat. 28. 55. Mark 15. Yea even the Women of Jerusalem wept for him, insomuch that he said unto them, Weep not for me. ye Daughters of Jerusalem; but weep for yourselves, and for your Children, Luke 23. 28.

And certain Women which had been healed of Evil Spirits and Infirmities, Mary Magdalen, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's Steward's Wife; and many others which ministred unto him of their Substance, Luke 8. 2, 3.

Thus we see that Jesus owned the Love and Grace that appeared in Women, and did not despise it: and by what is recorded in the Scriptures, he received as much Love, Kindness, Compassion, and tender Dealing towards him from Women, as he did from any others, both in his Life time, and also after they had exercised their Cruelty upon him; for Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James, beheld where he was laid; And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James, and Salom, had brought sweet Spices, that they might annoint him: And very early in the Morning, the first Day of the Week, they came unto the Sepulchre at the rising of the Sun; and they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre? And when they looked the Stone was rolled away, for it was very great, Mark 16. 1, 2, 3, 4. Luke 24. 1, 2. and they went down into the Sepulchre, and as Matthew saith, The Angel rolled away the Stone, and he said unto the Women, Fear not, I know whom ye seek, Jesus which was Crucified: He is not here, he is risen, Mat. 28. Now Luke saith thus, That there stood two Men by them in shining Apparel, and as they were perplexed and afraid, the Men said unto them, He is not here, remember how he said unto you when he was in Galilee, That the Son of Man must be delivered into the Hands of sinful Men, and be Crucified, and the third Day rise again; and they remembred his Words, and return'd from the Sepulchre, and told all these things to the Eleven, and to all the rest.

It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the Mother of James, and the other Women that were with them, which told these things to the Apostles, and their Words seemed unto them as Idle Tales, and they

believed them not. Mark this, ye despisers of the Weakness of Women, and look upon your selves to be so wise: But Christ Jesus doth not so; for he makes use of the weak: For when he met the Women after he was risen, he said unto them, All Hail! And they came and held him by the Feet, and worshipped him; then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid, go tell my Brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me, Mat. 28. 10. Mark 16. 9. And John saith, when Mary was weeping at the Sepulchre, that Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? what seekest thou? And when she supposed him to be the Gardner, Jesus said unto her, Mary; she turned her self, and said unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master; Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God, John 20. 16, 17.

Mark this, you that despise and oppose the Message of the Lord God that he sends by Women; What had become of the Redemption of the whole Body of Mankind, if they had not cause to believe the Message that the Lord Jesus sent by these Women, of and concerning his Resurrection? And if these Women had not thus, out of their Tenderness, and Bowels of Love, who had received Mercy, and Grace, and Forgiveness of Sins, and Vertue, and Healing from him; which many Men also had received the like, if their Hearts had not been so united and knit unto him in Love, that they could not depart as the Men did; but sat watching, and waiting, and weeping about the Sepulchre until the time of his Resurrection, and so were ready to carry his Message, as is manifested, else how should his Disciples have known, who were not there?

7. A daughter's memory of her mother's piety, Germany 1750

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in many parts of Europe people sought to deepen their spiritual experiences in a variety of ways. Organized movements developed that promoted more intense piety, such as pietism in Germany and Methodism in England, and followers were encouraged to engage in frequent individual prayer. In this selection from a letter, Katharina Stolberg describes the intensity with which her mother, Christiane Charlotte Friederike Stolberg, prayed. (J.H. Hennes, *Aus Friedrich Leopold von Stolberg's Jugendjahren. Nach Briefen der Familie und andern handschriftlichen Nachrichten* (Frankfurt 1876), pp. 7-8. Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks)

My mother was a true prayer. She did not start a trip or any undertaking without praying; she did not start reading a book or writing a letter without praying. Wherever she went, she took the first moment that she was alone to drop on her knees or sit down, and with closed eyes--she opened them only to cast devout glances at the heavens--and folded hand she prayed. The presence of her children or her servants did not bother her; I am also certain that few of her friends have not seen her in prayer; yet it occurred to no one to become annoyed at this or to wonder about it. Her whole demeanor was so open and so natural, with no doubts in her belief and with such joy in her prayer. Her whole being was so lively, so cheerful, that it was impossible to have any doubts about her. I do not know if she ever wished to have a miraculous sign of belief, but a child-like belief was her element. From childhood on she had a very special view of providence whenever she listened to prayers, and she wished only that her dear Father would fulfill her requests, not give signs or miracles.



