ON THEATRICAL SPECTACLES

Daniele Concina, O.P.

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ON THEATRICAL
SPECTACLES
Two Dissertations on Spectacles Prohibited to Every Christian,
Both Lay and Clerical
TO WHICH IS ADDED
A THIRD DISSERTATION
On Priests in Masks
BY
FR. DANIELE CONCINA
OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS
SECOND EDITION
To which have been added the treatise of St. Charles Borromeo on dances and spectacles, and selected statements by the same author bearing on this subject.
ROME
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With permission of the superiors

Circular Letter of Pope Benedict XIV

BENEDICT XIV, SUPREME PONTIFF

Circular Letter of Pope Benedict XIV

It is enough for us to say that the diversions of Carnival are merely permitted and tolerated by the Church, although reluctantly and in order to avoid greater evils, as the celebrated and pious theologian Thomas Stapleton concludes by a sound and valid argument in his eighth *Oration against Carnival*, volume 2 of his works, page 556.

There is, moreover, a great difference between those things which are commanded and those which are tolerated. *What we teach is one thing; what we endure is another; what we are commanded to correct is another; and, until we correct it, what we are compelled to tolerate is another.* These are the words of St. Augustine in *Against Faustus*, book 20, chapter 21.

It follows that, in matters which are merely tolerated, there is no room for extending them, as though we might make use of them at will, and so forth.

Given at Rome, at Saint Mary Major, on 1 January 1748, in the eighth year of our pontificate.
Circular letter of His Holiness Our Lord Pope Benedict XIV to the archbishops and bishops of the temporal Pontifical State.

Dedication to Don Andrés Mayoral, Archbishop of Valencia

To the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord
Don Andrés Mayoral, Archbishop of Valencia
Fr. Daniele Concina, O.P., wishes happiness.

That it came into my mind, though I am an Italian far removed from you by land and sea, to honor this work with your name, Most Eminent Archbishop Mayoral - a name full of dignity and glory - had no other cause than the fame of your distinguished works, probity, learning, and integrity. That fame, unable to be contained within the vast realms of Spain, has resounded throughout all Europe, reached even my ears, and so penetrated my mind that I was compelled, according to my small ability, to applaud you as an image of the ancient Fathers of the Church and to offer some token of just and pious rejoicing.

Nor should you, in consequence of the modesty with which you are endowed, be disturbed; nor can others justly entertain a suspicion of flattery. For if I proclaim you a strenuous emulator of the ancient Fathers of the Catholic Church, and especially of Chrysostom, I shall demonstrate by invincible arguments that in the government of your archbishopric you wonderfully reproduce their heroic deeds. Instead, they must admire the infinite providence of God, who in this greatest calamity of the ages has appointed over the Church of Valencia such an archbishop as the most flourishing first age of the Christian religion would have desired.

To carry out in words what I have proposed, I shall not mention that most abundant eloquence of speech by which, when you expound the Gospel of Christ from the sacred chair, you restrain the appetites of your hearers, bend their minds, inflame their hearts to fulfill the divine commandments, and raise and strengthen their powers. I shall not recount either the singular wisdom with which you adorned the Complutensian Academy before a numerous attendance of hearers; or your lavish generosity in endowing maidens and assisting widows; or your most ardent charity in relieving the poverty of the needy.

Your most arduous labors and episcopal solicitude in visiting the Diocese of Valencia are attested, even if I remain silent, by the many altars and churches either erected, restored, or adorned with new ornaments and splendid furnishings; and they commend those labors to distant posterity. What then shall I set forth to adorn the undertaking I have assumed? I shall bring forward one thing which comprises a specimen of every virtue: that most excellent resolution, unheard of for ages, by which, with truly incredible courage of mind, you resolved to demolish and level to the ground the spacious theater of the most illustrious city of Valencia, which was intended for the exercise of the comic art, and actually accomplished it.

This is a great and most splendid work, which wonderfully represents you, Most Illustrious Mayoral, as a most perfect imitator of the ancient Fathers of the Church. For every one of the most holy Fathers of every age persecuted theatrical spectacles as nothing less than the training school of every vice and crime. Yet that great and celebrated Chrysostom surpassed and excelled them all. Of him Cardinal Baronius, the father of ecclesiastical history, writes: *But what, in the end, did he accomplish by*

preaching the word in season and out of season? This work, certainly, of great importance: that the obscene spectacle called Maiuma was utterly abolished.

Baronius, under the year 399.

Nor did the spirit of the unconquered Patriarch stop here. He eagerly urged the emperor Arcadius to remove every theater from their midst; he pressed the people to abstain from the theaters; and he exposed the depravity of the actors in order to inspire horror. As he himself testifies: *What shall I do? Behold, I am rent asunder every day so that you may withdraw from the theaters.* Yet he was unable to obtain his wishes.

Chrysostom, Homily 44 on the Acts of the Apostles.

You, however, Most Excellent Archbishop, more successful and fortunate than Chrysostom in this respect, not only completely eradicated the theaters from your distinguished city, but from the very ruins of the profane building caused a most spacious house to be rebuilt on the same site, at very great expense, and consecrated as a dwelling for the poor and the sick.

What, in undertakings so heroic, is most to be admired? Some will extol the purpose and magnitude of the plan undertaken; others, the very great quantity of gold and silver spent in demolishing and raising buildings. And indeed, who would deny that these things are great and splendid? Yet they are not so unusual and extraordinary that they are not encountered elsewhere. Indeed, the applause of the world, the thirst for enlarging one's own glory, and the acclamations of the people often attract and impel men to undertake such things.

What then was unusual here, what heroic, what unheard of? Certainly it was that unconquered and fearless heart with which you overcame the most serious and difficult obstacles that opposed your daring and doing such things, and defeated every assault of opposition. The contrary corruption prevailed, spread more widely, and exercised supreme dominion over men's minds. Those attached to the pleasure of the stage opposed your plans, as did political administrators, who most ignorantly suppose that cities grow rich, commerce increases, and financial wealth expands through frequent attendance at the theaters. There were also shallow sophists, laureled in worldly learning, who declared that prudence consists in concealing and tolerating several evils so as to avoid graver ones.

All these, in a body and as though by a concerted assault, muttered secretly against you, or cried aloud: *Your predecessors, upright and honorable men, permitted theaters to remain, tragedies and comedies to be represented, and male and female actors to practice their art, and they tolerated them. What? Are you holier than they? Are you more prudent? Are you Elijah? Are you Peter? Are you a just man come down from heaven? These attempts and undertakings of yours proceed from an imprudent mind, a hasty judgment, and a fanciful piety.*

What did you do amid so many dangers and amid the snares and outcries of worldly men opposing you on every side? Filled with a certain divine inspiration, and a most vigorous despiser of every earthly affair and of perishing glory, you overcame the obstacles, laid your enemies low, vigorously undertook the work of God, carried it out with incredible fortitude, and adorned it with the greatest splendor. And to silence completely the mouths of those who spoke against you, you employed the answer which, in an entirely similar case, the most holy Roman pontiff Gelasius gave: *I must earnestly consider and ponder deeply, not what my predecessors did, nor what they tolerated, but what I myself ought to do; for I shall render to the supreme and terrible Judge a most severe account, not of their government, but of my own and of the flock committed to my care, since the harshest judgment will befall those who rule.*

Gelasius continued: *But you say that these things existed even in Christian times. Is it then because they were not removed under the first prelates of the Christian religion that they ought not to have been removed under their successors? It is proper for me to declare that these things are undoubtedly harmful and deadly to Christians. Why do you accuse me if I declare that what is hostile to the name we profess must be removed by those who share the Christian profession? I, certainly, shall absolve my own conscience; let those who have neglected to obey just admonitions see to themselves. Moreover, if you think a rule must be taken for me from the conduct of my predecessors, each one of us must render an account of his own administration, just as you see done also in public offices. I do not dare accuse my predecessors of negligence, since I rather believe that perhaps they attempted to have this depravity removed, but that certain causes and opposing wills existed which hindered their intentions, just as you perceive that even now you are unwilling to desist from these mad attempts.*

Baronius, under the year 496, no. 28; Wisdom 6.

These unusual, heroic, and unheard-of deeds portray you, unconquered Mayoral, as a living image of Chrysostom, Gelasius, and the other ancient Fathers of the Church; and they exalt you the more highly because we see such deeds become rarer in this most disastrous age. But so that the loftiness, and almost the divinity, of the things I have thus far comprised in a brief discourse may appear more clearly, it must be considered that, when you demolished the theater, you understood perfectly that you were exterminating a sanctuary of Venus, a refuge of demons, a council chamber of impurity, a brothel in which modesty is overthrown, a school of baseness and obscenity, and a training ground of lust, as the sacred writers of every age testify with one voice.

You knew indeed that the most holy Fathers issued not as many discourses, homilies, and books against thefts, adulteries, perjuries, fornications, or blasphemies as they did against theatrical spectacles and the infamous art of actors. To what end was this? Because all other private crimes injure one virtue or another and stop with the offender himself, as those same Fathers, and Chrysostom above all, say. Theatrical spectacles, however, are the camps of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh. There male and female actors, for an accepted wage, wage a general war against the whole Gospel of Christ.

They attack and undermine all the virtues - modesty, fortitude, reserve, humility, shame, and chastity - and very cunningly teach and persuade men in the art of corrupting them. By contrast, they extol the opposing vices with marvelous praises: luxury, ostentation, pride, ambition, impudence, pandering, fraud, and lust. They entice and urge the minds of the spectators to embrace these vices, and with all their strength disclose the roads by which spectators may reach them. To obtain victory in these contests, they spare neither art, industry, labor, tricks, nor deceits. But by demolishing the theater and erecting a house for the relief of the poor, you removed the art of committing and teaching wickedness and opened a temple for the cultivation of virtue and holiness.

All these things are great and excellent, yet they cannot profit for long unless there are removed from our midst those monstrosities of doctrines and opinions which, concealed beneath the mask of seductive benignity, greatly foster the pleasure of the stage, the allurements of dances, the corruption of games, the enormity of usury, and the promiscuous association of men and matrons, and nourish them through frequent reception of the sacraments.

Formerly articles of faith - *The Father is greater than I*; *This is my body* - were drawn into controversy by heterodox men. But in our age, within the bosom of the Church, certain Catholic advocates of a more indulgent ethics draw into controversy the holier precepts of morals: *Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*; *Enter by the narrow gate; how narrow is the gate and confined the way which leads to life*; *He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me*; *The kingdom of heaven suffers violence*; *Watch at all times,*

praying; *Those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh*; *Lend, hoping for nothing thereby*; *Turn to me with all your heart, in fasting*, and so forth; *Do not look upon a woman of many desires; do not linger with a dancing woman, nor listen to her; turn your face away from a woman adorned*; *If your eye, if your hand causes you to stumble, pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it away from you.*

John 14; Matthew 26; Matthew 3; Matthew 7; Matthew 10; Matthew 11; Luke 21; 1 Corinthians 7; Luke 6; Joel 2; Ecclesiasticus 9; Matthew 5.

These, I say, the chief commandments of the Christian life, they frustrate and overthrow beneath a covering of empty little distinctions and by the most inept commentaries. All Catholics shudder at heresies of the former kind, which injure the mysteries of faith even by subterranean passages; yet many regard as nothing the heresies which lay snares for the divine laws of morals and bring extreme destruction upon them, as though these evils too were not harmful and deadly, although it is the constant and settled judgment of all that heresies against doctrines to be believed have always arisen from heresies of morals.

From where, then, is a remedy to be sought for so great a plague, fastened to our innermost vitals? From the zeal, vigilance, and fortitude of the bishops, whom God has established as overseers and governors of his Church. In expelling the comic art you followed the footsteps of the ancient Fathers. But to exterminate corrupt ethics, there stand ready for your imitation not only the ancient Fathers and those of other nations, but recent bishops of your own country and household. Their one voice is that the restoration of Christian holiness depends above all upon those who, sitting in judgment, possess the power of loosing and binding.

Before all others I set before your eyes St. Thomas of Villanova, your predecessor, who from that very Valencian chair, adorned by him with the splendor of holiness and learning, pronounced this equally true and terrible judgment: *What ruins the Church of the Lord today, if not the flattering adulation of confessors and pastors, their soothing and caressing assent?*

St. Thomas of Villanova, sermon for Friday after the fourth Sunday of Lent.

You have innumerable other celebrated pastors and theologians of your most illustrious Spanish nation, which I shall perhaps have praised less than is just if I call it second to no nation of Europe, whether sublimity of intellect or holiness of morals is considered. You may prescribe these men as examples to be followed by your ministers of sacred penance. Among the pastors shine those nine archbishops and bishops who extracted more than three hundred false and erroneous propositions from the works of the more indulgent casuists and submitted them to the Roman See for proscription.

Among the theologians the most eminent are Ribera, Mariana, Elizalde, Gonzales, Camargo, and Muniesa, all most excellent Jesuits, who endured no slight storms of adversity in order to vindicate evangelical doctrine from corrupt ethics. I acknowledge that I profited from their teaching and constancy both in driving out the new manner of forming opinions and in composing the *Christian Theology*. Most diligent censors subjected that work, over a long interval of time, to a severe examination, slowly and painstakingly sifting even its smallest points; and, with God's assistance, they found in it not one proposition either more rigorous than equity or laxer than justice. This is manifestly established by the declaration dictated by the most wise Pope Benedict XIV and prefixed

to the final volume. In it I glory and rejoice no less, and indeed more sincerely, than others do in their honors.

It is enough to indicate in passing two other Spaniards. The first is the Most Eminent Cardinal de Aguirre, glory of the celebrated Benedictine Order, of the Sacred College, and of the Spanish nation, who yields the palm to no one in weakening and overthrowing the new system of corrupt ethics, as may be established from the following words: *Moreover, a book of the Reverend Father General Tirso will shortly come from the press, which almost everyone eagerly awaits except those who are pleased with that monster of Probabilism, which has long lodged deep rather in their heart than in their mind.*

Posthumous works of Mabillon and Ruinart, volume 1, page 427.

The second is the Most Illustrious Francisco Pérez de Prado y Cuesta, Bishop of Teruel and Inquisitor General of Spain, distinguished for integrity of morals and doctrine. In his most learned work entitled *Canonical Defense*, commended with much praise by Pope Benedict XIV himself, he overthrew theatrical corruption by most powerful arguments drawn both from authority and from reason.

Canonical Defense of the Decretory Power, and so forth; see from page 535 onward.

And what of the fact that not theologians alone, but whole Spanish cities - Córdoba, Pamplona, and others - furnished monuments of sounder doctrine when they completely demolished their theaters and, by enacted law, forbade themselves the sight of comedies? Let these things be spoken as a slight token of my devotion toward the Spanish theologians and prelates, and toward the splendor and praise of the entire Spanish nation.

These things give the spirit a little refreshment and encouragement. Yet we live in such an age, and the Christian religion has fallen into such a calamity, that we can neither continue to endure the evils nor apply the remedies. From the contagion of corrupt doctrine and morals there has at last broken forth, not a schism or some heresy as formerly, but the very monster of impiety. With head erect, as though rejoicing and triumphing, it attacks the whole of religion with such audacity and such destruction of the Catholic faith that the dreadful and terrible prophecy of Christ seems to have its place: *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, do you think he will find faith on earth?*

Luke 18.

And to complete the accumulation of every evil, this too is added: amid the very flames of impiety burning from the four corners of the Lord's temple and devouring souls, it is not permitted to utter one's voice and cry out freely. If we inveigh against the crimes of the peoples, no one protests. But if we criticize a more indulgent art of healing, which soothes and fosters diseases; if the seat of the disease and the root of the wounds are exposed; if the authors who pervert the method of applying the divine medicine are revealed; if we cry out that the source of all the evils by which we are overwhelmed is the corruption of the evangelical doctrine of morals; if, finally, we strive as we ought to promote that most immaculate Christian ethics by which Christ the Lord made men holy - immediately certain indulgent men accuse us of being driven by envy, hatred, pride, and ambition, and regard it as a religious duty to brand us with the most hateful names of Baianism, Jansenism, and rigorism, as though in our age the extreme of excessive severity, and not of pestilential softness, raged against the human race, and as though the people languished, crushed and tormented by the excessive austerity of fasts, penances, hair shirts, vigils, and similar practices.

I have therefore briefly recalled all these things to your sight so that you, who sit in the house of God as judge and defender, clothed with celestial armor amid the hazards of so many storms, may stand vigorously as a wall of bronze and adamant against those who never cease to gnaw away the sacred deposit committed to your vigilance, to loosen the most holy laws by flattering speech, and to overthrow them by pernicious indulgence. May you raise and inflame your spirit to dare still greater things than those which you have already accomplished fearlessly.

If our ancestors, men of the greatest courage, did not fear to shed their blood and endure the most savage butchery in order to defend doctrines of belief in the sight of raging pagans, shall we of the future be so fearful and weak that, from fear of losing or hope of acquiring a fleeting scrap of glory, we basely abandon an open and vigorous defense of sound moral doctrine? O Faith, Faith! Where are you, Faith? Augustine cries. Continue, therefore, you who have already furnished so many proofs of Christian fortitude.