John Wesley preaching.

8. John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 1777

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, thought that God could help believers live a life that was imbued with what he called “perfect love.” This love would shape the relationship between believers and God, and between believers and other people, leading to what Wesley called “Christian perfection.” “O Perfect Love” is the title of one of the best-known Methodist hymns. Wesley interwove his own life story with his theological ideas in a practical guide to Christian perfection, the full text of which is available at:

<http://www.ccel.org/w/wesley/perfection/perfection.html>

1. What I purpose in the following papers is, to give a plain and distinct account of the steps by which I was led, during a course of many years, to

embrace the doctrine of Christian perfection. This I owe to the serious part of mankind, those who desire to know all "the truth as it is in Jesus." And these only are concerned in questions of this kind. To these I would nakedly declare the thing as it is, endeavouring all along to show, from one period to another, both what I thought, and why I thought so.

2. In the year 1725, being in the twenty-third year of my age, I met with Bishop Taylor's "Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying." In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the devil.

Can any serious person doubt of this, or find a medium between serving God and serving the devil?

3. In the year 1726, I met with Kempis's "Christian's Pattern." The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw, that giving even all my life to God (supposing it possible to do this, and go no farther would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea, all my heart, to him.

I saw, that "simplicity of intention, and purity of affection," one design in all we speak or do, and one desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed "the wings of the soul," without which she can never ascend to the mount of God.

4. A year or two after, Mr. Law's "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call" were put into my hands. These convinced me, more than ever, of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian; and I determined, through

his grace, (the absolute necessity of which I was deeply sensible of;) to be all-devoted to God, to give him all my soul, my body, and my substance

Will any considerate man say, that this is carrying matter too far? or that anything less is due to Him who has given himself for us, than to give him ourselves, all we have, and all we are?

5. In the year 1729, I began not only to read, but to study, the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having "the mind which was in Christ," and of "walking as Christ also walked;" even of having, not some part only, but all the mind which was in him; and of walking as he walked, not only in many or in most respects, but in all things. And this was the light, wherein at this time I generally considered religion, as an uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master. Nor was I afraid of anything more, than of bending this rule to the experience of myself; or of other men; of allowing myself in any the least disconformity to our grand Exemplar.

6. On January 1, 1733, I preached before the University in St. Mary's church, on "the Circumcision of the Heart;" an account of which I gave in these words: "It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed 'holiness; and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin 'from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit;' and, by consequence the being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus the being so 'renewed in the image of our mind,' as to be 'perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.'" (Vol. V., p. 203.)

In the same sermon I observed, "'Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment.' It is not only 'the first and great' command, but all the commandments in one. 'Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise,' they are all comprised in

this one word, love. In this is perfection, and glory, and happiness: The royal law of heaven and earth is this, 'Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' The one perfect good shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake, -- the fruition of Him who is all in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with Him that made them, the having 'fellowship with the Father and the Son,' the being 'joined to the Lord in one spirit.' One design ye are to pursue to the end of time, -- the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things so far as they tend to this; love the creature, as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought and word, and action, be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think speak, or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole end, as well as source, of your being." (Ibid., pp. 207, 208.)

I concluded in these words: "Here is the sum of the perfect law, the circumcision of the heart. Let the spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections. -- Other sacrifices from us he would not, but the living sacrifice of the heart hath he chosen. Let it be continually offered up to God through Christ, in flames of holy love. And let no creature be suffered to share with him; for he is a jealous God. His throne will he not divide with another; he will reign without a rival. Be no design, no desire admitted there, but what has Him for its ultimate object. This is the way wherein those children of God once walked, who being dead still speak to us: 'Desire not to live but to praise his name; let all your thoughts, words, and works tend to his glory.' 'Let your soul be filled with so entire a love to Him that you may love nothing but for his sake.' 'Have a pure intention of heart, a steadfast regard to his glory in all you actions.' For then, and not till then, is that 'mind in us, which was also in Christ Jesus,' when in every

motion of our heart, in every word of our tongue, in every work of our hands, we `pursue nothing but in relation to him, and in subordination to his plea sure;' when we too neither think, nor speak, nor act, to fulfil `our own will, but the will of Him that sent us;' when, `whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do,' we do it all `to the glory of God.'" (Ibid., p. 211.)

It may be observed, this sermon was composed the first of all my writings which have been published. This was the view of religion I then had, which even then I scrupled not to term perfection. This is the view I have of it now, without any material addition or diminution. And what is there here, which any man of understanding, who believes the Bible, can object to? What can he deny, without flatly contradicting the Scripture? what retrench, without taking from the word of God?

7. In the same sentiment did my brother and I remain (with all those young gentlemen in derision termed Methodists) till we embarked for America, in the latter end of 1735. It was the next year, while I was at Savannah, that I wrote the following lines: -- Is there a thing beneath the sun, That strives with thee my heart to share? Ah! tear it thence, and reign alone, The Lord of every motion there!...

8. In the beginning of the year 1738, as I was returning from thence, the cry of my heart was, O grant that nothing in my soul May dwell, but thy pure love alone! O may thy love possess me whole, My joy, my treasure, and my crown ! Strange fires far from my heart remove; My every act, word, thought, be love!

9. A daughter's letter to her father on her confirmation day, Germany 1778

Young people who were Catholic or members of many Protestant denominations including Lutherans and Anglicans went through a ritual of the confirmation of their faith when they reached adolescence. Until they had been confirmed, they were not allowed to take Holy Communion, a central ritual in Christianity, in which bread and wine represent--or in Catholicism, or transformed into--the body and blood of Christ. Until they were confirmed, Catholic young people did not make their confessions, a necessary prerequisite to Communion. In this letter, Susanna Maria Jakobina Loeffelholz asks her father's forgiveness and blessing before her confirmation; such a request was probably encouraged by her priest, or expected as a normal prelude to Communion. (Franz Erich Mencken, ed. *Dein Dich zärtlich liebender Sohn. Kinderbriefe aus sechs Jahrhunderten* (Munich, 1965) pp. 43-4. Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks.)

Today is one of the most important days in my whole life, because with God's support I will go into a confessional booth for the first time in my life, and afterward will be invited to the atonement and holy meal of our lord Jesus. So that I might appear in a more worthy way, it is my duty and obligation as a child, to first appear before you, my gracious father, with my thanks and debts... because my conscience is also convinced that I have often offended you my dear Papa both consciously and unconsciously, and have brought you to anger, so I will not only attest to this, but will ask you obediently with my whole soul to forgive me my youthful errors and sins from your heart. If you do not bear these in mind any more, I will attempt, with the help of God, to transform these errors into virtues. I ask in closing only this, that you include me in your Christian and fatherly prayers, and ask for God's grace and help for me, to which God will undoubtedly listen. For this I will be, for the duration of my life,

My gracious Herr Papa's humble and obedient daughter.

10. Legal opinion concerning the religious training of a woman accused of infanticide, Germany 1787

Though all Christian denominations in early modern Europe mandated religious instruction, and some was available in most cities and villages, many people, especially the very poor, had no opportunity to attend. In this legal brief, which was part of the documentation of a case of infanticide, the jurist noted how superficial and scanty the religious training of the accused was; his explanation was not enough to bring about a reduction in the sentence of the accused, however. (Wilhelm Wächterhäuser, *Das Verbrechen des Kindesmordes im Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Quellen und Forschungen zur Strafrechtsgeschichte*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1973), p. 108. Translated by Merry Wiesner-Hanks)

The unfortunate accused had enjoyed as good as no religious instruction, in that when she was six she went to a school run by the village sexton for fourteen days, and after that she learned a few catechism questions and readings by heart from one of her companions without understanding their meaning. At her confirmation she did not receive any further religious instruction, but some questions were put to her by her pastor, which he answered himself and simply admonished her. It was clear from the examination before the court, that in terms of religious and moral matters she has a completely miserable understanding and incorrect notions; in particular, in terms of the unlawfulness and liability to punishment of the deed she has done, and its seriousness, she has only a little and incomplete understanding and conviction, and no idea about the meaning of the words that she learned by heart in her youth: thou shall not kill.