And since no heresy raised against the Christian faith has thus far been able to set foot in the most flourishing realms of Spain - which is surely a most splendid privilege of your renowned nation - strive earnestly and vigilantly, according to your custom, lest it happen hereafter. You will accomplish this if the undefiled holiness of evangelical morality and the discipline for administering sacramental penance preserved by the holy Fathers of the Church remain intact and flourish.

It remains now, Most Eminent Archbishop Andrés Mayoral, that you receive kindly this work, which I inscribe not so much to your name as to your magnanimity, vigilance, and almost divine fortitude. At the urging of Benedict XIV, the supreme and excellent Pontiff and the most illustrious defender and champion of sounder doctrine, I have submitted this same work to the press. I therefore have no doubt that, especially for this reason, you will in your kindness receive it as a most welcome gift and a token of my devotion toward you.

Unless everything deceives me, the doctrine set forth in it is evangelical; and therefore, since it is hostile to flesh and blood, it will arouse against itself the murmurs, censures, and insults of worldly men. It is therefore for the doctrine, not for myself - who am nothing - that I fear: *Though camps stand against me, my heart shall not fear; though battle rise against me, in this will I hope.* I commend it to your most powerful patronage and most humbly submit it to your unconquered defense. Farewell.

> *A bird, fearing an empty noise, falls into the nets. So men who fear the vain and empty words of mockers, and who blush at superfluous insults, fall into the snares of the hunters and are captured by the Devil. There are many Christians who live badly; among them, anyone who wishes to live well, to be sober among drunkards, and chaste among fornicators, and who among the spectators of trifling theaters refuses to go anywhere except to church, suffers those same Christians as mockers and endures harsh words. They say: 'A great man you are, a just man! You are Elijah; you are Peter come down from heaven.' They mock him. Wherever he turns, he hears a harsh word on this side and that. If he fears and departs from the way of Christ, he falls into the snares of the hunters. When he hears harsh words, from where can he obtain consolation for himself, so that he may disregard those harsh words, not depart from the way, and enter through the gate? Let him say: 'What sort of words do I hear, I who am a servant and a sinner? My Lord heard: You have a demon.' It was not necessary for the Lord to hear this; but he warned you against harsh words, lest you fall into the snares of the hunters.*
>
> St. Augustine, Sermon 1 on Psalm 90.

Author's Preface

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I. The abuse of spectacles, than which nothing is more harmful to evangelical holiness, once crept along, permitted only in certain principal cities of Europe. Yet within no long interval of time, like a dreadful plague, it drove and enlarged its roots so widely that there is now hardly any small city, at least in Italy, which does not have theaters erected as though they were colleges for educating youth in the art of love affairs, and as though they were emporia of a market, to which people from every direction may come, empty their purses, and increase the wealth of the inhabitants.

The first result succeeded not merely according to, but beyond, their wishes; for the morals of the young, and even of older men, have now been effeminated and dissolved to the utmost degree. The second fell out adversely. Instead of increasing wealth and revenues, the excessively costly hiring of actors introduced want and poverty. Amid so many evils, this alone turned out well: in some places spectacles can no longer be staged because of extreme poverty. Indeed, even during this season of Carnival the theaters in no few cities are silent, and the spacious temples of the Muses and the stage have become dwellings of spiders and scorpions.

What Salvian writes in book 6 of *On the Governance of God* applies wonderfully to several cities: *Both things, therefore, must be considered: why the places and lodgings of the games still exist, while the games themselves have ceased to exist. The places and habitations of baseness still exist because impure and shameful things were formerly performed there; but the games themselves are not now performed because, owing to the misery and poverty of the times, they can no longer be performed. Thus what was done before arose from vice, while what is done now arises from necessity. The fact that things formerly performed are not performed everywhere is the benefit of misery, not of discipline.*

But O times! O morals! We are compelled to see prodigies and monstrosities which Salvian did not see. Spectacles which were formerly staged only in the public theaters of cities are now staged even in certain monasteries. For even the wise are swept into error by the opinions of the common people. Persons dedicated to sacred things - clerics, priests, and even some cloistered religious - not only consider it no violation of religion to attend public theaters and be present at comedies; no few of those very men themselves act in comedies and reproduce spectacles in their own monasteries. In this way all those monks enjoy dramatic performances with slight inconvenience and little expense.

Men of God distinguished for wisdom and probity, lamenting this depraved corruption, urged me when the subject arose, and added their spurs, to compose a dissertation against it. Had the abuse been hidden, I would have appeased it with silence. But since it is public in certain places, I judged that the counsels of wise men should be obeyed. At first I resolved to dispose of the matter briefly and to bring forward only those things which relate directly to monastic spectacles. But after seriously weighing the matter, I was compelled to seek the controversy at a deeper level and to distribute the argument between two dissertations.

II. I am not unaware that some will call our labor empty and useless. Neither civil nor canon laws, they will say, nor the powerful and vehement declamations of the Fathers, theologians, or preachers have ever been able to remove the pleasures of comedies and theaters from among Christians. Why

then do we beat the air and waste our labor by condemning theaters and spectacles? Either Christians are upright and well conducted, and such people have no need of your book; or Christians are worldly and addicted to the theaters, and for them this book is altogether superfluous.

Those who reason in this way do not know that the Church is a field sown with wheat and tares. They do not know our Savior's command: *Allow both to grow, lest you uproot the wheat together with them.* Are we therefore not to cry out against crimes and the dangers of crimes because crimes and wicked deeds cannot be entirely eliminated? Christ, then, ought to have been silent; the apostles ought to have been silent; every holy man ought to have been silent. Everyone sees how absurd this is. Sins have existed, and as long as human nature stained by original guilt endures, sins will continue to exist. Are our exhortations therefore empty and vain when by them we strive to withdraw God's elect and sinners from offenses and from the danger of perishing? We must know instead that God permits offenses for the salvation of the elect and the glory of his divine majesty, and that the Church tolerates many things in order to avoid greater evils.

Matthew 13:29.

Augustine writes much on this subject in Letter 43 to Glorius and Eleusius, formerly numbered Letter 161: *Aaron tolerates the multitude demanding, making, and worshiping an idol. Moses tolerates so many thousands murmuring against God and so often offending his holy name. David tolerates Saul persecuting him, abandoning heavenly things through criminal conduct, and seeking the things below by magical arts; he vindicates him when slain and even calls him the Christ of the Lord because of the sacrament of the venerable anointing. Samuel tolerates the wicked sons of Eli and his own perverse sons; and because the people would not tolerate them, the people were accused by divine equity and chastised by divine severity. Finally he tolerates the proud people who despise God. Isaiah tolerates those against whom he charges so many crimes. Jeremiah tolerates those from whom he suffers so much. Zechariah tolerates the Pharisees and scribes. The Lord himself tolerates Judas, his devil, thief, and betrayer.*

III. The Church therefore tolerates vices, abuses, allurements, and pleasures which she condemns and execrates. Yet for that reason she does not exempt her ministers from the duty of crying out and inveighing against the evils which, unwilling and weeping, she permits and endures. For as all the Fathers, and Chrysostom above all, teach, theologians and ministers of the divine word must fulfill the duties of their office; but the fruit and favorable outcome of the ministry must be left to God alone. God himself plainly commands this in Ezekiel 33: *If, when I say to the wicked man, 'Wicked man, you shall die the death,' you do not speak so that the wicked man may guard himself from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood from your hand. But if, when you warn the wicked man to turn from his ways, he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; you, however, have delivered your soul.*

For half a century and more, so far as I know, no writer has appeared in Italy who deliberately sharpened his pen against the abuse of theaters. By contrast, several vigorous defenders of comedies and tragedies have published booklets in their praise. It is therefore no wonder that this most harmful corruption has driven such deep roots and spread so widely, and has assumed such a mask of honor and innocent recreation, that even men consecrated to God become indignant when they hear the theaters of our day condemned. But let them mutter, murmur, and prattle. Meanwhile, following the footsteps of divine Scripture and the holy Fathers, I have resolved to carry into effect the most salutary admonition of St. Charles Borromeo.

The preacher shall continually detest and execrate spectacles, games, and playful things of that kind, which take their origin from the customs of the pagans and are opposed to Christian discipline. He shall demonstrate the disadvantages and public calamities which flow from them among the Christian people. He shall strongly confirm the people in this judgment by the arguments advanced by the most weighty men Tertullian, Cyprian the Martyr, Salvian, and Chrysostom; and in that kind of argument he shall omit nothing else by which so great a corruption may be uprooted.

St. Charles Borromeo, Acts, part 2, in the diocesan synod of 1572.

Behold the perpetual tradition of the Church against theatrical pleasures. What will the critics of our day answer, who are not ashamed to prattle that the ancient Fathers are cited in vain against the theaters of our age, because those holy Fathers detested the obscene and filthy theaters which prevailed in their time, unlike those represented today? Is this truly so? Then St. Charles and all the other most holy men of the latest age wrongly bring forward Tertullian, Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Salvian in order to prove that our theaters are forbidden and harmful to Christians.

IV. Men of God wonder and stand astonished that in our stormy age the Catholic religion diminishes day by day and is confined within narrower boundaries, while impiety raises its face most boldly, advances more freely, and daily enlarges its territories. Yet the reason for wonder ceases if we consider the principles from which these things flow. The Christian religion turns upon two hinges: the things to be believed and the things to be done. They are joined by so intimate a covenant that, once separated, they can scarcely live for a long interval of time.

The immaculate holiness of evangelical morality rivals the sublime height of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Lord's Passion, and the other dogmas. Faith in the articles shines in the mind as though upon its throne, but is suckled, grows, and is nourished by the pious affection of the will and integrity of morals. The chastity of such love is so pure and undefiled that it execrates even deliberate thoughts, much more deliberate pleasures. Human concupiscence, however, implanted by God for the propagation of the human race, has been so disordered and unbridled by original sin that, having cast off the bridle of reason, it is swept with violent force toward pleasure and lust.

Therefore the law of Christ, which commands either virginal or conjugal chastity to be preserved inviolate, orders two safeguards to be employed. The first concerns fasts, prayers, alms, and other works of penance, by which the untamed powers of appetite within are broken and restrained: *Turn to me with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning*, God says through Joel, chapter 2. Paul adds: *Those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and desires.* Finally Christ himself says: *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily.*

The other safeguard removes from without the incitements of luxury: pomp, excess, spectacles, theaters, comedies, and familiar association with women. *Turn your face away from a woman adorned, and do not gaze upon another's beauty. Because of a woman's beauty many have perished, and from this concupiscence burns like fire. Many who admired the beauty of a woman became reprobate, for her conversation blazes like fire. Do not sit at all with another man's wife*, Ecclesiasticus says in chapter 9; and again in chapter 42: *Do not remain among women, for from garments comes the moth, and from a woman the iniquity of a man. Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman who does good* - that is, who caresses with flatteries. And it concludes in chapter 3: *He who loves danger will perish in it*. These teachings occur everywhere in Holy Scripture.

V. Let everyone now examine, with a mind free from prejudices, the customs and morals of many Catholics. As soon as many Christians are brought into the light, they learn thoroughly to violate the profession made in baptism of renouncing Satan and his pomps, and to extinguish the very seeds of virtue. Even the pagan Cicero lamented this plague of morals in the *Tusculan Disputations*:

> *If nature had produced us such that we could look upon and perceive her, and complete the course of life under her excellent guidance, there would surely have been no reason for anyone to require system and instruction. But she gave us tiny sparks, which we, corrupted by evil customs and depraved opinions, so quickly extinguish that the light of nature nowhere appears. There are seeds of virtue innate in our dispositions; if they were allowed to grow, nature herself would lead us to the blessed life. But as soon as we are brought forth and received into the light, we immediately dwell amid every corruption and the greatest perversity of opinions, so that we seem almost to have drunk in error with our nurse's milk. When we are returned to our parents - that is, entrusted to teachers - we are so imbued with various errors that truth yields to vanity and nature itself to confirmed opinion. The poets are added, who, because they display a great appearance of learning and wisdom, are heard, read, learned by heart, and adhere deeply in the mind. When there is added to this the people, a certain very great teacher, and the multitude agreeing everywhere in vice, then we are completely infected by the depravity of opinions and defect from nature. It seems that they have begrudged us the best nature, since they judge nothing better for man, nothing more desirable, nothing more excellent than honors, offices, and popular glory. Every best man is borne toward these; and while seeking that true honor which nature chiefly seeks, he is occupied with the greatest vanity and pursues, not the eminent form of virtue, but the shadowed image of glory. Through this blindness men, although they desired certain excellent things, did not know either where or what those things were, and utterly overturned their cities, or themselves perished. Although they sought the best things, they were deceived not so much by their will as by an error in their course.*

VI. If Tullius himself detests such depraved corruptions among the worshipers of demons, how much more horrible will they be among those who profess the Catholic religion? Are not Catholic boys and girls, before they know how to distinguish good from evil, filled with images of luxury, ambition, ostentation, and worldly vanity? Are they not instructed and strengthened in the things of the world by the pomps, banquets, and other allurements of their own parents, household members, and companions? Nourished and fed upon this poisonous milk of education, when they grow up, men and women spend day and night together and devote diligent labor to games, feasts, and dances. By these external fans the internal fire of concupiscence is kindled and increased. They nourish and fatten the flesh with dishes prepared by exquisite art, and in both directions excite one another's lust.

Women fascinate men by the splendor of their garments, foreign fashions of adornment, the most cunning arts of their sex, and the allurements of swelling breasts, says Jerome in his letter *On Avoiding Suspect Cohabitation*:

> *What will you do, a girl of sound body, delicate, plump, ruddy, heated among meats, wines, and baths, beside married men and beside young men? Although, when solicited, you may not yield, nevertheless you consider it a testimony to your beauty that you are solicited. A lustful mind pursues honorable things more ardently, and suspects more sweetly what is not permitted. A cheap and somber garment is itself an indication of a silent mind; but if it is dragged over the ground so that you may appear taller, if it is deliberately torn so that something within appears, and if it covers what is unsightly while revealing what is beautiful, it is otherwise. The little black boot of a woman walking calls young men to itself with a squeaking*

sound. The breasts are compressed with bands and the body is bound more tightly with a rippling girdle. The hair falls either over the forehead or the ears. The little cloak sometimes falls so that it may bare the white shoulders; then, as though she had not wished to be seen, she hurriedly conceals what she had deliberately uncovered.

By these tricks they so effeminate men that you would call them the most abject slaves of little women. They serve at their nod, bend the knee, support their arms, and display themselves as bewitched and maddened. Jerome continues in the same place: *A little bearded attendant will give you his hand, support you when weary, and either be touched by your fingers or touch you. He will speak by signs and communicate by his expression whatever he fears to say. They boast of sitting beside her bed, applying a midwife's hands to the sick woman, carrying the chamber pot, warming cloths, and folding bandages. I wonder if maidservants and household slaves invent such things about you. Open your ears, I beg you, and hear the cry of the whole city. You have already lost your own names and have taken surnames from one another: you are called his, and he yours.*

And as though the enticements of such pleasure were few, they attend theaters and comedies together so that, through the sweetness of song, the modulation of sound, and the lively allurements of female musicians and actors who represent the art of impurity, they may be more violently inflamed toward lust. Cicero, in chapter 2 of the *Paradoxes*, graphically describes the most abject slavery of men of this sort who cling to little mistresses and matrons: *Is that man free whom a woman commands, upon whom she imposes laws, to whom she prescribes, orders, forbids, and commands as she pleases? He can deny her nothing and dares refuse nothing. She asks: it must be given. She calls: he must come. She casts him out: he must leave. She threatens: he must tremble. I think that such a man should be called not merely a slave, but the most worthless slave, even if he was born in the most distinguished family.*

VII. Among so many reefs, will the lily of chastity flourish undefiled? Will speech be chaste and modest, with scurrility and filthy language driven away? Will the eyes be chaste, the mind free of wicked thoughts, and the will immune from consent to pleasure? *Among such great enticements of pleasure*, says Jerome in the passage cited, *lust subdues even minds of iron.* And a little earlier: *Who among mortals ever sleeps safely beside a viper? Even if it does not strike, it certainly causes alarm. It is safer to be unable to perish than not to perish while beside danger.*

And indeed, if the things I have recounted are not fans of lust and training grounds of Venus, what will be? Either there are no dangers in the world for the defilement of chastity, or those I have described are most grave. The first is contrary to Holy Scripture; the second is therefore true. Either the Catholic religion, which by the same law that commands chastity to be preserved commands the aforementioned reefs of chastity to be avoided, must be renounced, or dangers of this sort must be guarded against.

VIII. But lest anything appear to have been said by exaggeration, I yield the point. Are dress and gait more modest among the Catholic matrons of our age than among pagan women? Are their pomps, luxury, and vanities more restrained? Do Turks, Indians, and men of every sect spend more time at games, in familiarity with women, at spectacles, comedies, and pleasures than those Catholics who devote themselves to the modern association with women and to comedies? Do those men provoke concupiscence with more select dishes and more splendid banquets than these Catholics do? What, then, did Catholics renounce in the profession of baptism? If these are not the pomps of the World and the Devil, what will be?