A seventeenth-century Russian religious painting, or icon, which served as a devotional aid

11. Fighting demonic possession with the assistance of the saints, Russia 1659

In Orthodox and catholic Europe, men and women frequently invoked the saints for the treatment of physical and emotional illnesses. Recipients of healing through the ecclesiastical system sometimes made formal statements attesting to their "miraculous" cures. This statement by a woman named Solomonina, describes her healing of demon-possession through the intercession of Saints Prokopii and Ioann of Ustiug. Ustiug was a major commercial center of Russia in the seventeenth century, and Sts. Prokopii and Ioann became the center of a popular cult. Solomonina's statement is found in cycle of miracle tales compiled by the clergy at the saints' shrine, appended to a longer and more detailed account of her sufferings. It was edited to suit the genre of the miracle-tale, but retains Solomonina's first-person voice.

According to this account, she had been afflicted by demons since her wedding night over a decade earlier. The demons raped her, forced her to bear demonic children, made her attack her father, carried her off from home, and tried to hang her from the rafters and then to drown her. Or, as modern people might put it, Solomonia engaged in promiscuous sex, rejected her children, became violent with her father, ran away from home, and attempted suicide. Her despairing family sent her to the cathedral in Ustiug for treatment, and after two trips and months of residence, she received healing from the saints through their direct intercession. (Excerpted from the original version published in *Pamiatniki starinnoi russkoi literatur*, N. Kostomarov, ed., vyp 1 (St. Petersburg, 1860; reprint: The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 153-168. Translated by Eve Levin)

In the past, in the year 167 (=1659), because of my sins, the Devil Satan, who from time immemorial hates humanity and fights it, settled a demonic force in me. This force ruled me for eleven years and five months, and during that time, I was tormented by all sorts of unspeakable tortures, as have been described already. I, a sinful one, did not see the natural world and the rays of the sun truly, but for me day was like night. I went to God's churches as though a prisoner tied up, sometimes into the holy church itself, sometimes to the entryway. [In early-modern Russia, sinners under penance were forbidden to enter the church building and take their places among the congregation, but instead stood on the porches outside the doors of the sanctuary.] I did not listen to the voices singing or reading; my eyes were blind to holy things and by ears deafened by the terrifying demonic yearnings. From the first day when I sensed the hostile demonic blue flame, from then until now my ears were filled with a great noise during the chanting of God's words.

On the eve of July 8, the feast day of St. Prokopii, a desire entered me to go to the all-night vigil in the church in honor of St. Prokopii, the miracle-worker, to hear about his marvelous miracles. Before that, I had had no desire to do this. I went and stood outside the church, at the north doors.

At that time, inside the church they were reading the vita of St. Prokopii. I stood there for a short time, and my brother started to send me into the church. Whether because of my brother's fear, or because of the gaze of all the people standing there, I entered the church with great difficulty, and the demonic force was forbidding me...

I began to cry out as much as I could, "Don't bring me into the church of St. Prokopii!" They dragged me by force, but I broke away from them, and I went into the church of St. Ioann the miracle-worker. I sat down, and I saw the grave of St. Ioann as though it was shaking. I greatly feared this terrifying vision, and I held onto the grave of St. Ioann with my sinful hands. I dozed a little, and I saw an ineffable light, and in this light a maiden saintly and very wonderful; I cannot tell how beautiful. She came into the church of St. Ioann through the noon doors [Russian churches were always oriented on an east-west axis, with the altar on the east or "sunrise" wall. The "noon doors" were located on the south side of the sanctuary] past the icons standing there, and came to me. She took me by the right shoulder, and said, "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy upon us!" I did not answer anything. She said to me, "Solomonias, say 'Amen'." I did not answer anything. She repeated the prayer a second time and a third, and this most holy maiden said to me, "Solomonias, say 'Amen'." I was barely able to answer "Amen!" She said, "Answer twice more, 'Amen'." I answered twice, "Amen! Amen!" She said to me, "Do you know who I am?" I said to her, "My lady, I do not know you at all. I am a sinful person in great distress from the demonic force living inside me." The most holy maiden adorned in light said to me, "How can you not know me? You have been coming to my house unceasingly for five years!" I, sinful person, said, "Where is your house, my lady?" She said to me, "My house is the cathedral church. I am called the most holy Mary, who gave birth in the flesh to Jesus Christ, my creator and God. Today I shall reveal a great miracle through you, thanks to Sts. Prokopii and Ioann of Ustiug, the miracle workers, my representatives and supplicants to me. Pray to them unceasingly for healing. In your womb