Proceed further. What are the Devil's pomps renounced in baptism, if they are not spectacles, comedies, luxury, ostentation, and the promiscuous associations of our day? Let them explain: if, in place of the profession *I renounce Satan and all his pomps*, they had made this contrary profession, *I promise Satan that I shall diligently devote myself to his vanities, ostentation, and spectacles*, could men and women who banquet and mingle together and sit in the theaters rave any more freely than they do? Never have the incitements of lust come more violently into public view; therefore the infection of lust has never spread more widely. This is most certain and inescapable.

Concubinages are now rarer and public prostitutes diminished because a more cultivated art of satisfying Venus has been invented, with disgrace and horror cast aside. In former times crimes revealed their own horror. Concubinaries, murderers, and other wicked men were banished from the altars. In our age light and darkness, vice and virtue, good and evil have entered a compact, and crimes themselves have put on the mask of virtue, which is the extremity of evil. *Woe to you who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness*, Isaiah says in chapter 5. From all these things follow stupor of spirit, blindness of mind, obstinacy of will, unbelief, and impiety.

God once destroyed the human race by the flood of waters, especially because of the compacts of the flesh. In our time torrents of impiety overflow, less perceptible to the senses but more deadly to the soul. We are astonished when we see common men, drunk with cheap wine, staggering to the right and left. Yet we are not at all astonished when we behold nobler men, born for greater things, saturated with the wine of prostitution, clinging to the sides of little women and supporting both their arms and their garments through the streets and squares. Even Turks and Indians are moved to astonishment when they see such things. And what surpasses all belief, both the matrons and their lovers are not ashamed to babble that no venereal affection touches them.

But let them hear, and be confounded by, St. Basil, who in chapter 4 *On the Monastic Constitution* casts such a man among either the beasts or the drunken: *If anyone says that frequent conversation and association with women brings no danger, he either does not partake of masculine virtue and is a most marvelous creature, constituted midway between the two natures; or, if he does partake of it, he is so immersed in the passions that he does not perceive the danger, after the example of drunken and frantic men, who, although they suffer the gravest things, suppose themselves to stand outside the passions.*

IX. These things are indeed most grave, but they become small if compared with those that follow. Not only do very many Catholics do the things described above; no few theologians and clerics are also found who approve, confirm, and defend them. They condemn, to be sure, fornication, adultery, effeminacy, and even impure looks, much more venereal pleasures. But they permit as lawful the attendance of theaters and comedies, the association of men and women, the leading of dances, devotion to games, the wearing of foreign fashions of adornment, and the other pleasures of our time. They admit to the sacred altars Christians who deliberately practice such things, refresh those same persons with the most holy body of Christ, and proclaim them blessed.

And what surpasses all belief, they cry out triumphantly that ours is a golden age, because never has there been so frequent a reception of the sacraments, never so great a concourse of peoples to the churches. Nor may you object that never in the Christian religion has there been so great a profanation of churches, and never have Christ's sacraments been polluted and administered with such sacrilege. Certain flattering professors of a more pleasant theology reply that Christians accustomed to frequent reception of the sacraments, when they incline toward old age and

concupiscence cools, will reform their morals and at last approach the sacraments well prepared. Admirably and charmingly said! Let them nourish their souls on sacrileges and crimes while their strength remains; let them roll like pigs in the mire of lust, because when they become gray and old they will be white and immaculate. Let them serve the World and the Devil as long as nature is vigorous; when superannuated and near the grave, they will perform heroic deeds of chastity.

X. The advocates of such sweeter doctrine do not notice, or refuse to notice, that they undermine the first foundations of evangelical law, introduce a counterfeit religion produced by political or carnal prudence, and reconcile the World with the Gospel in an intimate covenant - the chimera of chimeras. For what agreement has Christ with Belial? The Catholic religion, as I have said, by the same law by which it commands chastity of soul and body, orders the incitements of lust to be avoided: familiarity with women, frequent attendance at comedies, the use of empty pomps, gluttony, and satiety of the belly. For the belly and the genitals, Augustine says, are neighbors, and according to the order of the members there also arises an order of the vices.

If you ask the theologians mentioned above whether it is a grave sin to attend theaters, frequent comedies, have men and women associate together, devote oneself to games, dissolve in idleness, and practice all these things together as a custom, they emphatically deny it. Indeed, they admit those who frequent these things to Christ's sacred mysteries. If we say that Christians must not only avoid external dangers and occasions of luxury, but must restrain concupiscence and suppress the rebellion of the flesh by Christian fasts, which do not permit either exquisite dishes or Indian morning draughts, and by the severity of penance, outcries immediately arise and sound doctrine is accused of unjust rigor. Perhaps they will also shout that these dissertations disturb the public peace, produce sadness among the citizens, draw Christians away from attending theaters, rob theater managers and contractors of their money, prevent strangers from entering cities, and are therefore harmful and hostile to the public good.

XI. Below I shall deliberately overthrow these specters and empty delusions fabricated by pseudo-politicians. For the present, it concerns the reader to remember that certain casuists are found who not only tolerate lay Christians attending theaters and present-day comedies, but also encourage clerics and priests themselves to frequent such spectacles, babbling that they do not incur even venial guilt if they attend them.

Against so great a seduction Augustine writes in chapter 25 of *On Catechizing the Uninstructed*: *You must also notice that those crowds which fill the churches also fill the theaters; you will be tempted to imitate them by laughing. You will also see many who are called Christians commit all these evils. But if you do such things as though secure, you err greatly. Therefore, when you see many not only doing these things but also defending and recommending them, hold to the law of God and do not follow the transgressors; for you will be judged not according to their judgment but according to his truth.*

By these enchantments they give courage even to well-conducted Christians to attend spectacles and indulge the pleasure of the senses, because in this way they win for themselves larger crowds and a multitude of matrons and great men. The same holy Father Augustine adds in chapter 3 of *On the Shepherds*: *If you wish to cast your minds upon spectacles, go; what evil is there? If you wish to celebrate those festivals which are celebrated throughout the cities in the joy of revelers, go and celebrate; great is the mercy of God, which forgives everything. If we say these things, perhaps we shall gather larger crowds.*

By speaking in this way we win the multitude. But against us who reprove these things, they easily stir and incite the aforementioned crowds because we make war upon their pleasures, as the same St. Augustine testifies from experience in Sermon 14 to the Brothers in the Hermitage: *If they are reproved in anything, they bark like dogs, bite like serpents, and grieve like women in labor, calling evil good and good evil.* In Tractate 90 on John he laments their miserable condition and stubbornness: *O wretched men, who, although they wish to be evil, do not wish the truth by which they are condemned as evil to exist. They wish it not to be what it is, although they themselves ought to wish not to be what they are, so that, while the truth remains, they may be changed and not be condemned when it judges.*

XII. But it is now time to compress many things into a few. Just as nothing is more distant from spirit than flesh, so no crime separates a person farther from God, blinds the mind more violently, or bewitches the spirit more powerfully than the venereal plague. These are commonly called sins of weakness, which I do not deny if someone falls accidentally and unexpectedly. But lust repeated and turned into a habit draws with it, like a torrent, almost every crime. What thefts, robberies, injustices, and frauds do not accompany it? Lustful men, in order to satisfy this uncontrollable appetite and insatiable she-wolf, squander inheritances, fail to pay their debts, overthrow households, and become savage, cruel, and inhuman. And because the pleasure of luxury is most violent, wanton men so surrender themselves to it that they despair completely of heavenly goods, as Paul affirms in Ephesians 4: *Despairing, they have given themselves over to impurity, to the working of every uncleanness, unto avarice.*

XIII. Despair therefore follows lust and carnal pleasure; impiety follows despair. The more widely lust ranges, the more shamelessly impiety unfurls its banner. In our age the pleasures of the throat, belly, luxury, and theater have reached their utmost limit. It is therefore not at all surprising - to return to the point from which this discourse began - if unbelief and impiety show themselves, pour out their declarations among lovers and mistresses, deny Paradise, Hell, and Eternity, and say that the destruction of men and beasts is one and the same.

Therefore Paul cries out in Colossians 3: *Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and avarice, which is the service of idols. Because of these things wrath comes upon the sons of unbelief.* I distinguish two kinds of impiety, one positive and the other negative. The first erupts with uncovered brow and belongs to a few. The second creeps most widely, covered by many disguises and enticements. True religion is not openly rejected; instead it is tempered and, with incredible art, accommodated to human appetites.

St. Augustine says in question 110 of *The Old and New Testament*: *Certain men apply to themselves, as it were, coverings beneath which they conceal impiety, so that they may appear to have been deceived. For impiety cannot be openly proposed, because it finds no buyer; and where the law of the Devil exists, if the Devil himself is named, men shudder. But just as honey is mixed with poison so that it may be concealed, so certain just things are mixed with the law of the Devil and the name of truth is applied to it.*

Therefore give this answer, with St. Augustine on Psalm 136, to the cultivators of flattering and accommodative doctrine who by a new art attempt to join the World with the Gospel: *What shall we answer? Babylon carries you, Babylon contains you, Babylon nourishes you, Babylon speaks from you. You know how to grasp only what glitters for a time; you do not know how to meditate on eternal things; you do not understand what you ask. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? Brothers, this is almost how it is.*

Begin to wish to preach whatever little truth you know, and see how necessary it is that you endure such mockers and demanders of truth who are full of falsehood.

XIV. Before I bring the preface to an end, I earnestly ask one thing of my reader: that he be willing for a little while to renounce preconceived opinions derived from custom, or rather from the most shameful corruption creeping everywhere, and assume that impartiality of mind which everyone needs in order to pronounce a just judgment. Read, therefore, as a severe judge the case I have pleaded for Christ, or against the World and the Devil. Since the case is most grave, because eternity depends upon it, it rightly claims your diligence and a mind free from prejudice. If you find anything I have written to be false or excessively rigorous, reject it, condemn it severely, and convict me of my error without any leniency.

We are all in exile; we all journey far from the Lord; we are all, to a greater or lesser degree, stained by the same flesh, overwhelmed by the same calamities, and struck by the blows of the appetites. I would consider myself afflicted by the greatest folly if, beyond what is just, I wished to make harsher and heavier the yoke of Christ which heavenly charity alone has made sweet. Those who sin through excessive laxity at least have this advantage: they satisfy their appetites. But those who rage through excessive rigor commit two evils, one of guilt and another of punishment, by which they torment themselves and others.

Yet they rightly incur no less reproof who, without consulting the Gospels, the Fathers, the councils, and true theologians, do not fear to measure the lofty and divine commands of Christian ethics by little arguments fashioned from their own brain and by carnal prudence. May I at least attain this by my labor, such as it is: that false opinions and the erroneous counsels of Christians may be removed, and the true doctrine of Christ may shine forth, so that the souls of the elect, enlightened by it, may be preserved unharmed from the tricks of so many allurements.

But if practice is considered, I am not unaware that it can scarcely be hoped that the most harmful and everywhere overflowing corruption of male actors, female actors, and comedies will be entirely exterminated. For we can predict of actors what Tacitus declared of astrologers in book 1 of the *Histories*: *A class of men unfaithful to the powerful and deceitful to those who hope, which in our city will always be forbidden and always retained.*

Parergon

PARERGON

My adversaries seem to direct their efforts to this end: that by their unceasing pamphlets they may draw me away from my purpose of explaining evangelical doctrine. If I wished to refute them all, I should indeed consume my whole life in demolishing trifles and impostures, and they would obtain their wishes. But in order to frustrate their endeavors without interrupting the work in hand, I have resolved, whenever occasion is given, merely to refute in passing some one grosser error among the many and some more monstrous imposture.

When this work was about to see the public light, two pamphlets appeared against my *Christian Theology* and my other works. The first bears this title: *Moral-Theological Letters in Defense of the History of Probabilism, Examined and Shown to Be Infected with Falsehood. Trent, 1752*. That pamphlet teems from head to foot with absurdities, nonsense, and impostures. I transcribe a single one from page 41, where these words occur:

> Father Concina was advised of the insolence of those Indexes. How does he defend himself? He asserts that he did not compose those Indexes. But if he did not compose them, he will certainly have read them beforehand, since it is unbelievable that he allowed so many sheets as those Indexes comprise to come out under his name. He could also have confessed that neither did he compose that Theology and the other books, since it is the OPINION of many WISE MEN, founded upon good EVIDENCE, that either all or at least the greater part of them is work sent to him from BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS and adopted by him.

As regards the indexes of words, I freely confess that they were compiled by others and adopted by me. For what writer spends his time upon the indexes of his works? But I say that it is most inconsiderate to make those indexes an objection. For if they falsely indicate the passages of the work, then let them be rejected as erroneous and inept. If, on the contrary, they designate them correctly, why are they condemned? Perhaps because the laxity of the opinions appears more clearly? Would the adversaries therefore wish the pleasing poison of laxity to lurk in concealment, lest readers be able to detect it so easily? Far be it. What, then, is the cause of complaint? That the opinions marked as lax are not of that kind. If they assert this, they wrongly accuse the innocent Indexes; rather, they ought to prove that the censure is unjust. If they accomplish that, I promise to sing a recantation.

The second charge - namely, that I received the *Christian Theology*, either entire or in greater part, sent by the Transalpines (who are those Transalpines? Jansenists, Lutherans, or Calvinists?), as likewise the other books, and published them in public print - filled me with so great a terror and dread that I can scarcely express my feelings. For while reading such things, amid tears and sighs and while looking up to the most dreadful judgments of God, I spoke thus with myself: A religious, a priest, eighty-five years old, who at any moment must render an account to God, does not shudder to publish in print a calumny partly so atrocious and so unheard of that it inspires horror, and partly so utterly ridiculous and childish that I myself would be foolish if I wished to refute it with as many

testimonies as there are religious men and friends whom I have as companions in my studies. Those who seek to shine with another's feathers are known to the City and the world.

Either, therefore, that author regards it as lawful and honorable to tear his neighbor's reputation to pieces by the most manifest lies and calumnies and to bring him under suspicion of heresy; or he regards religion as an empty fiction. The latter is false; therefore the former is true. It is thus absolutely necessary that he furnish one of the two. Either let him publish the evidence he has paraded - and that he may do so, I earnestly ask and entreat him, indeed I vehemently challenge and press him - or let him retract this most monstrous calumny. No opening for escape lies here. Otherwise, he not only represents himself to the living and to posterity as a calumniator, but also reveals to the entire Republic of Letters that he champions the doctrine of hurling calumnies.

I have touched upon these things in passing, although I had otherwise resolved to pass them over in profound silence as the most foolish little tales and children's rattles, had not grave and learned men advised me to answer these few things in passing, adding this reason: If you were silent, posterity would cry out: A most celebrated theologian, a director of souls, most distinguished in learning and integrity of morals, advanced in age and near death, publicly testified in print that Concina's Theology, while its author was alive, had been worked out by Transalpine heretics. Fr. Concina, although he could have done so, did not protest. Therefore his silence is a most manifest confession.

The other pamphlet, filled to overflowing with sedition and consisting of a single small page, is inscribed with this title: *Supplements to Certain Propositions . . . Extracted from the Christian Theology of the Most Famous Fr. C., and to Be Added to the Retraction Published by the Same in Rome, etc. Printed at Rome at the Minerva, 1752, by the HEIRS OF DOMINIC STRANGLETHROAT.*

By these last words the holy Patriarch Dominic, founder of the Most Holy Inquisition, is assailed. The Transalpine heretics call this supreme Tribunal of the Faith an unsheathed dagger and a slaughterhouse. Alluding to this expression of the heretics, the author of this pamphlet says that Dominic constricts the throat and calls his Religious the Heirs of Dominic Stranglethroat. This doctrine, however - not the *Christian Theology* - was truly borrowed from the Transalpine heretics without interest. To the rest I reply nothing, but humbly submit judgment upon it to those whom it concerns. O times! O morals!

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Approbations

APPROBATIONS

Fr. Antoninus Bremond, Professor of Sacred Theology, humble Master General and servant of the whole Order of Friars Preachers.

Since, as has been explained to us, the Reverend Father Lector Fr. Daniele Concina of our Order has composed a book whose title is *Two Dissertations on Theatrical Spectacles, etc.*, and desires to submit it to the press, we, by the tenor of these presents and by the authority of our office, insofar as lies in us and with the other requirements of law observed, grant our paternal permission, provided that the aforesaid work is judged worthy of light by two theologians of our Order and is approved by their censorial vote. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. In testimony whereof, etc. Given at Rome, in our Convent of St. Mary above Minerva, on 8 August 1752.

Fr. Antoninus Bremond, Master of the Order.

Registered, folio 4.
Fr. Joannes Thomas de Boxadors, Master Provincial of the Holy Land and Associate.

By order of the Most Reverend Father Master General of our Order, we have viewed with an attentive and censorial eye and read through two dissertations *On Theatrical Spectacles Prohibited to Every Christian, Both Lay and Clerical*, and another *On Priests in Masks*, written with tireless diligence, zeal, and very great learning by the Most Reverend Father Fr. Daniele Concina, theologian and preacher of this same Order of ours and a most celebrated author by reason of the books he has hitherto published. We found them fully conformable to the Word of GOD, to the statutes of Synods both ancient and recent, and no less to the judgments of the Fathers than to those of theologians. We therefore judge them not only exceedingly useful to the Christian commonwealth, but also absolutely necessary for restraining the excessive license of this corrupt age, so that, being given to the press, they may become public property and may be engraved more deeply by the Spirit of the living GOD upon the souls of all Christians and upon the fleshly tablets of the heart; to the end that they, mindful of their profession by which at Baptism they renounced the pomps of Satan, may bid farewell to the vanities of theatrical spectacles and may themselves rather, with the Apostle, become a spectacle to the world, to Angels, and to men.

Given at Rome, in the Casanatense College of St. Thomas in the City, at St. Mary above Minerva, on the day before the Kalends of August, in the year 1752.

Fr. Cyrillus Riga, O.P., Doctor of Sacred Theology in the University of Vienna, Casanatense Theologian.
Fr. Thomas Maria Mamachi, O.P., Casanatense Theologian.

Obeying the commands of the Most Reverend Father Master of the Sacred Palace, I carefully read the two dissertations *On Theatrical Spectacles Prohibited to Every Christian, Both Lay and Clerical*, and also the particular dissertation *On Clerics in Masks*. In them I found nothing contrary to the Faith or to good morals, but rather pious and solid doctrine. I therefore plainly judge that they ought very greatly to come forth into the public light, so that at least those who are of God and hear his words may know

well how greatly the mercy of GOD must be implored, that he may grant understanding to condemn these things, affection to flee them, and mercy to pardon them.

St. Augustine, exposition of Psalm 50.

Pietro Francesco Foggini, Coadjutor Keeper of the Vatican Library.

By order of the Most Reverend Father Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace, I carefully read through, and examined with the greatest diligence I could, the two dissertations *On Theatrical Spectacles Prohibited to Every Christian, Both Lay and Clerical*, together with the Third Dissertation added to them, *On Clerics in Masks*, composed by the Very Reverend Father Daniele Concina, a most celebrated theologian of the Order of Preachers. I found them entirely conformable to the evangelical ordinances and skillfully woven from the judgments and words of the Fathers, Councils, and theologians, both ancient and recent. I judge it highly expedient that they be given to the public light, so that Christ's faithful of every condition may understand how greatly frequenting theatrical spectacles full of danger and crime is abhorrent to Christian profession; and so that men bound to God by the solemn vows of a religious institute, or particularly consecrated to him by Sacred Orders, may clearly recognize how unbecoming it is for them either to act as stage players and actors or to deform the dignity of the clerical state with the monstrosities of masks.

Given at Rome, in the College of Saints Basil and Charles at the Catinari, on 6 October 1751.

Girolamo Bugatti, Cleric Regular of St. Paul, Consultor of the Sacred Congregations of Rites and of Indulgences and Relics.
IMPRIMATUR

If it shall seem good to the Most Reverend Father Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace.

F. M. de Rubeis, Patriarch of Constantinople, Vicegerent.
IMPRIMATUR
Fr. Giuseppe Agostino Orsi, Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace, of the Order of Preachers.

First Dissertation — On Public Spectacles

ON PUBLIC SPECTACLES
FIRST DISSERTATION

Chapter I — The readers' prejudices are anticipated in advance

CHAPTER I

The readers' prejudices are anticipated in advance. The common doctrine of theologians not only of the Catholic religion but also of the Lutheran sect is defended in this work against present-day theaters.

I. The cause to be treated is filled with so great an odium and hatred that, before I enter upon it, it is exceedingly important to advise the reader that in this work I shall defend, not some private doctrine or one held by a few, but the common, certain, and most manifest doctrine of the theologians of every age, not only of Catholics, but even of the Lutheran sect itself, and of the wise among the pagans. We pass our lives in this most unhappy age, the dregs of all those preceding it, in which even the very first principles of evangelical doctrine, which restrain morals and human appetites within the bounds of honesty, are fearlessly accounted opinions more rigid than is just, belonging to certain Rigorists, as they themselves say. Things which directly and hostilely conflict with Christian profession are clothed in the mask of custom; and because men cannot reform morals according to the exact rule of the divine laws, through the benefit of an Accommodating Theology they adapt the laws to morals and to the most shameful corruptions. Therefore the genuine image of Christian profession and the likeness of evangelical doctrine lie, among very many, either obscured in every respect or altogether abolished.

II. Just as no corruption is so deadly and harmful to evangelical morality, and so fitted to soothe and flatter human senses, as theatrical pleasure, so there is no abuse which worldly men strive with greater effort, more cunning inventions, and shrewder artifice to cleanse of every stain of depravity. The matter has reached such a point that even not a few honest and upright ecclesiastics, bound to God by the solemnity of vows - much less worldly men - regard attendance at theaters as an honorable and innocent consolation and defend it most pugnaciously. I therefore judged that I should perform a worthwhile service if, at the very beginning of the disputation, I tore up the more deeply rooted prejudices and pledged my faith that in this controversy I would defend nothing except common and certain doctrine.

III. In order, then, to discharge the pledge I have given, I shall follow this path. First I shall touch briefly upon a synopsis of theatrical history. Afterward I shall set forth clearly the doctrine of the Fathers by which they execrated all theaters. But because the patrons and defenders of comedies and actors, not directing the mind's attention sufficiently either to evangelical doctrine or, so far as this matter is concerned, to profane learning itself, are not at all ashamed to assert that the theaters of our age differ in their whole kind from those of antiquity, and that those were base and lascivious while these are chaste and honorable, after the doctrine of the Fathers I shall give a more exact account of baseness, obscenity, and the theaters of this age, and shall demonstrate that present-day theaters are no less obscene, lascivious, and base than the ancient. I shall also close another escape to those who, since they have not altogether renounced common sense, do not dare entirely to deny that our theaters are opposed to Christian profession, but nevertheless contend that spectators of theaters cannot without rashness be condemned of mortal guilt, because, they say, those scales by which the gravity of theatrical malice is weighed are by no means obvious.

In fact, I had composed this Dissertation without making mention of the distinction of mortal sin from venial, content to disclose that Christians who frequent theaters do indeed sin, while omitting dispute about the quality and degree of the crime. I had prescribed this law of moderation for myself, both because Holy Scripture, the Fathers, and the Councils absolutely inculcate abstinence from sin, very rarely making a distinction between mortal and venial sin, and because the boundaries and degrees of malice are often hidden from our feeble mind, although the depravity of the action is manifest and evident. Those who in a doubtful dispute do not fear to define the malice as grave expose themselves to the danger of sinning equally with those who define it as light. It is, however, established and known among all that those persons sin mortally who, certain of an action's iniquity but doubtful whether it is light or grave, knowingly and deliberately dare rashly to perform it without laying aside the doubt.

If, moreover, you ask the learned opponents whether they possess the balances by which they weigh the venial malice of theatrical pleasure, they must become mute as fishes; for if the Divine Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Councils do not decree that its malice is mortal, neither do they define it as venial. Therefore, with no one dissenting, they sin mortally if, certain of the malice but ambiguous and doubtful concerning the quality of the crime, they frequent those theaters which they confess to be deadly and hostile to the profession of Baptism.

IV. For the rest, I think it occurred by the ordering of divine providence that they themselves stirred up this controversy. For that gave me occasion to examine the matter more severely and to seek documents more diligently, from which both grave theologians and the most benign casuists infer that spectators of theaters sin mortally. Let benevolent readers therefore be certain and secure that nothing in this controversy will be decided by me from my own judgment and authority. What? Shall I, a wretched little man, rise up against a torrent of corruption overflowing everywhere and carrying away with it even upright and learned men, and cast up embankments against it? So rash an attempt would not be free of madness. I shall therefore apply myself only to this: that I oppose to the wandering multitude the most manifest common doctrine of the Fathers, Councils, and theologians of every age - of the Catholic Church, of the Protestants, and of the pagans. Let the reader therefore lay prejudices aside and assume that impartiality which is needed to pronounce a right judgment, when I have exactly fulfilled my promises.

V. I premise two things in advance. First, I shall indicate the sins which commonly occur and are customarily committed in public theaters. Whether it can sometimes afterward happen that someone may watch comedies without at least grave guilt I shall bring under examination near the end of the Dissertation. I give this warning because many infer an absolute rule from an accidental and exceedingly rare event, the absurdity of which everyone sees. Second, I distribute the spectators of theaters into four classes.

In the first I place almost all young men and very many older men who, captured by the love of carnal pleasure and polluted by the plague of Venus, watch comedies as suitable fans of concupiscence. In the second I place those who come there, not to inflame concupiscence, which perhaps is already satiated and languishes, wearied and drained by inveterate custom, but to soothe their eyes with the artifice of dances and their ears with the sweetness of music and song, like those gluttons who, after a sumptuous banquet, well gorged, titillate their lips and palate with certain sweetmeats and liqueurs.

Those of the third class go to theaters not to hear song or music, tragedies or comedies, or to watch female dancers, but to visit their little mistresses most elegantly, not to say most lasciviously, adorned; to address them; and in their boxes to institute amorous skirmishes with them, to be seen and to see, and sometimes to exchange touches and little touches and the tenderest conversations. These care neither for song, nor music, nor dances, nor male or female actors. And rightly so. For who is so foolish as to wish to pursue fictitious pleasures when he has the means truly to fatten his appetites and senses? Finally, the fourth class consists of the few who come there to pass the time, to transact some business with friends, to see and indulge curiosity, and to hear some beautiful and sweet little song. Whether all these persons sin, some under one head and others under another, I shall inquire and examine.

VI. Finally, I earnestly ask and entreat all who are going to read this work to do one of two things: either let them enter the contest and, in writing and not by word of mouth, by the doctrine of truth and not by insults of the tongue and impostures, prove and make manifest to the Republic of Letters that this doctrine of mine is improbable, false, or more rigid than is just. So far as this is concerned, I challenge and press them, promising a sincere and not a feigned retraction. Or, if they cannot accomplish this, let them cease chattering in circles, babbling in shops, muttering in palaces, and whispering into the ears of matrons and the unlearned that this doctrine, flowing spontaneously from the Gospel itself and the choir of the Fathers, is stained with the taint of an imaginary Rigorism. But when the truth has been discovered, let them come to their senses and not disdain, for the greater glory of God, to confess that until now they have either been ignorant of it or dissembled it.

But if they wish to do neither, let them at least not omit this: let them despise that book in profound silence. What, I ask, is there that should move them to raise disturbances against it, excite beardless youths, and mingle heaven and earth? If that book were a soldier who sat with drawn sword at the doors of the theaters and kept watch to bar those entering, they would rightly cry, To arms! But it lies alone in the bookseller's shop, attacks no one, and is troublesome to no one. If it displeases them, let them abandon it as fit to feed cockroaches and moths.

Let them explain the mystery to us. Why are so many poisonous books which lay snares for the first principles of the Gospel spared most indulgently? Why, on the contrary, is there continual muttering and shouting against books which promote evangelical holiness and conduct the business of eternal salvation? What is the reason for this difference? Perhaps because truth brought into the open strikes, bites, torments, and reproaches iniquity unworthy of a Christian man and an ecclesiastic? Perhaps because what St. Augustine writes in book 4 of *On the Ten Chords* applies: *The Word of God is your adversary because it commands the contrary of what you do. Since the Word of God which commands is an adversary, I fear lest I be an adversary to SOME because I speak these things.*

Chapter II — A Specimen of the History of Spectacles

CHAPTER II

A Specimen of the History of Spectacles

I. The learned Father Le Brun published in the French language a little work in which he describes the origin, progress, and vicissitudes of theaters. In this second chapter I shall take a few things from it so far as history is concerned. And so that some notion may be had of the matters we are going to discuss, spectacles are enticements and delights of the senses. For they are directed to this end, that they may soothe, bewitch, and fascinate the eyes, ears, and other senses.

There were at first two kinds of spectacles. One exercised the powers of the body; the other refreshed the spirit. The former was performed in the Circus through horse races and the combats of beasts and athletes. The latter took place in the theater beneath a shelter, from which the name *scene* arose, where actors represented comedies and tragedies and were called tragedians and comedians. The Romans also called those actors *histriones*, as Titus Livy observes. Those who disclosed things by gestures alone were named mimes and pantomimes, whom Horace calls satyrs. In general, those who did anything in the theater began to be called stage performers, players, and practitioners of the entertaining art, just as the thing itself is called the entertaining art, theatrical art, scenic art, and scenic entertainments. Some comedies were called *togatae* from the toga of the Romans, others *palliatae* from the cloak of the Greeks, and others *Atellanae* from the town of Tuscany where they were first invented.

II. Tacitus testifies that before Pompey theatrical entertainments were exceedingly rare and that no place had been designated for them; rather, when occasion was given, a stage was constructed for the time. For Pompey was accused by the elders because he had established a permanent seat for the theater. *For previously entertainments had customarily been exhibited on temporary tiers and upon a stage erected for the time; or, if you recur to more ancient practice, the people watched while standing, lest, if they sat down, they should continue at the theater for whole days. Yet morals were overthrown through the wantonness thereby invited, so that whatever anywhere can be corrupted and can corrupt may be seen in the City, and the youth may degenerate through foreign pursuits by practicing gymnasia, idleness, and shameful loves.* Tacitus, *Annals*, book 14, chapter 20.

Thus, in the year 699 from the founding of the City, and in the fiftieth year before the birth of Christ, Rome first had a theater made of stone. A second was erected while Augustus was emperor, in the year 743 from the founding of the City, at which time Balbus erected a third. Tiberius, the successor of Augustus, was hostile to spectacles and would have taken away the theaters had he not then feared an uprising of the people. During his reign actors were driven from Italy, but Gaius Caligula, the most wicked of all impious men, recalled them. Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius loved the theaters without restraint. Although Domitian favored theaters no less than his predecessors, he nevertheless *forbade actors the stage*, Suetonius says, *while granting them the right to practice their art within houses*. He also took care that Roman knights should not attend theatrical entertainments, regarding that as unworthy of a grave person.

Trajan ordered actors - that is, dancers and pantomimes - to return to the theater. Antoninus Pius did not abolish them, but nevertheless restrained attendance at theaters and diminished the golden stipends of the actors. Commodus, successor of Marcus Aurelius and a monster of depravity, not only fostered theatrical entertainments but befouled them with lust and public shamelessness. Heliogabalus imitated his profligate and abandoned morals, acted in comedy, and represented upon the theater things slippery and obscene with unspeakable impurity.

Alexander Severus moderated the shamelessness of the stage a little; Carinus afterward relaxed it, *a man*, Vopiscus says, *the most contaminated of all, an adulterer, and a frequent corrupter of youth*. Diocletian was accustomed to say, the historian adds, that *the entertainments ought to be more chaste when the Censor is watching*. Vopiscus adds that honorable people had always been hostile to spectacles of this kind. *And I committed these things to writing*, he writes, *so that shame might touch future sponsors of entertainments, lest, after proscribing their lawful heirs, they assign their estates to mimes and buffoons*.

III. But before I proceed farther, it must be observed that in those first three centuries there existed two kinds of spectacles, one dedicated to the worship of the gods and the other to the delight of the people, as Tacitus writes in book 14, calling theatrical entertainments celebrated in honor of the gods sacred. Thus the spectacles which were destined for the delight and gladness of the people savored nothing of idolatry; those which were called sacred and over which priests presided did savor of it.

The spectacles instituted for the pleasure of the people were not so shameless as the common people suppose. The entertainments of the shameless woman Flora were celebrated only once a year by unrestrained prostitutes alone, with the dregs of the people and gutter-dwellers sitting beside them, while all upright persons regarded it as a disgrace to themselves to be present at that most sordid representation. Hence certain writers, not sufficiently skilled in antiquity, as they flatter themselves, seized the occasion to publish that the comedies and tragedies of the ancients were most dishonorable. Both ancient and recent writers testify, however, that this is false, with the entertainments of Flora excepted. Horace, in his *Art of Poetry*, depicts tragedy as a grave and modest matron: *Tragedy, disdaining to babble trivial verses, like a matron commanded to dance on festival days, will mingle with the wanton satyrs somewhat bashfully*.

That certain pagan emperors whom I listed in section 2 polluted the stages proves only that those men were most shameless and, as the times changed, disfigured the theaters. It does not prove that theatrical art itself was infected with manifest baseness and obscenity, as will be explained more fully below. Therefore Father Pierre Le Brun, in his cited treatise on theaters, reports Father Rapin as teaching that present-day theaters are soft and effeminate and, when compared with those of the ancient pagans, are dishonorable and shameless. Indeed, Seneca's tragedies, the only ones we possess from antiquity, are more chaste and honorable than the tragedies of more recent poets.

What is more, Plautus himself, who in his comedies was more slippery and sordid than the rest, promises the spectators in the prologue to the *Captivi* that the play to be recited is not shameless like his other works, but chaste and modest: *It will certainly be worthwhile to give attention to this play. It has not been made in the customary manner, nor in the same way as the others; nor does it contain filthy, unmentionable verses*. Plautus therefore knew that, even in his time, those comedies which displayed chastity, honor, and modesty were held in greater esteem.