now there are seven hundred demons, and another thousand and seven hundred demons will enter you. Do not fear these wicked ones, for the miracle-workers Prokopii and Ioann will stand by you, and rescue you from the demonic force of illness.... You should promise to observe all the instructions they tell you." Having heard this, I, a sinful person, could not answer her anything. Then the Most Holy Mother of God said, "Peace be upon you, Solomonia!" And she departed by the same path by which she had entered.

I awoke from that wondrous vision and terrifying apparition, and I wanted to run from the church. I saw my brother standing nearby, and I was afraid. Then I gathered my strength, and I sat down, and I dozed off. I saw a great light in the church, unlike anything I had seen before, and St. Prokopii came into the church by the western doors. When he was near the grave of St. Ioann, St. Ioann got up from his grave. They came to me, a sinner, and the saints stood before me and said, "Depart, accursed ones, from the servant of God Solomonia!" The saint said to me, "Solomonia, pray from the depths of your heart to the intercessor of Christians, the most pure Mother of God and to Sts. Prokopii and Ioann, and you will be healed on this day. And give us your promise that you will not return to your former husband, and will not attach yourself to another one. You will still suffer a evil torment for three hours this day, but then you will be healed..."

This was St. Prokopii's appearance: long red hair, a simple red beard, not too short, short clothing, boots on his feet, pokers in his hands. St. Ioann was the same sort, as he is depicted on the icon in the local fashion. Then they said to me, "Peace be upon you, Solomonia!" And they left her, and became invisible.

I, a sinful person, awoke from this wondrous vision, and came to; and I left the church. My brother and someone else took me, leading me then to the church of St. Prokopii. I cried out as much as I could, "Do not bring me to St. Prokopii!" They did not listen to me, but dragged me by force into the

church... My spiritual father and the priest Simion of the cathedral church began to read the Psalter over me. And I began to suffer the worst torment from the demons living inside me, and I, a sinful person, could not listen to the words they were saying. I began to cry out to them not to read the psalter over me. And so it was with me for three hours...

I went out of my mind and saw a wondrous and terrifying vision. On the right side, the ranks of priests and deacons came, and sang, with cross and Gospel and candles and incense. On the opposite side I saw a multitude of demons; and in appearance the wicked ones were black and blue and savage and terrifying. They were like a great cloud, and these wicked ones spit and sneezed in my face. I came to those terrifying and savage ones and did not suffer at all, thanks for the prayers of the most holy Mother of God and Sts. Prokopii and Ioann...

Suddenly, an ineffable light shone on the place where I lay. I saw a youth coming into the room with a candle, and behind him came Sts. Prokopii and Ioann. They stood by my head, and the holy men spoke among themselves. I do not know what they said. Then St. Prokopii came up to me, and made the sign of the cross with his hand over my womb. St. Ioann held a little spade in his hand, and he came up to me and cut open my womb and took a demon out of me and gave it to St. Prokopii. The demon began to cry out in a loud voice and wriggle in his hand. St. Prokopii showed me the demon, and said, "Solomonias, do you see the demon, which was in your womb?" I looked at it, black in appearance and having a tail and a wide and terrifying mouth. He put the wicked one down on the floor and whacked it with his pokers... . St. Ioann said to St. Prokopii that while cutting me, a sinful person, not to bloody my shift, and not defile God's church. St. Prokopii replied, "Solomonias will not allow herself to be bloodied, and my house will not be bloodied by the hostile force." St. Ioann began to remove the demons from that same wound, as before. St. Prokopii took them, threw them to the floor of the church, and stomped them with his foot. St. Prokopii said to St. Ioann, "Is Solomonias's womb clean of the demons living

inside her?" St. Ioann replied, "She is clean, and there is no corruption in her!" Then St. Prokopii himself looked into my womb, to see that it was clean. St. Prokopii said, "Glory be to God!" And St. Ioann also said, "Glory be to God!" Then the saints said to me, "Solomonias, you also should say 'Glory be to God!'" My tongue moved, and I said, "Glory be to God!"

Then St. Prokopii said to me, "Solomonias, from this day you will be healed of that great demonic torment of illness. You will still suffer from hostile imaginings, but you should not fear them." And then St. Prokopii said to me, "Be well, Solomonias, until God's day of judgment!" He blessed me with his hand and said, "May our blessing be upon you now and forever!" And he said, "Solomonias, go to the right side, and recite the Jesus prayer, and say, 'Glory be to God!'" And after this speech, the saints became invisible.

I returned to myself after this wondrous vision, and I saw the light of the sun in the church, and I looked around the whole church and icons. I asked my brother in the church, "Am I standing here, or am I seeing a vision?" My brother answered me, "You are standing in the church of St. Prokopii at the liturgy, and the holy Gospel is being read." Then I looked at the grave of St. Prokopii, and I rejoiced greatly, and bowed to St. Prokopii's grave. I fell down there and began to pray and call for help, "O saint of God Prokopii, you did not overlook me, a sinful person, but searched for me, like a lost sheep, and you rescued me from hostile oppression." I did not sense in my womb any hostile force, and I did not suffer even a little; and the sores from the evil devilish abrasions healed. From now on I am healthy, just as the saint told me.

12. Healing spells, Italy, seventeenth century

Saints and other holy figures might be approached through personal prayers, such as those in the previous source, and also through formulaic spells. These spells and chants would be used along with certain herbs and other substances, thus blending natural and supernatural cures. The Madonna of the High Seas (Madonna dell'Alto Mare) was often invoked as the source of dream prophesies. In the prayers below we see how closely linked were matters of health, the supernatural, food and agriculture. (Cecilia Gatto Trocchi, *Magia e medicina popolare in Italia*, (Rome: Newton Compton, 1982), p. 234 (a) and p. 216 (b) Translated by Monica Chojnacka)

O Madonna of the High Seas

Come to me in my dreams, for I must
speak with you

Doors of gold and keys of silver

Bring me this dream for my salvation

O, of evil and of good

Beautiful Mother, you must warn me

If there is evil

Sharp needles, rushing water and
burning fire

If there is good

A table is set

The church is lighted

And the vines are full [of grapes]

b) Men who suffered from "hysteria" were considered victims of *Mal di matrone*, or "illness of the strong woman." In the region of Abruzzo such a condition was treated with a chest massage and the chant below:

I will defeat you, Mother of the Strong Women

You have ninety-nine mouths

Cold like the snow

Sharp like needles

Your mouth like that of a serpent,

Your throat like that of a mare

Do not destroy this servant of God

I point you to the Virgin Mary

In the company of Saint Gregory



Illustration from a German witchcraft pamphlet.

13. The Witch Trial of Mayor Johannes Junius, Bamberg, Germany, 1628

The prince-bishoprics with the Holy Roman Empire, such as Bamberg, were the site of many of the deadliest witch hunts in Europe. The first people to be accused in most hunts were women who were somehow distinctive, but as the circle of accused widened, men who were politically and economically powerful were sometimes caught up in the process as well. This record of the minutes of the trial, and a letter by the accused, is just such a case:

<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/bamberg.html>

14. A woman is accused of witchcraft, Italy 1625

Though there were relatively few witchtrials in southern Europe, there were a few. In this Inquisition trial record from seventeenth-century Venice, Christina Collari was accused both of witchcraft and of having a sexual relationship with a Jewish merchant. Below is the testimony from one of the witnesses in her trial, a former lover named Nicholas who was fifty-five years old. (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Sant'Uffizio, Processi, B. 80, no. 2, doc. #3, December 1625. Translated by Monica Chojnacka)

Inquisitor: Do you know a Christina who starches collars for a living?

Resp: Yes, I know her; for three years we had carnal relations because my wife is ill, and it's been one year since I haven't had anything more to do with her, since I have reconciled myself with God's majesty.