For this reason both the ancients and the moderns always valued the more honorable comedies of Terence highly. For Terence aimed to correct vices and form morals, and by no means to stir shameless passions, as is read in his epitaph: *Born beneath the lofty roofs of high Carthage, I was the spoil of war for Roman leaders. I described the morals of men, of youths and old men, and how slaves deceive their masters; what the harlot and what the greedy procurer contrives by wiles. Whoever reads these things, I think, will thus be cautious.*

When the emperor Constantine embraced the Christian religion, he declared war against the temples and spectacles of the pagans. Yet he was by no means able to abolish them altogether, as is gathered from Eusebius, who writes that at the emperor's death *public spectacles and whatever other amusements men living in idleness are accustomed to arrange were removed*. That Christians abstained from spectacles of this kind is drawn from the emperor Julian the Apostate, who exhorted the priests of the idols not to go to the theaters, after the custom of the Galileans. Then he exhorts an individual priest *not to approach the theaters*. Letter to Arsacius, page 450, Spanheim edition.

When tranquility had been granted to the Church, several laws were enacted against spectacles, which we think it fitting to transcribe here. The emperors Valentinian I, Valens, and Gratian in the year 371 issued this law, found in the Theodosian Code, book 15, title 7, law 1, page 361: *Male and female stage performers who, in the final necessity of life, compelled by the imminence of death, hastened to the Sacraments of the supreme God, if perhaps they recover, shall not afterward be recalled to any assembly of a theatrical spectacle. Before all things, however, we command it to be diligently observed and maintained under sanction that those truly placed in extreme danger and requesting this for their salvation, if nevertheless the prelates approve, shall obtain the benefit.*

They issued other laws in the year 380, found in the same Code, title 7, law 4, page 365: *Women who, perhaps born from a lower condition, are owed to the services of spectacles, if they have declined scenic duties, shall be assigned to the ministries of entertainments - those, however, whom regard for the most holy Religion and reverence for Christian law have not yet bound to its faith. For we forbid those whom a better manner of life has released from the bond of their natural condition to be dragged back.*

This law was issued at Milan, perhaps at the urging of Ambrose, and was renewed at Aquileia in the year 381; it is found in title 7, law 8, page 570.

In the year 386 Theodosius the Great forbade judges to attend theatrical games, except on those days on which he was born and on which he assumed the scepter of empire, as is found in title 5, law 2, page 570: *Let none at all of the judges give his time either to theatrical games, to contests in the Circus, or to exhibitions of wild beasts, save only on those days on which We were either brought forth into the light or obtained the scepter of empire; and on those days let them attend the solemnity only before noon, but after their meals let them cease to return to the spectacle. At it, however, all judges, as well as private persons, shall understand that absolutely nothing is to be given as a reward in gold.*

IV. In the year 399 the emperors Honorius and Arcadius ordered all the temples of pagan superstition to be demolished: *If there are any temples in the countryside, let them be demolished without a crowd and without tumult. For when these have been cast down and removed, all material for superstition will be consumed.* Theodosian Code, book 16, title 10, law 16. And by about the year 414 the Christian religion alone exercised all the dignities of the Empire and alone had temples appointed for common prayers. Nevertheless, the emperors did not judge it appropriate to remove spectacles altogether. Arcadius

says in the year 399, Theodosian Code, book 15, title 6, law 2: *We permit the entertaining arts to be practiced, lest sadness be produced by an excessive restriction of them.* Honorius says the same in the West, title 10, law 17: *As We have now suppressed profane rites by a salutary law, so We do not allow the festive assemblies of citizens and the common gladness of all to be suppressed. Hence We decree that pleasures may be exhibited to the people according to ancient custom, without any sacrifice and without any damnable superstition, and that festive banquets may also be entered upon whenever public vows require them.*

V. These laws by no means prevented the holy bishops from declaiming against spectacles. At the Council celebrated in the year 399, or, as Baronius maintains, in the year 401, the African bishops requested two things among others from the emperor. First, that dances should not be performed in the streets and squares on feast days: *Especially since in some cities they do not fear to commit such things even upon the birthdays of the most blessed Martyrs and in the sacred places themselves. On those days also - a thing shameful to say - they practice the most criminal dances throughout the streets and squares, so that the honor of matrons and the modesty of innumerable women coming devoutly to the most sacred day are assailed by wanton insults.* Second, that at least on Sundays and on the other solemnities of the Christian religion theatrical games should not be celebrated: *This also is to be requested: that the spectacles of theaters and of other games be removed on the Lord's day and on the other most celebrated days of the Christian religion.*

Ambrose had obtained this same thing for the city of Milan. And in the year 425 Theodosius the Younger issued this law, which is law 5 of book 15, title *On Spectacles*: *On the Lord's day, which is the first day of the whole week, and on the days of the Nativity and Epiphany of Christ, and also on the days of Easter and Pentecost, so long as the garments imitating the celestial radiance of the sacred font bear witness to the new light of holy Baptism, at which time also the commemoration of the Apostolic Passion, teacher of the whole of Christianity, is rightly celebrated by all, let all pleasure of theaters and circuses be denied throughout all cities, so that the minds of all Christians and faithful persons may be occupied with the worship of God.*

The Carthaginians were swept away by such madness for theatrical games that at last only the vengeance of God, executed by the sword of the Vandals, could destroy the abuse, the fountain of all evils. Salvian depicts the severe and tragic punishment in somber colors in book 6, page 133: *Who can estimate this evil? The walls of Cirta and Carthage resounded round about with the arms of barbarian peoples, and the church of Carthage was going mad in circuses and luxuriating in theaters.... The crash, so to speak, outside the walls and within the walls, of battles and of games, was mingled; the voice of the dying and the voice of the revelers were confounded; and perhaps the wailing of the people who were falling in battle could scarcely be distinguished from the sound of the people shouting in the Circus.*

VI. The Council of Arles, celebrated in the year 452 according to Sirmond, renewed the excommunication which had been pronounced against theatrical persons at the first Council in the year 314: *Concerning theatrical persons, it was also resolved that, so long as they practice their art, they be separated from communion.* Canon 5. Yet the theaters did not therefore cease. For St. Caesarius, bishop of Arles in the sixth century, inveighed against theatrical games, as Cyprian, bishop of Toulon, teaches. Why the holy pontiffs, while Christian magistrates ruled, did not bring it about that the theaters were utterly demolished, Pope Gelasius answers: *I do not dare accuse my predecessors of negligence, since I rather believe that perhaps they attempted to have this depravity removed, and that there existed certain causes and contrary wills which hindered their intentions.*

This pontiff cut down the abuse of the theaters, as Ennodius of Pavia observes in his *Apology*, cited by Baronius under the year 496. But a few years later the theaters were opened again. For Theodoric,

king of Italy, pronounced these words concerning theaters: *Who, however, looks for grave morals in spectacles? Catos do not know how to assemble at the Circus. Whatever is said there to a rejoicing people is not regarded as an injury. It is a place that defends excess.* Cassiodorus, book 1, letter 27. The same king inveighs more clearly and forcefully against spectacles in Cassiodorus, book 3, letter 51: *A spectacle that expels the gravest morals, that invites the lightest contentions, an evacuation of honesty, a well-watered fountain of quarrels: what antiquity indeed held sacred, but contentious posterity made a mockery.*

Why, therefore, did he not abolish them? He replies: *We foster these things from the necessity of the peoples. Sometimes it is expedient to be unwise, so that we may contain the joys desired by the people.* See letter 31 of book 1. Spectacles ceased entirely at Rome under the emperor Justinian, when the principal buildings had been demolished.

VII. Very many pagan authors condemned the theaters. Ovid writes these things in his apology to Augustus, book 2 of the *Tristia*: *Yet I confess this: games also furnish seeds of wickedness; order all theaters wholly removed.* In book 1 of *The Art of Love* he calls theaters rocks of shamelessness, to which women come in order to see and to be seen: *They come to see; they come that they themselves may be seen. That place possesses the losses of chaste modesty.* In book 2 of *Remedies for Love*: *But let it cost you so much not to indulge theaters. The cithara, song, and lyre enervate spirits, and the voice, and arms moved to their own rhythms.*

Ovid was by no means devoted to the stricter rules of ethics. Valerius Maximus, book 2, *On Spectacles*, chapter 4, describes the injuries which theaters brought upon the Romans; and in chapter 6 he praises the people of Marseilles because they were unwilling to receive mimes, *lest the custom of seeing such things assume the license of imitating them*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, book 4, chapter 8, relates that the wiser Romans detested the comedians and comic performers whom not a few had sought out from Greece: *Scarcely is modesty retained in honorable arts; much less amid contests of vices will chastity, modesty, or anything good be retained.*

Seneca, letter 7: *Nothing, however, is so harmful as lingering at some spectacle. For then vices creep in more easily through pleasure. What do you think I say? I return more avaricious, more ambitious, more luxurious.* Juvenal presents the Romans as worthy of ridicule because, although they had formerly subdued nations to themselves, they now indulged their belly and spectacles.

Chapter III — The Fathers Condemn Spectacles Both Because They Savor of Idolatry and Because They Provoke to Lust

CHAPTER III

The Fathers Condemn Spectacles Both Because They Savor of Idolatry and Because They Provoke to Lust. The Mind of Tertullian Is Expounded More Fully.

I. Thus far I have touched upon a few things which pertain to historical learning. I now approach the cause itself more closely and shall set forth sincerely the doctrine of the holy Fathers of the Church against theaters. All those in whose interest it is that the use of comedies should flourish direct their efforts chiefly to this: that they may paint them with the colors of honesty. And although Christian poets, or the more modest among them, when composing their comedies, propose for their imitation the models of the pagans Terence, Plautus, and others, against which the Fathers inveighed so sharply, they nevertheless contend that the Fathers condemned certain spectacles of the pagans either because they savored of idolatry and superstition or because mimes and pantomimes, representing base deeds with shameless gestures, contaminated them.

But we shall show at present that the holy Fathers condemned every kind of spectacle. First they rejected four kinds generally, as Jacobus Pamelius observes in his notes on Tertullian's book *On Spectacles*: namely, the circus games in the Circus, the scenic arts in the theater, contests in the stadium, and munera, hunts, or gladiatorial games in the amphitheater. Then, individually, they execrated the entertaining and obscene actions of comedians, tragedians, mimes, and pantomimes. I shall now examine only the views of the older Fathers, who are customarily set in opposition.

II. There are those who publish abroad that pious and religious men are moved by the greatest grief against theaters because they believe that the Fathers devoted them to curses. Sharp declamations against spectacles do indeed exist in the books of the Fathers, they say; but the meaning, reason, and force of those declamations must be understood. For scenic games were not then, as they are now, simple consolations and honorable entertainments, but offices of a false religion contaminated by the taint of idolatry. This truth, above all, has been discovered by antiquarians, who investigate the more hidden secrets of former ages and search out and weigh the more precious monuments of antiquity. To prove this they oppose the authority of Tertullian, who writes in chapter 38 of the *Apology*: *We renounce your spectacles insofar as we renounce their origins, which we know were conceived from superstition.*

If this were a matter only of ingenuity and learning, I should pass it over in silence; but since it is a matter of religion and piety, I did not think that I should restrain myself from making manifest, according to my measure, what I judge fatal to Christian morals. First, then, I say that the cited authority of Tertullian is mutilated, if we consider the argument under discussion. For Tertullian adds, without a single intervening word: *Indeed, we are strangers also to the very matters enacted in them. We have nothing to do, in speech, sight, or hearing, with the madness of the Circus, with the shamelessness of the theater, with the savagery of the arena, or with the vanity of the wrestling school.* He therefore inveighs against theaters not only because of their origin in superstition but also because of the contamination of all the senses and the crime of shamelessness.

What if in that place he had produced only the cause of superstition, where he speaks of spectacles merely in passing? The very pious and religious men who have tasted sacred knowledge only with the tips of their lips teach that the true and genuine understanding of the holy Fathers and of all writers in disputed matters must be drawn from those places in which they treat the controversy not merely in passing but by design. Now Tertullian composed an entire book *On Spectacles*, divided into thirty chapters. And the learned cultivators of antiquity oppose to us a truncated text from his *Apology*?

III. Since, however, they appeal this cause to Tertullian, I begin by examining before all others the doctrine of Tertullian among the Fathers. In the first twelve chapters of the aforesaid book *On Spectacles*, he recounts the origin of spectacles, their places, their diversity, the various deities to whom they were dedicated, and other similar things of that kind, and from all these grounds he proves that one must abstain from them. Then in chapter 13 he concludes with these words: *I think we have sufficiently filled out the order: how many, and in what ways, spectacles commit idolatry - from their origins, their titles, their apparatuses, their places, and their sacrifices. We are certain that these things belong in no part to us, who have renounced those idols.*

IV. Having completed these things, he attacks spectacles by an entirely different road, and directs the whole remaining part of the book to demonstrating that theaters must be fled chiefly because they either provoke to shamelessness, lust, pleasure, and softness, or excite savagery, ferocity, hatred, revenge, rivalry, and pride in the minds of the spectators. Let us hear Tertullian himself, who begins his chapter 14 thus.

V. *Now, with idolatry set aside, which alone ought to suffice for the renunciation of spectacles, let us treat them from another reason superabundantly, especially because of those who flatter themselves that this abstinence is not expressly prescribed, as though too little were pronounced concerning spectacles when the concupiscences of the age are condemned* (1 John 2). *For just as there is the concupiscence of money, or of dignity, or of gluttony, or of lust, or of glory, so also there is the concupiscence of pleasure; spectacles, however, are also a species of pleasure. Concupiscences named generally, I think, contain pleasures in themselves; and pleasures likewise understood generally are contained specifically also in spectacles.*

For the rest, we have related above concerning the nature of places that they do not defile us by themselves, but through the things done there; when through those things they have at once drunk in contamination, they then spit it upon others also. What of the fact that Gnaeus Pompey himself, who first erected a permanent seat for a theater, foreseeing the censure of prudent men, from whom he had hoped for great praise, as though by establishing a theater he had constructed a workshop of baseness, joined the theater as a sort of appendix to a temple of Venus, so that by the cosmetic of this circumlocution he might take counsel for his reputation? Tertullian says in chapter 10: *And so Pompey the Great, lesser only than his theater, when he had erected that citadel of all baseness, at some time fearing the censorial judgment upon his memory, set a shrine of Venus above it; and, summoning the people to its dedication by edict, he called it not a theater but a temple of Venus, "beneath which," he said, "we have placed tiers for spectacles." Thus he covered a condemned and condemnable work with the title of a temple, and mocked discipline by superstition.*

VI. But so that the mind of Tertullian and of the other Fathers in this controversy may be made more manifest, a few heads or foundations of the Christian religion must be laid down, which perhaps are not known to all antiquarians, but are known above all to theologians, to whom the explanation of heavenly mysteries has been entrusted. The first is that all pleasures, consolations, and

entertainments which cannot be referred to the glory of God are forbidden to Christians. But all things which are not pleasing to God and cannot be referred to him certainly displease him; and the things which displease him belong to the devil and are reckoned among the pomps of the devil. All these things savor of idolatry, and we abjured them all in the profession of Baptism. Tertullian explains this principle briefly in chapter 24: *For nothing is not of the devil, whatever is not of God or displeases God. This will be the pomp of the devil, against which we swore at the seal of faith; we must participate in it neither by deed, by word, nor by sight*.

The second is that, since every kind of shamelessness is so severely forbidden to Christians, they must therefore avoid everything contrary to chastity. But nothing is more hostile to chastity than theaters, Tertullian says in chapter 17: *Likewise we are commanded to remove all shamelessness. In this way, therefore, we are also separated from the theater, which is the private consistory of shamelessness, where nothing is approved except what is not approved elsewhere. But if every shameless thing is execrable to us, why should it be lawful to hear things which it is not lawful to speak? Since we know that scurrility also, and every idle word, has been judged by God, why should it likewise be lawful to see things which it is wicked to do?... You have, therefore, the prohibition of the theater from the prohibition of shamelessness.* Could he have asserted more clearly that theaters are forbidden to Christians not only because of the crime of idolatry, as certain antiquarians falsely contend, but also from the prohibition of shamelessness? But attend to the principle he uses: If an account must be rendered to God for every idle word, how much more for the sayings and deeds of theaters?

The third is that in theaters all the inclinations of the human heart and soul are excited, ungoverned movements and more violent passions are provoked and irritated - all things which the evangelical law forbids to be done. Behold the words of Tertullian in chapter 15: *For no spectacle is without a shaking of the spirit. Where there is pleasure, there is also desire, through which, of course, pleasure has its savor. Where there is desire, there is also rivalry, through which desire has its savor. Moreover, where rivalry is, there are also madness, bile, anger, grief, and the other things arising from them, which with them are incompatible with discipline.*

The fourth: if the study of fables, if the fictions of poets and the teaching of secular literature, are scarcely permitted to Christians, will spectacles, theaters, and comedies be lawful for them? Tertullian says in chapter 17: *If we despise the teaching of secular literature as foolishness before God, enough is prescribed for us also concerning those species of spectacles which secular literature marks out for the scenic or competitive stage. But if comedies and tragedies are actresses of crimes and lusts, bloody and lascivious, impious and prodigal, no commemoration of an atrocious or vile thing is better.* I could bring forward from Tertullian and the other Fathers several other principles, which, however, are reducible to those recounted; but I shall add some a little below. It is now fitting to bring under examination the things which are opposed.

VII. They object that two kinds of representation must be distinguished in the theaters of the ancients: one which soothed the hearing by speech, and the other which soothed the eyes by gesture. The first was occupied with presenting comedies, tragedies, and Atellan plays, which were honorable entertainments. The second represented deeds by gestures, postures, bodily movements, and dances amid sounds and songs. The gesticulators were called mimes and pantomimes. They contend that the Fathers condemned these spectacles, not the former. But because, they conclude, few persons are found endowed with keenness of understanding and penetration of matters who know the various

significations of the terms, pious and religious men therefore fell into the error of believing that all theatrical stages had been proscribed.

But, as my opinion indicates, neither profound penetration nor a keen understanding is needed here; rather, anyone equipped even with light arms can gather that the holy Fathers detested both kinds of representation. And this is clearly established from the principles alone which have been recounted. We freely admit that the Fathers inveighed more vehemently against the most sordid actions of mimes and pantomimes, the most foul nakedness of prostitutes, adulteries, male concubinage, and fornication. What follows from this? Did they therefore not also condemn inward pleasures, depraved thoughts, shameless touches, and obscene kisses? Did they therefore not condemn even the danger of falling into these things?

VIII. But lest the response seem too general and insufficiently precise, I wish to dissolve the objection from the Fathers themselves. For this opposition is not new, but has always been in the mouth of all poets and lovers of pleasure. For since men are affected by the most ardent desire for pleasures, joys, and entertainments, they exert all their powers and efforts to prove lawful and honorable what they desire and seek without restraint. Let us hear Tertullian himself, who most acutely sets before himself all the things now customarily advanced with subtlety for the honesty of comedies, and dissolves them. *How wise an arguer human ignorance seems to itself*, he says in chapter 11, *especially when it fears to lose some such thing from the joys and fruits of the age.*

He responds to the objection in these words in chapter 27: *Let them be sweet, if you please, and agreeable and simple, even some honorable.* Is not this the objection itself? Hear the response: *No one tempers poison with gall and hellebore, but injects that evil into seasoned dishes, well flavored and exceedingly sweet. Thus also the devil imbues the deadly thing he prepares with the things of God most agreeable and most acceptable. Whatever there is there that is strong, honorable, melodious, or subtle, regard it just as if it were drippings of honey from a poisoned little cake; and do not value the pleasure of the throat as highly as the danger.*

IX. These things would be more than sufficient for the resolution of the proposed difficulty. But so that the truth may shine more brightly and every crack for escape be closed, it is helpful to recount the other cavils and artifices by which lovers of pleasure, even in Tertullian's time, attempted to spread a veil of honesty over comedies. Let spectacles be shameless and comedies immodest, they said; we enjoy them uprightly and honorably. Tertullian responds in chapter 14: *For even if someone enjoys spectacles modestly and uprightly by reason of the condition of his dignity, age, or even his nature, his mind is nevertheless not unmoved, without a silent passion of the spirit. No one comes to pleasure without affection; no one experiences affection without its accidents. The accidents themselves are the incentives of affection.*

But if someone should stubbornly deny that he experiences in theaters any passion, any affection, or the consequences of affection - namely, its accidents and the ruin of the soul - or any pleasure at all, Tertullian attacks him by another road and condemns him as guilty of foolishness, because he assembles where he perceives no savor and obtains no advantage: *But if affection ceases, there is no pleasure; and that man is now guilty of vanity, assembling where he obtains nothing.*

X. I shall touch very briefly upon three other principles which Tertullian employs against spectacles. The first: I shall suppose that you are touched by no affection, by no pleasure at all; nevertheless, you are guilty of a crime because you are present with others who sin, connive at them, and by your presence extend, as it were, assisting hands to them. Tertullian says in chapter 14: *It is not enough for us*

if we ourselves do nothing of the kind, unless we also refuse fellowship with those who do such things. If you saw a thief... you ran together with him. Would that we did not even dwell with them in the world; yet we are separated from them in worldly things, because the world is God's, but worldly things are the devil's.

The second. Poets in their comedies, tragedies, and tragicomedies produce scarcely anything of simple truth without an admixture of falsehood. They devise great portents, miracles, fabulous inventions, and all such things, whether true or false, which they think able to excite wonder, fasten the mind and soul, and move the spirit. They present them anointed with those cosmetics and fictions, and paint them with the colors of figures, tropes, and digressions, by which they may gradually and delicately stir up the crowd of every appetite and excite affection, love, anger, and indignation, as the various representation requires.

What shall I say of the actors, who report the inventions of the poets to the people with elaborated artifice; who artfully simulate and falsely display now love, now anger, now tears, now gladness, now hope, and now despair? Are these things lawful for Christians, whose speech ought to be simple and sincere, as Christ commands: *But let your speech be: Yes, yes; no, no* (Matthew 5:37)? Tertullian also uses this argument, and Augustine uses it more fully, as will appear below, to condemn spectacles. For Tertullian says in chapter 23: *Now I ask whether the masked work itself pleases God, who forbids every likeness to be made in Exodus 20: how much more the likeness of his own image? The Author of truth does not love what is false; what is feigned is adultery before him. Therefore he who condemns all hypocrisy will not approve a voice falsely asserting sex and ages, loves, angers, groans, and tears.* They condemn the poetic art not absolutely, but when it is applied to this end and polluted with these falsehoods.

XI. The third principle of Tertullian is this. Let the spectacles which you defend be lawful and honorable - which, nevertheless, is altogether false. Let them breathe nothing except chastity, modesty, shamefacedness, the detestation of crimes, and the love of virtue. It is not therefore lawful for Christians to go there. For there still remains a stumbling block to innocence or chastity. What is it? It is the assembly of men and women who love spectacles and theaters as a suitable occasion for coming together. They go there everywhere not so much to hear poetic inventions and watch comedians as to enter into mutual companionship: there every man is a poet and actor, and every woman a poetess and actress. Does not experience establish that, in the splendor of their garments, in the pigments of their faces, and in their allegorical conversations, the spectators in theaters are most like the actors in comedies?

Shall I describe here the artifices of women, by which, before they proceed to the theater, consulting the mirror concerning their head, they torment it, twist their hair, and spare neither iron nor fire, so that they may appear long-haired, curled, and crested? They apply powder, perfumes, and ointments. If they have a face adorned with a beautiful natural color, with what diligence do they assist nature; if an ugly one, with what art, with what cosmetics and pigments, polluting the image of God, do they alter it, falsely laying claim to a deceptive beauty? What shall I say concerning the adornment of the whole body? What concerning the womanly adornment of men? For at last they have become so effeminate that they yield nothing to little women either in the vanity of dress or in the fragrance of perfumes.

Thus they proceed to the theater with an exquisite apparatus of pomps and vanities; they assemble together, play with their eyes, and speak by gesture and tongue. They enter into the sweetest bonds of friendship and foster them with the tenderest conversations, by which they excite sparks of lust.

Tertullian concludes in chapter 25: *Indeed, in every spectacle no greater scandal occurs than the more elaborate adornment of women and men, their very agreement, their very conspiracy in favor, or their disagreement with one another concerning their interaction, which together fan the sparks of lust. Finally, no one in entering a spectacle first thinks of anything except to see and to be seen.*

You say that in every association of women and men outside the theaters and spectacles all these things can occur; and I say that they very often do occur if the association is frequent and familiar. But what follows from this? I brought forward that argument to prove that Tertullian detested all spectacles, not only because they were dedicated to fictitious deities, because they savored of idolatry, or because they were contaminated by the gestures of mimes and pantomimes, but chiefly because of the other and weightier grounds which we have described. Indeed neither Tertullian nor the other Fathers reproach Christians for idolatry, or for the danger of falling into it, as much as they magnify the crimes of shamelessness and lust and the contamination of all the virtues.

From all these things Tertullian gathers a conclusion which is the sum of the Christian profession: namely, that the entertainments, delights, and spectacles of Christians are holiness of life, integrity of morals, chastisement of the flesh, fasts, tears, sackcloth, repentance for sins, contempt for pleasures and for the world itself, adherence to God alone as the center of our happiness, and meditation upon his final advent.

Tertullian says from chapter 28 to the end: *Our supper, our wedding, has not yet come; we cannot recline with them, because neither can they recline with us. The matter is arranged by turns: now they rejoice and we struggle. The world,* says John 16, *will rejoice; you will be sorrowful. Let us therefore mourn while the pagans rejoice, so that when they begin to mourn we may rejoice, lest, rejoicing equally now, we then also mourn equally. You are dainty, O Christian, if you desire pleasure in the world; indeed, you are exceedingly foolish if you consider this pleasure.*

Again, chapter 29: For what is more delightful than reconciliation with God the Father and the Lord, than the revelation of truth, than the recognition of errors, than pardon for so many former crimes? What greater pleasure than a loathing of pleasure, than contempt for the whole world, than true liberty, than an unblemished conscience?... These are the pleasures, these the spectacles of Christians: holy, perpetual, free....

Again, chapter 30: But what a spectacle is already near: the advent of the Lord now beyond doubt, now exalted, now triumphant! What exultation of the Angels, what glory of the rising Saints! What a kingdom of the just thereafter! What a new city, Jerusalem! But there remain other spectacles: that final and perpetual day of judgment, unexpected by the nations and derided by them, when so great an antiquity of the world and all its many births shall be consumed in one fire. What breadth of spectacle then! What shall I admire? What shall I see? Where shall I rejoice, where exult, beholding so many and such great kings, who were reported to have been received into heaven, groaning in the lowest darkness with Jupiter himself and with the very witnesses who reported it?

And the governors, persecutors of the Lord's blood, melting in flames more savage than those with which they themselves raged against Christians? Moreover, those wise philosophers blushing before their disciples as they burn together, to whom they had said that nothing pertained to God and to whom they had affirmed that souls either did not exist or would not return to their former bodies? The poets also trembling not before the tribunal of Rhadamanthus or Minos, but before the unexpected tribunal of Christ? Then the tragedians must be heard more, being more vocal, of course, in their own calamity. Then the actors must be recognized, far more loosened by fire; then

the charioteer must be watched, wholly red upon the fiery wheel; then the wrestlers must be contemplated, hurled not in gymnasia but in fire.

Except that not even then should I wish to see those, since I should prefer to direct an insatiable gaze toward those who raged against the Lord. "This is he," I shall say, "the son of the carpenter or the hireling, the destroyer of the Sabbath, the Samaritan, and the one who has a demon. This is he whom you bought from Judas; this is he who was beaten with a reed and fists, adorned with spittle, and given gall and vinegar to drink. This is he whom the disciples secretly stole so that he might be said to have risen, or whom the gardener removed lest his lettuces be harmed by the crowd of passersby."

What praetor, consul, quaestor, or priest will furnish you from his liberality the sight of such things and exultation over such things? And yet we already possess these things in a certain manner through faith, represented by the imagining spirit. But what are those things which neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man? I believe they are more pleasing than the Circus, both enclosures, and every stadium.

XII. I wished to transcribe these things, though somewhat at greater length, because these are the sacred monuments of former ages to which those who desire to dispute concerning the morals of Christians ought to turn their eyes; these are the principles of the Christian religion to which they ought to direct their minds. But one who is not accustomed to meditate upon all these things with the whole inquiry of his mind and does not keep them deposited deep in his memory will determine with sufficient difficulty what accords with evangelical integrity and what is opposed to it. Moreover, so that we may attain this divine knowledge, besides keenness of understanding, breadth of mind, the power of penetrating and cutting all things to the quick, continual prayers and heavenly illumination are needed.

Tertullian attempted to exterminate all worldly spectacles, and by no means merely to purge them of superstition, idolatry, and other crimes. And he opened to Christians the spectacles and theaters of heavenly mysteries, so that they might direct all their thoughts there. I should like you now to compare the spectacles which Tertullian proposes for the servants of God to contemplate with those tragedies and comedies which the more modest actors are accustomed to perform today. Then gather whether they differ from one another as much as light from darkness.

XIII. Tatian, a hearer of St. Justin Martyr, says in the oration which appears at the end of the works of St. Justin that an actor is *a slanderer of illustrious actions, a promoter of adultery, a commender of insane avarice, a teacher of catamites, and an author of things to be condemned*. Then he reproaches both the Greeks and the modern praisers of theaters in these words: *What, I ask, is there among you that is excellent or worthy of admiration? They pour forth obscene words through the nose and are agitated by indecent movements, and your daughters and sons watch teachers of adulteries upon the stage.*

XIV. Minucius Felix, in the *Octavius*, was contemporary with Tertullian: *In the curule games, who would not shudder at the madness of the people quarreling among themselves, or, in gladiatorial games, at the training in homicide? In the scenic games madness is less, but baseness more prolonged. The enervated actor, while he feigns love, inflicts it.*

Chapter IV — The Judgments of Cyprian, Lactantius, Salvian, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and Augustine Concerning Theaters, or Spectacles, Are Set Forth

CHAPTER IV

The Judgments of Cyprian, Lactantius, Salvian, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and Augustine Concerning Theaters, or Spectacles, Are Set Forth.

I. Before I place the views of these Fathers before the eyes, it is proper that I premise two things. First, theologians distinguish a twofold kind of idolatry: one of the intellect and the other of the will. The idolatry of the intellect regards a creature as a deity and offers it religious worship. The idolatry of the will loves a creature above the true Deity. The former is situated in the mind, the latter in the affection. They call the former speculative and the latter practical. Therefore this sacrilegious crime has not been altogether erased even from the Christian people; rather, it is seen merely to have changed its throne or seat and to have migrated from the intellect of the pagans into the will of many Catholics.

The Fathers teach that the pomps, vanities, entertainments, and pleasures of the world which cannot be referred to the true God pertain to the devil and consequently to idolatry. Therefore in the profession of Baptism we renounced all these and abjured them as fashioned idols. The Fathers speak of both kinds of idolatry, and especially of the second, when they condemn spectacles.

Second, it must be observed that even in this age we detest the theaters and spectacles which are performed not only because they corrupt chastity, but also because they savor of superstition and idolatry. For just as the more recent and more learned poets have been unable to purge modern spectacles of every taint of shamelessness, so neither have they been able to purge them of every soot of idolatry. For let us seek their origin: whence shall we draw it? From divine institutions, from the Gospel, the Apostles, or the Fathers? Certainly from nowhere except from the pagans themselves. There can therefore be no doubt concerning their pagan origin.

What more? Modern spectacles are certainly celebrated neither in honor of the gods nor with the intention of pleasing them. But do not Christian poets invoke Jupiter, Mercury, Apollo, and the other deities of the pagans in their comedies and tragedies, adding the protest that they write thus lest poetry grow cold? What if you consider the times? Are they not chiefly celebrated during the Bacchanalia? In what, then, do these differ from those of the pagans? In intention and purpose, and in certain circumstances which are exceedingly foul and sordid. Yet, with our more learned poets as witnesses and the matter itself speaking, many comedies of Christians smell of a more sordid shamelessness than the comedies of many pagans.

Tell me, please: when spectacles of this kind are celebrated, to what deity are they dedicated? To the true God? Far be it. Therefore to the deities of the pagans. For whatever is neither directed nor can be directed to the true God necessarily pertains to false deities, namely to the devil, whatever the intention of the one acting may be. For every agent, as they say, acts for an end; and whenever the end of the work is depraved, the end of the one acting cannot be good. Behold under how many titles

even these very theaters of ours, whose honesty certain persons strive to defend, savor of idolatry of the will.

For this reason the Fathers inveigh not only against the spectacles of the pagans but also against those of Christians, because they too are defiled by the foul remnants of pagan superstition and idolatry. And they amplify this reason by the principles just indicated. From this, however, it by no means follows that either we or the Fathers do not detest spectacles under other titles. Indeed we strive more forcefully to remove them because they are fatal and pestilential to integrity of morals and evangelical holiness. With these things established, we proceed to an examination of the Fathers.

II. And since the patrons of theaters thrust the authority of St. Cyprian upon us in the second place, after the examination of Tertullian the doctrine of the holy martyr Cyprian must be considered. Among the works of St. Cyprian is found a book *On Spectacles*, which some deny to Cyprian on the strength of two conjectures: namely, that it does not savor of Cyprian's style and that Pontius makes no mention of it. But most learned men defend it as a genuine offspring of Cyprian: Baronius, Pamelius, Sirmond, Heraldus, Bellarmine, and others, to whom I subscribe, both because nothing is more like Cyprian's style and because the silence of Pontius is an excessively slight conjecture. But however the matter may stand, what the aforesaid book contains against theaters must be discussed.

III. At the beginning of the book the author inveighs against the patrons and defenders of theaters in these words: *There are no lack of flattering advocates of vices and indulgent patrons who furnish authority to vices and, what is worse, convert the censure of the heavenly Scriptures into an advocacy of crimes, as though the pleasure of spectacles were sought as an innocent relaxation of the mind. For to such a degree has the vigor of ecclesiastical discipline been enervated, and so is it driven headlong into worse things by every languor of vices, that now not an excuse but authority is given to vices. I have resolved to instruct you now with a few things.... For no evil is extinguished with greater difficulty than one which has easy means of return, since it is asserted by the consent of the multitude and is flattered by an excuse.* Thus speaks Cyprian, whose authority the advocates of theaters oppose.