Inqu: Do you know that said Christina has practiced any kind of witchcraft?

Resp: That I ever saw, no. But I did hear talk from Mr. Antonio, the husband of Mrs. Cattarina... that about a year and a half ago he told me that I needed to free myself of said Christina, telling me that she was a witch because she had brought about the death of his nephew, a grown man. This was also told to me by Cattarina his wife, who is still alive, though the husband is now dead. And some clients of mine also told me this, though I can't remember who was present when they told me. Nor did they tell me what particular sort of witchcraft said Christina practiced.

Inqu: Do you know that said Christina practiced witchcraft to pressure her lovers?

Resp: I don't know anything else, if not that once a year ago, about a month before I left her, I found a piece of cord in a little envelope for combs [probably a makeshift small bag for small things, made of a folded piece of paper] near the bed, whose color I don't remember. It wasn't made of silk, but of some thread, and it was wound around so that I don't know its length, and it had various knots with pins....And when I asked her what she was doing with that cord, she answered that she tossed that to see what would be [i.e., to divine the future], and that she was doing no harm by

using it. Then I threw it into the fire, and I left her, very angry, after reproaching her for engaging in such slothful, bad behavior. No one else was in the house when this happened, but outside of the room, in the entry way I saw a woman who rented one of the other rooms in the house, she was called the Fiorentina [the Florentine, i.e., from the city of Florence]; I don't remember her real name, who is the wife of Zanella the linen maker. And to this woman (she's about forty years old), I showed said cord [editor's note: how did Nicholas show Fiorentina the cord if he had just thrown it into the fire?], and I told her how I had found it in the envelope. And she, without saying a word to me, shrugged her shoulders.

Inqu: If you know that said Christina had domestic relations with any Jew.

Resp: Yes, my lords, a Jew from Ferrara named Bonforno, a man of 36 years. Actually I caught him, and I saw him in the house, and before, when he used to come by wearing a black hat, I thought he was a Christian. But once I discovered the deceit by finding his red hat [Jews had to wear special red or yellow hat to distinguish themselves from the Christian population] in her storage chest, she confessed to me that this Jew had slept with her.

Inqu: If you know whether that Jew brought things to eat to that Christina, and whether she ate them, and what sorts of food it was?

Resp: Before I learned that he was a Jew, one Sunday we were eating together at Christina's house, who in those days lived in the parish of San Marcuola [near the Jewish Ghetto]. He brought two fowl, cooked in a pan and a pan of meat cooked with cloves, and he gave me to understand that he was staying in [the parish of] San Boldo in the home of a well-born friend of his. And other times, she told me that this Jew had brought her other cooked things, but at that point she had not yet told me that he was a Jew, because I learned of it from the hat, and when I found the hat, she and he confessed to me that he was a Jew, and after reproaching them I never returned, and that happened about a month after the said Sunday.

Inqu: if you know whether said Christina ate meat on Friday or Saturday that was brought to her by said Jew, and did you hear talk of this?

Resp: No, my lords.

15. Jewish prayers, Eastern Europe, seventeenth century

Prayer was a common religious activity for people of all religious persuasions in early modern Europe. Many prayers were spontaneous, and there is no way to reconstruct them, but others were published, and people were encouraged to memorize and then recite them. This selection comes from two *tkhines*, supplicatory prayers for women written in Yiddish, the everyday language of central and eastern European Jews. Most *tkhines* were probably written by men, though some are known to be written by women, and they often concern issues that were important in women's lives, such as childbirth, family, and widowhood. Some were written specifically to be recited as a woman carried the three special women's religious duties in Judaism, separating out a portion of dough in memory of priestly offerings, lighting the Sabbath candles, and remaining apart from her husband during menstruation until she had taken a ritual bath. (*Tkhines* (Amsterdam, 1658) co. [5c] and *Shloyshe she'orim*, translated in Chava Weissler, "Prayers in Yiddish and the Religious World of Ashkenazic Women," in Judith R. Baskin, ed. *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), pp. 159, 174-5.)