IV. He then institutes a sharp declamation against Christians, by which he calls them away from spectacles because they are infected with both superstition and idolatry, and especially because in the Sacrament of Baptism they renounced the pleasures of every kind of comedy: *Let each person deliberate only with himself and speak with the person of his own profession, and he will never do anything unbecoming; for a conscience which owes itself to no one other than itself will possess greater weight. What has Scripture forbidden? For it has forbidden to be watched what it forbids to be done. It condemned, I say, all these kinds of spectacles when it abolished idolatry, the mother of all games, whence these monsters of vanity and levity have come.*

For what spectacle is without deceit? What game without sacrifice? What contest is not consecrated to the dead? What is a faithful Christian doing among these things? If he flees idolatry, why, now that he is holy, does he take pleasure in criminal things? Why does he approve against God the superstitions which he loves while he watches? But let him know that all these things are inventions of demons, not of God. Shamelessly in the Church he exorcizes demons whose pleasures he praises in spectacles; and when once he has renounced the devil, the whole matter having been rescinded in Baptism, by going after Christ to a spectacle of the devil he renounces Christ as though he were the devil.

Idolatry, as I have already said, is the mother of all games; and, so that the Christian faithful may come to her, she entices them through the pleasure of the eyes and ears.

V. Thus far Cyprian has demonstrated that Christians must be kept from spectacles as infected with superstition and idolatry. He now proceeds to condemn them because they cast the poison of shamelessness and the pestilence of lust into the eyes, send them into the ears, and fill the mind with obscene thoughts: *But, so that I may now pass over this shameless contamination of the stage, it is shameful to relate the things that are said; it is shameful even to accuse the things that are done: the turns of plots, the deceits of adulterers, the shamelessness of women, scurrilous jokes, sordid parasites, even the householders themselves in their togas, now stupid, now obscene.... What shall I say of comic and fruitless anxieties, what of those great frenzies of the tragic voice, what of sinews joined with shouting?*

VI. It is therefore plain that Cyprian proves spectacles hostile to the Christian religion not only because of the crime of superstition and idolatry, but also because of the crimes of shamelessness and lust. But granted, you say. Yet those spectacles were both dedicated to the gods and excessively shameless. Hear Cyprian, who, so that he may blunt this cavil also, adds that Christians must abstain from spectacles even if they were not dedicated to the gods and even if they contained no manifest crime of lust; because, however much they may be granted to have been purged of the monstrous forms of those vices, they still contain vanity, which is by no means lawful for the faithful of Christ: *Even if these things were not dedicated to idols, nevertheless they ought not to be approached and watched by faithful Christians.*

Hear the reason: *For even if they did not possess a crime, they possess in themselves the greatest vanity, one little suited to the faithful.* What could Cyprian have written more precisely or more manifestly to close every refuge? In his letter to Donatus he also recounts very many crimes of comedies besides superstition and idolatry: *She who perhaps proceeded to the spectacle as a chaste matron returns shameless from the spectacle. Then, further, how great a stain upon morals, what fomentations of disgrace, what nourishment of vices, to be contaminated by the gestures of actors!... What might not one who is such persuade? He moves the senses, soothes the affections, and conquers the stronger conscience of a good heart; nor is the authority of flattering disgrace absent, so that destruction may creep upon men through the more soothing hearing.*

They portray the shameless Venus, the adulterous Mars, and that Jupiter of theirs, no more a king in power than a prince in vices, burning for earthly loves with his own thunderbolts: now growing white in the feathers of a swan, now flowing down in a golden shower, now bursting forth to ravish boys coming of age with birds as his ministers. Ask now, therefore, whether anyone who watches can remain uncorrupted or chaste.

VII. In the third place those skilled in ancient antiquity oppose Lactantius, whom they contend forbids Christians from frequenting spectacles only because of idolatry. So that the reader may be able to judge whether this is true or false, I place the entire text of Lactantius before his eyes. Lactantius recounts not only the spectacles performed by mimes, pantomimes, and female pantomimes, but every kind of spectacle, and passes his censures upon them all. Book 6 of the *Divine Institutes*, chapter 20: *On the stages also I do not know whether there is a more vicious corruption. For comic plays speak both of the defilement of virgins and of the loves of harlots; and the more eloquent those who have fashioned those crimes are, the more do they suffuse their subject with elegance, and the more easily do their rhythmic and ornate verses remain in the memory of their hearers.*

As you see, he speaks not about base and most sordid comedies, but about comedies arranged with the gravity of their sentiments and the sweet harmony of their verses in elegant words. He continues: *Likewise, tragic histories subject parricides and the mournful evils of kings to the eyes and display crimes upon the tragic buskin. And what else do the most shameless movements of actors teach and instill except lusts? Their*

enervated bodies, and their gait and dress made womanly, falsely represent shameless women with dishonorable gestures....

Why should I speak of mimes, who openly profess a school of corruptions? Who teach adulteries while they feign them and, by imitations, instruct toward realities? What should young men or virgins do, when they see that these things are both done without shame and willingly watched by everyone? They are certainly admonished what they may do and are inflamed with lust, which is excited especially by sight; and each person prefigures himself according to his sex in those images and approves those things while he laughs, and they return to their bedchambers more corrupted by the vices adhering to them: not only children, who ought not to be imbued with premature vices, but also old men, whom it is no longer fitting to sin.

What else does the system of the Circus games possess except levity, vanity, and madness? For minds are driven into madness with as great a force as that with which the race is run there, so that those who come for the sake of watching now exhibit more of a spectacle themselves when they begin to shout, to be carried away, and to leap. Therefore all spectacles must be avoided, not only lest some vice settle in our hearts, which ought to be calm and peaceful, but lest the habit of any pleasure soften us and turn us away from God and from good works.

For the celebrations of games are festivals of the gods, since they were established because of their birthdays or the dedications of new temples. And at first the hunts which are called munera were attributed to Saturn; scenic games to Liber; and games of the Circus to Neptune. But gradually the same honor began to be given to the other gods also, and the individual games were consecrated to their deities, as Sisinnius Capito teaches in his books on spectacles. Therefore, if anyone attends spectacles to which people assemble for the sake of religion, he has departed from the worship of God and transferred himself to the gods whose birthdays and festivals he has celebrated.

Certainly, if Lactantius had lived in our times, he could not have devoted every kind of spectacle to curses more precisely or closed every crack and refuge more completely, so as to reduce the defenders of comedies to extremity.

VIII. In book 6 Salvian directs all the sinews of his eloquence against spectacles of every kind. But he attacks especially two kinds of sins: shamelessness, or worldly pleasure, and superstition: *For, since there are two greatest evils, either that man destroy himself or that he injure God, both are enacted in the public games. For through criminal baseness the eternal salvation of the Christian people is extinguished there, and through sacrilegious superstitions the Divine Majesty is violated. For there is no doubt that they injure God, since they are consecrated to idols.*

He then continues his declamation against the monstrous forms of the other evils: *Whatever there is of impurities is practiced in the theaters; whatever of luxuries, in the wrestling schools; whatever of immoderation, in the circuses; whatever of madness, in the amphitheaters. In one place there is shamelessness, in another lasciviousness, in another intemperance, in another madness; everywhere a demon - indeed, throughout the individual places of entertainments, every monstrous form of demons. For they preside over seats dedicated to their worship. And therefore in spectacles of this kind there is not only enticement, nor only viciousness. For a Christian man to mingle with this superstition is a kind of sacrilege, because he shares in the worship of those whose festivals delight him.*

The greatest crime, therefore, of which Salvian accuses Christians who attend spectacles is the vain delight, the shameless pleasure, and the lascivious gladness which they derived from them. That delight made them in fact become sources of superstition also, even against the resistance of their own mind.

IX. In many places St. John Chrysostom execrates the lust and shamelessness of theaters. In homily 3 *On David and Saul*, where there is not a word concerning idolatry, he describes at length shameless eyes, venereal thoughts, and depraved desires excited by spectacles, and teaches that Christians who frequent theaters are to be kept from the altars. His doctrine, as happens now, seemed excessively rigid to certain persons. *And what great crime*, they say, *have these people committed that they should be kept from these sacred railings?* The same thing is objected now.

He replies: *Indeed, what greater crime than this do you seek in those who, after plainly contaminating themselves with adultery, rush shamelessly and after the manner of rabid dogs to this sacred Table? But if you wish to know the manner of adultery, I shall report to you not my words but those of him who will judge concerning the whole life of man: Whoever has looked upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart* (Matthew 5).

But if a woman perhaps met him in the marketplace, more carelessly adorned, has often captivated one who looked more curiously by the very appearance of her face, those who look not simply and not by chance but deliberately - and with such deliberation that they even despise the Church for this reason, go there, sit there through the whole day, and keep their eyes fixed upon the faces of those degraded women - with what face will they be able to say that they did not look upon them to lust after them? Where there are also broken and lascivious words, meretricious songs, a voice powerfully composed for pleasure, eyes painted with antimony, cheeks dyed with colors, clothing arranged with excessive care, the appearance of the whole body full of cosmetic, and many other enticements prepared to deceive and ensnare those looking; where there is the sluggishness of the spectators and much confusion; hence the place itself invites to lasciviousness, both from the songs which preceded and from the things which followed.

He writes very many things on this argument in homily 38 on Matthew. I shall transcribe here a few which make the argument decisive.

X. Accordingly, after he had depicted in a lengthy discourse the injuries of theaters and the horrible crimes of all spectacles, he proceeds to dissolve the most empty excuse of those who said that they suffered no evil from frequenting spectacles. He therefore concludes his homily with these words: *What then, you say, if I show that no harm emerges from this attendance? Certainly this very thing is harm: to consume time without cause and rashly, and to be a stumbling block to others. For even if you suffer no harm, you render another more devoted to this spectacle.*

But how do you suffer no harm, when you furnish the occasion for these spectacles? For the magician, the corrupted boy, the fornicating woman, and all those diabolical choruses cast the cause of the spectacles upon your head. For just as, if there were no spectators, neither would there be those who exhibited games of this kind, so, because there are spectators, these persons also suffer the fire of their gestures. Therefore, although you should do this without loss of chastity - which certainly cannot happen - you will nevertheless pay grave penalties for the destruction of others, whether of those watching or of those exhibiting the spectacles; and you would have made greater profit toward preserving chastity if you had not come there. For if you are chaste now, you would be much more chaste if you had avoided those spectacles.

Let us therefore not contend uselessly, nor devise useless defenses. There is one defense and excuse: if we flee the Babylonian furnace, if we dwell far from the Egyptian harlot, even if we must flee from her naked. For thus we shall enjoy much pleasure, our conscience not accusing us; we shall pass the present life chastely and shall obtain the goods to come, by the grace and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion now and always and unto ages of ages. Amen.

He also writes very much concerning this matter in homily 6 on Matthew, where he shows that in this world sins must be washed away by the tears of repentance and that time must not be worn away by laughter and the guffaws of theaters: *Are you sitting and laughing, uttering urbane jests and indulging pleasure, when you must render an account for so many and such great crimes? But if I do not do this, you say, if I mourn, what benefit will come to me from this?*

Much indeed, and so great that I cannot explain it. For in secular judgments, however much you weep, you will not escape punishment after sentence has been pronounced. But here, if you merely groan, you have dissolved the sentence and will obtain pardon. Therefore Christ often admonishes us concerning mourning, declares those who mourn blessed, and those who laugh wretched. For this theater does not admit laughter; nor do we assemble for this purpose, that we may pour forth guffaws, but that we may groan and from groaning of this kind obtain the inheritance of the Kingdom....

Nevertheless, some persons are so devoid of every sense that, after hearing these words, they say: "Far be it that I should ever pour forth tears; but may God grant me always to laugh and play." What is more unspeakable than a thought of this kind? For it is not God who grants us to play, but the devil. Hear, therefore, what those who played suffered: The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Such were the Sodomites, and such also were those at the time of the flood.... Therefore do not seek from God those things which you receive from the devil. For it belongs to God to give a contrite and humbled heart, a vigilant, temperate, continent, repentant, and compunctious soul. These are his gifts. Does Chrysostom condemn spectacles because of idolatry alone?

XI. Clement of Alexandria, book 3 of the *Pedagogue*, chapter 1, writes these things among others against theaters: *These assemblies are full of great confusion and iniquity, and an occasion of assembly is a cause of baseness, when men and women come together promiscuously, one for the spectacle of another.... For while the eyes act wantonly, the appetites grow warm; and eyes accustomed to regard their neighbors shamelessly at leisure, because they think it permitted to look, direct the desires.*

XII. St. Basil, homily 4: *Those acquainted with the orchestra, which abounds in impure spectacles, know that for those who sit there it is a common and public workshop of lasciviousness. For there the exceedingly harmonious modulations of flutes and meretricious songs, settling in the minds of the hearers and urging all persons to emulate the beat of the cithara players or flute players, persuade nothing other than obscenity.*

XIII. St. Gregory Nazianzen, in *Iambics to Seleucus*, section 3, asserts that the theater is a school of every baseness and lasciviousness. St. Ambrose, *On Flight from the World*, chapter 1; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 19; Justin, Athenagoras, Tatian, and Theophilus of Antioch, as is read in the *Library of the Fathers*, volume 2, inveigh against theaters in an acrid style.

XIV. In the last place, I wish to add some things from Augustine. The holy Doctor shows that all spectacles are unlawful and criminal for Christians. First he lays bare the cunning of the demon in the invention of theaters and stages. At the beginning the most wicked spirits suggested that spectacles should be celebrated in honor of the deities, so that obscene crimes covered with the veil of religion might invade minds more easily. The most crafty Satan foresaw that speculative and intellectual idolatry would cease at the proper time. Therefore he devised the plague of scenic games to endure without end, as the holy Father acutely observes, writing these things in book 1 of *The City of God*, chapter 33:

The gods commanded scenic games to be exhibited to them for the allaying of a plague of bodies. But your pontiff, to guard against a plague of souls, prohibited the stage itself from being constructed. If by any light of the mind you

prefer the soul to the body, choose whom you will worship. Nor did that plague of bodies cease because the refined madness of scenic games stole upon a warlike people accustomed previously only to games of the Circus. Rather, the craft of wicked spirits, foreseeing that the plague was already about to cease at its appointed end, took care through this occasion to introduce another far more grievous plague, in which it greatly rejoices, not into bodies but into morals.

Augustine condemns theaters not only because the plague of shamelessness corrupts the soul, but especially because fictitious shadows turn the mind away from truth. In *On True Religion*, chapter 22, he writes: *For this also is a certain imitation of truth. Nor are we forbidden spectacles of this kind for any other reason than lest, deceived by shadows of things, we wander away from the things themselves of which those are shadows.* Tertullian had written the same thing before him.

Indeed, even if neither impudent motions nor false fictions were represented in the theaters, nevertheless useless narratives and the vainest fables would fill the mind and occupy the heart in vanity. Augustine accuses himself of this, and washes away with penitential tears those profane tears which he had poured forth over Dido. Thus he speaks in book 1 of the *Confessions*, chapter 13: *I was compelled to retain the wanderings of some Aeneas, forgetful of my own wanderings, and to weep for Dido dead because she killed herself for love, while meanwhile I, most wretched, endured with dry eyes my own self dying in these things away from you, O God, my life. For what is more wretched than a wretch who does not pity himself, and who weeps for the death of Dido, which came about by loving Aeneas, but does not weep for his own death, which came about by not loving you?*

He describes in book 3 of the *Confessions*, chapter 1, the evils he drew from spectacles, how captive he was held by them, and how he desired to appear urbane and elegant while he wallowed in the filth of lust and the pitch of concupiscence. Would that the impudent followers of theaters might imitate his confession: *I therefore polluted the spring of friendship with the filth of concupiscence and clouded its brightness with hellish lust; and yet, foul and dishonorable, I desired to be elegant and urbane in abundant vanity.... Theatrical spectacles carried me away, full of images of my miseries and of fuel for my fire.*

XV. To the shame of those heroes of unstained chastity who boast that their mind remains immovable amid enticements, as though they were rocks of virtue set among the sewers of vices, I shall place before their eyes the fall of the holy Alypius in the amphitheater. Augustine recounts it in book 6 of the *Confessions*, chapter 8: *Not indeed abandoning the earthly path enchanted for him by his parents, he had gone on to Rome to study law; and there he was carried away by an incredible avidity for gladiatorial spectacles, and in an incredible manner. For although he abhorred and detested such things, certain of his friends and fellow students, when by chance they met him as they were returning from dinner, with a friendly violence led him, vehemently refusing and resisting, into the amphitheater during the days of the cruel and deadly games. He said: "If you drag my body into that place and set it there, can you also direct my mind and my eyes upon those spectacles? I shall therefore be present while absent, and thus I shall overcome both you and them."*

When they had heard these things, they nonetheless led him away with them, perhaps desiring to test whether he could accomplish it. When they arrived and had taken whatever seats they could, everything was seething with savage pleasures. He closed the doors of his eyes and forbade his mind to go out toward such great evils. Would that he had also stopped his ears! For when, at some incident of the fight, a mighty shout of the whole people struck him violently, overcome by curiosity and, as though prepared to despise and conquer whatever it might be even when seen, he opened his eyes.