[The woman] says this when she puts the loaf of *berkhes* [braided Sabbath bread] into the oven: Lord of all the world, in your hand is all blessing. I come now to revere your holiness, and I pray you to bestow your blessing on the baked goods. Send an angel to guard the baking, so that all will be well-baked, will rise nicely, and will not burn, to honor the holy Sabbath (which you have chosen so that Israel your children may rest thereon) and over which one recites the holy blessing--as you blessed the dough of Sarah and Rebecca our mothers. My Lord God, listen to my voice; you are the God who hears the voices of those who call to you with the whole heart. May you be praised to eternity.

I, Sarah bas Tovim, [the woman traditionally regarded as the author of this prayer] I do this for the sake of the dear God, blessed be he and blessed be his name, and arrange, this second time, yet another beautiful new tkhine concerning three gates. The first gate is founded upon the three commandments which we women were commanded: [The acronym] Hanna" h is their name ... that is to say, separating dough for hallah, observing menstrual avoidances [niddah], and kin-dling Sabbath lights [hadlaqat ha-nerot]. The second gate is a tkhine to pray when one blesses the New Moon. The third gate concerns the Days of Awe. I take for my help the living God, blessed be he, who lives forever and to eternity, and I set out this second beautiful new tkhine in Yiddish with great love, with great awe, with trembling and terror... May God have mercy upon me and upon all Israel. May I not long be forced to be a wanderer, by the merit of our Mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. And my own dear mother Leah pray to God, blessed be he, for me, that my being a wanderer may be an atonement for me for me for my sins.



A Jewish doctor at the Ottoman court

16. A Jewish doctor in Venice, 1607

Many Jews fled the Iberian peninsula in the sixteenth century, often going to Italy, where they lived in walled ghettos set up by Christian authorities. Jews who had converted to Christianity in Spain and Portugal were frequently targets of the Inquisition, and they fled as well. This document describes a Portuguese doctor who had originally lived as a Christian in Florence, but decided to return to living as a Jew in the Venetian ghetto. He realizes he will not be as well-off, but notes that he has done this “out of religious zeal,” and that there are thousands of people already living in the ghetto who will need the services of a doctor.

<http://www.medici.org/news/dom/dom042002.html>

17. Sufi prayers

In the Sufi orders, prayer and the recitation of sacred texts played a very important role. Each order had its own rituals and ceremonies, which evolved (and continue to evolve) over the centuries, though they were understood to be rooted in specific textual traditions. These two prayers capture the religious understanding of some Sufi groups, especially those associated with the order of Universal Sufism founded by Hazrat Inayat Khan. Like the writings of John Wesley, they emphasize the perfect love of God.

Saum. Praise be to Thee, Most Supreme God,
Omnipotent, Omnipresent, All-pervading, the Only Being.
Take us in Thy Parental Arms,
Raise us from the denseness of the earth.
Thy Beauty do we worship,
To Thee do we give willing surrender.
Most Merciful and Compassionate God,
The Idealized Lord of the whole humanity.
Thee only do we worship; and towards Thee alone we aspire.
Open our hearts towards Thy Beauty,
Illuminate our souls with Divine Light.
O Thou, the Perfection of Love, Harmony and Beauty!
All-powerful Creator, Sustainer, Judge and Forgiver of our
shortcomings, Lord God of the East and of the West, of the worlds above
and
below, And of the seen and unseen beings;
Pour upon us Thy Love and Thy Light,
Give sustenance to our bodies, hearts and souls.
Use us for the purpose that Thy Wisdom chooseth,

And guide us on the path of Thine Own Goodness.

Draw us closer to Thee every moment of our life,

Until in us be reflected, Thy Grace, Thy Glory, Thy Wisdom, Thy Joy and Thy Peace.

Amen.

KHATUM: O Thou, Who art the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,

The Lord of heaven and earth,

Open our hearts, that we may hear Thy Voice, which

constantly cometh from within. Disclose to us Thy Divine Light, which is hidden in our souls, that we may know and understand life better.

Most Merciful and Compassionate God, give us Thy great Goodness; Teach us Thy loving Forgiveness;

Raise us above the distinctions and differences which divide men; Send us the Peace of Thy Divine Spirit, And unite us all in Thy Perfect Being.

Amen.