And he was struck with a graver wound in his soul than the man whom he desired to see was struck in his body; and he fell more miserably than that man at whose fall the shout was raised. Entering through his ears, it opened his eyes, so that there might be a place through which his still more audacious than strong mind could be struck and cast down; and it was the weaker because it had presumed upon itself, when it ought to have presumed upon you. For as soon as he saw that blood, he drank in savagery at the same time; nor did he turn away, but fixed his gaze and imbibed madness, unaware, and delighted in the wicked contest and became intoxicated with bloody pleasure.

And he was no longer the same man who had come, but one of the crowd to which he had come, and a true companion of those by whom he had been brought. What more shall I say? He watched, shouted, burned, and carried away with him the madness which would spur him to return, not only with those by whom he had first been dragged, but even before them and dragging others. And yet from there you rescued him with a most powerful and most merciful hand, and taught him to place his confidence not in himself but in you; but this was long afterward.

Who does not grow cold with horror at this account? Spectacles soften hearts even toward those things which nature abhors. Alypius went unwilling; he was upright in morals; he carried holy thoughts within him; he had established a firm resolution to keep his eyes closed. Nevertheless the shout of the crowd opened them. He saw bodies torn apart and the earth wet with blood, and he drank in bloody pleasure. What, then, will happen if a theater presents those things toward which corrupted nature is carried with an almost irresistible impulse? Augustine recounts elsewhere, against Julian, that an old man who had lived chastely for more than eighty years lost the chastity of eighty years at the sight of a single scenic representation.

XVI. From the things said above it is clear that the Fathers forbade spectacles not only because of superstition and idolatry, but especially because of pleasure, the enticements of women, the loss of modesty and chastity, and the softening of minds. They reproach Christians with pagan superstition, not because Christians apostatized from the faith or worshiped the gods, but because by deed they supported superstition and the pagans.

For what Father says that Christians apostatized from the faith through a comedy? They went to the spectacles to soothe their senses and to seize pleasure, although their attendance was an occasion of idolatry and practical superstition. If Turks, Jews, or pagans were to present religious spectacles which provoked lust, and Christians were to attend them, would not sacred preachers call such attendance a disgrace and an encouragement of idolatry, although no one intended to worship a false deity, but all went for pleasure?

Therefore the preachers more fully and more ardently magnify lust, softness, lasciviousness, and the pollution of morals. For vices of this kind, when they have taken root, lead even the wise away from faith and from the worship of God. This is the genuine doctrine of the Fathers.

XVII. The investigators of ancient things oppose us with Ovid, Maximus, Seneca, Juvenal, and other pagan writers, who condemned theaters as the cesspool of shamelessness and lust. Did those men perhaps have it as their purpose to avoid idolatry? Or did they inveigh only against the obscene games of Flora, in which prostitutes appeared once a year? We possess theatrical writings whose mere reading makes many modern comedies and pastoral plays appear filthy.

Plato expelled musicians and comic poets, and Homer himself, from his commonwealth, because song, sweetness, and harmonious meter softened minds and rendered men effeminate. Was he moved by zeal against idolatry? Aristotle, Plutarch, Cicero, and almost all philosophers condemn

comic representations because pleasure bewitches the senses and dissolves the powers of the soul. Did religious zeal inflame them? Let the antiquarians therefore be silent, and let them cease to seduce the unlearned with rotten tales as though with solid documents when the business concerns concupiscence. Why should I linger longer in refuting a vain invention?

Chapter V — Certain Documents of Later Times Against Theatrical Games

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Certain Documents of Later Times Against Theatrical Games.

I. After the Christian religion had gained dominion and idolatry had been expelled, pious emperors by their edicts, and bishops by their councils, waged a continual and open war against comedies, tragedies, and theatrical games down to the present day. To be sure, while the pagan emperors still ruled, the Council of Elvira in Spain, in the time of Lactantius, had enacted canons 62 and 67; and the Council of Nicaea, according to Nicephorus, book 8, chapter 18, pronounced an anathema against the book of Arius entitled *Thalia*, because it smelled of the songs of Sodomites and comedians. The *Apostolic Constitutions*, canon 5, also contain many things against theaters. Yet the Church could not then raise her voice with the freedom and power which she later possessed after superstition had been extinguished.

Neither the nature of this work nor the limits of time permit me to set forth all the documents. A few will suffice; more may be read in Le Brun.

II. The Council in Trullo, held in the year 692, decreed in canon 51: *This holy and universal Synod altogether prohibits those who are called mimes and their spectacles, and also spectacles of hunts. But if anyone despises the present canon and gives himself to any of the things which are forbidden, if he is a cleric, let him be deposed; but if a layman, let him be separated.*

III. Toward the end of the eighth century Leo the Isaurian and the iconoclast princes expelled monks and gave their cells to actors. The Seventh General Council, in session 7, where these things are related, severely forbids attendance at spectacles and establishes penalties against it; the Council of Laodicea likewise. In volume 6 of the Councils we read: *Let them give thanks only to him who gives the food, and not through certain theatrical pleasures, that is, satanic songs and citharas and meretricious infections; upon such persons shall come the prophetic curse* (Isaiah 5): *Woe to those who drink wine with cithara and psaltery, but do not behold the works of the Lord and do not understand the works of his hands. And if there have ever been such persons among Christians, let them be corrected. But if not, let the things regularly enacted before you prevail over them.*

IV. In the year 866 Pope Nicholas commanded the Bulgarians to flee spectacles. Photius, in the ninth century, in his *Nomocanon*, collected the ecclesiastical and civil laws by which the Church had never permitted spectacles, the faithful were ordered to abstain from them, and clerics who frequented them were to be confined in monasteries.

Le Brun shows from Balsamon, Patriarch of Antioch, that this discipline was observed exactly in both East and West. The Goths and Vandals abolished the theaters, and they were scarcely revived in the age of Charlemagne. The Council of Chalon, held in the year 813, decreed in canon 9: *Priests ought to abstain from all enticements of the eyes and ears. Let them not only themselves reject the insolence of actors or buffoons, and of base or obscene jests, but also declare that it must be rejected by the faithful.*

The Council of Paris, held in the year 829, decreed the same thing, and spoke severely against Christians and clergy who frequented spectacles. Christian Lupus observes that, through the Trullan and similar canons, the art of poets had become almost obsolete in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

V. John of Salisbury, Bishop of Chartres, writing in the year 1172, when the theaters had been destroyed and the tragedians and comedians exterminated, says in book 1 of *On the Trifles of Courtiers*: *Moreover, when the comic and tropic poets had departed, since levity had occupied all things, their clients, the comedians and tragedians, were exterminated.*

Chapter VI — A Compendium of the History of Theaters from the Age of the Scholastics Down to Our Times

CHAPTER VI

A Compendium of the History of Theaters from the Age of the Scholastics Down to Our Times. The Doctrine of St. Thomas Is Vindicated from the Inept Commentaries of Many Casuists.

I. In the thirteenth century, after the public theaters had been removed, actors recited verses in private houses with musical instruments. In that century France especially abounded in poets and actors of this kind, because the language commonly called Provençal was held in great esteem and was called Roman, both because it approached more nearly to the Roman language and because that province was called Roman; hence romances received their name. Considering this kind of acting absolutely, the Scholastics rightly and deservedly defined it as not evil by its nature.

St. Thomas, easily the prince of the Scholastics, establishes the following in the *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, question 168, article 3: *In everything which can be directed according to reason, that is called superfluous which exceeds the rule of reason. But it has been said that playful or jocular words or deeds can be directed according to reason; and therefore that is called superfluous in play which exceeds the rule of reason. This can occur in two ways. In one way, from the very species of the actions which are employed in play. According to Tully, this kind of jesting is called illiberal, insolent, disgraceful, and obscene, namely when someone for the sake of play uses base words or deeds, or even those which tend to the injury of one's neighbor; these of themselves are mortal sins.*

In another way there can be excess in play through a defect of the due circumstances: for example, when persons engage in play at improper times or places, or beyond what is suitable to their business or person. And this can sometimes be a mortal sin because of the vehemence of the affection for play, when someone prefers its delight to the love of God, so that he does not refuse to engage in such games against a command of God or of the Church.

II. Nothing is more lucid, nothing more decisive against the theaters of our age, in which the actors almost always represent base deeds, such as profane loves, enticements of concupiscence, acts of procuring, and other things of that kind, and sometimes also employ obscene words; and these things by their nature tend toward the injury of one's neighbor. *And these of themselves are mortal sins*, says the Angelic Doctor. A mortal sin can also occur, the holy Doctor adds, *because of the vehemence of the affection for play, when someone prefers its delight to a command of God or of the Church.*

It is clear, moreover, that theaters in which lascivious women, adorned together with their lovers, represent base deeds with fornicating song, meretricious music, as I speak with Chrysostom, and the most shameless dances added, are prohibited by both divine and ecclesiastical command. This kind of games, says the Angelic Doctor, according to the pagan Tully himself, *is called illiberal, insolent, and disgraceful.*

III. Having established this principle, the Angelic Doctor proposes to himself an objection, from whose solution his doctrine shines forth clearly. *To the third*, he says, *it must be said that, as has been stated, play is necessary for the intercourse of human life. But certain lawful offices can be assigned to all things which are useful for human intercourse; and therefore even the office of actors, which is directed toward furnishing recreation to men, is not in itself unlawful, nor are they in a state of sin, provided that they use play moderately, that*

is, by not using any unlawful words or deeds in play, and by not employing play in improper affairs or at improper times.

Those who do not know that in the time of St. Thomas no public theaters existed apply what he writes concerning the actors of his time to the comedians of our latest age, although the latter differ from the former by more than a genus, as will soon be made more evident. The actors whom the Angelic Doctor mentions were certain joculators who recited verses in private houses with musical instruments, as can be gathered even from the very words of the objection. *For it is read*, he says, *in the Lives of the Fathers that it was revealed to Blessed Paphnutius that a certain joculator was to be his companion in the future life. But the office of recreating men is not unlawful in itself, provided that the necessary conditions are observed.*

The expression *in itself* receives a twofold meaning. Some things are so vicious in themselves that they can never be rendered honorable, such as fornication, adultery, lying, blasphemy, and the like. Other things are so unlawful of themselves and in themselves that in some case they can become lawful. That a man should put on a woman's garment is vicious in itself, says the Angelic Doctor in II-II, question 169, article 2, reply 3; nevertheless this change of clothing can become honorable for the preservation of one's own life. Theft is evil in itself; under the pressure of extreme necessity it casts off all malice and indeed ceases to be theft.

The acting of our time is vicious in itself in the moral genus, or when all things are considered. Some things in metaphysical abstraction, or when the circumstances are cut away, are lawful and honorable, which become criminal when the circumstances are changed. I have indicated these things in passing so that I might forestall the cavils of many unskilled persons. St. Thomas therefore teaches that the office of recreating men is not unlawful in itself, provided that the due circumstances are observed: namely, that the deeds and words of the games be honorable, and that the circumstances of place, time, and person be observed.

Hence in the cited reply to the third objection he adds: *But if some persons spend their possessions excessively upon such men, or even support those actors who employ unlawful games, they sin as though sustaining them in sin. Hence Augustine says that to give one's possessions to actors is an enormous vice, not a virtue.* In the same place St. Thomas ranks this art of comedians who employ unlawful games together with prostitution, as he expressly teaches in II-II, question 87, article 2, reply 2: *But some things are called ill-gotten because they are acquired from a base cause, as from prostitution, acting, and other things of this kind.*

From men of this kind, he adds in the same place, the Church ought not to receive tithes as long as they remain in sin, lest she seem to communicate in their sins. The actors of our time employ unlawful games, as has been demonstrated. Therefore, according to St. Thomas, spectators who pay them wages sin even if they are not stained by any impure delight, because they sustain them in sin. St. Thomas drew this doctrine from the Fathers, especially from Augustine, who says in chapter 4 of John: *To give one's possessions to actors is an enormous vice, because the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul, and he who acts unjustly is blessed.*

The doctrine of the Scholastics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is wholly the same as that of St. Thomas and must be understood in the same sense. The actors in the time of St. Thomas were like our itinerant performers, who, when they erect platforms, pulpits, or theaters, as you wish to call

them, either in private houses or in public squares and furnish spectacles to the people, commit no sin provided that they observe the conditions prescribed by St. Thomas.

In the centuries just reviewed, therefore, there were no public theaters at all; rather, the actors traveled from town to town reciting their verses and striking musical instruments, like our itinerant performers, commonly called charlatans. Magnates and princes were accustomed to maintain those Provençal poets in their courts. They were men adorned with nobility of birth and gifts of mind. The poet Foulquet entered a monastery and was appointed Bishop of Marseille and afterward Bishop of Toulouse. But because many abused this art, neglecting the conditions prescribed by St. Thomas, they were driven into exile by Louis, King of France.

Others, as I said, had a permanent residence in the courts of magnates; others sang verses composed by themselves now in this city and now in that, with instruments. They were declared infamous by no law, as were the actors who recited in public theaters. Caesar Nero himself established this distinction between private and public actors, as Tacitus relates in book 14, chapter 15. *Yet, lest he should still dishonor himself in a public theater, he instituted games under the name of the Juvenalia, for which names were entered everywhere; neither anyone's nobility, nor age, nor other honors were an impediment to the practice of the Greek or Latin actor's art*.

And the law declared that those who recited in private houses were not infamous. Pliny the Younger, who disapproved public actors, maintained private comedians in his house, as is gathered from book 1, letter 15.

IV. So that the doctrine of St. Thomas and of the other Scholastics may appear more clearly, two things must be established as certain. First, all the Fathers and both ecclesiastical and civil laws marked public actors with the censure of infamy. Second, St. Thomas, most versed in the doctrine of the Fathers and the laws, was not ignorant of these laws and this infamy. Was he ignorant of what Tertullian, Cyprian, Salvian, Chrysostom, and Augustine teach concerning mimes, and of what Theodosius and other emperors established concerning the infamy of actors? Whoever contended that he spoke of public actors who represent among the scenes the vices either of impure love, ambition, or cruelty would brand the Angelic Doctor with the mark of supine ignorance.

When, therefore, with the other Scholastics he teaches that the art of actors is not unlawful in itself, he means the art which the poets and actors, or itinerant performers, of his time exercised privately in this or that city. This is confirmed by the fact that at that time there existed no public theaters at all possessing a fixed seat. What is more, the holy Doctor teaches in the cited testimonies that those games are lawful provided that they are not contrary to the law of God or of the Church and provided that they contain neither base deeds nor base words.

Let the defenders of theaters show us even one tragedy or comedy, whether of the ancient or the modern age, which, when recited in a public theater by women and men, with interludes, dances, music, and all the other things added, was not polluted by things which smell of baseness and obscenity. It is therefore plain that the art of acting which St. Thomas asserts to be lawful in itself differs in its whole genus from that which female and male mimes represent in our time. Theaters change their nature and essence through the diversity of circumstances, and especially of the subject matter, as will soon be evident.

The most celebrated Ludovico Antonio Muratori, the splendor and ornament of the republic of letters, confirms what I have said thus far in volume 2 of the *Antiquities of the Italian Middle Ages*, dissertation 29, where he observes that after the decline of the Roman Empire the theaters and spectacles which had formerly flourished disappeared, and that battles of fictitious war and playful contests succeeded them; yet some traces of mimic art were never lacking. On page 845 he reports certain words from the cited testimonies of St. Thomas and interprets what the holy Doctor understood by the name of actors. For he says: *But they should be believed to have then performed the same things which now itinerant performers - whom we call acrobats and bench-singers - and others present as games in public squares and at crossroads*.

Perhaps the fact that Philip Augustus, King of France, at the beginning of the same thirteenth century ordered actors to depart from the borders of the kingdom because he judged that kind of men pernicious to the commonwealth gave rise to this question. From this gather again how gross is the ignorance from which those labor who distort what St. Thomas said concerning itinerant performers, commonly called acrobats, in order to render today's theaters honorable. The illustrious Muratori pursues more points in the same place and examines the diversity of the games which prevailed in the barbarous centuries down to the fifteenth century.

VI. In the fifteenth century, the Provençal poets having been neglected, another kind of poets and comedians came forth, who represented the deeds of the Saints and of Christ the Lord. A congregation for sacred representations of this kind was established at Paris, as the often-praised Father Le Brun relates; its office was to present the acts of the Passion of Christ. He relates many things concerning this congregation which I pass over. At first they excited devotion and piety; but in the course of time all things were polluted by interludes and prologues, as is accustomed to happen in all arts which are exercised by the work of men.

These sacred representations, with dances added, were celebrated on the more solemn feasts of the Christian religion, now in churches and now outside. Clerics themselves acted the comedians. All these things were finally abolished; their traces endured for a long time in various provinces and still rage in Spain.

VII. Around the sixteenth century public theaters possessing a permanent seat were built. Comedies and tragedies, composed in both Italy and France after the models of Sophocles and Euripides, came forth full of deceits and amorous skirmishes, and the corruption of the ancient theaters began to rage everywhere. Mussato of Padua and Trissino of Vicenza are regarded as the first authors of tragedies in Italy; Jodelle and Garnier in France.

The Church was not silent; but, following the footsteps of the ancient Fathers and Councils, she strove with all her strength in her synods to exterminate the reviving corruption. Innumerable are the decrees of the Church which Father Le Brun collected against spectacles of this kind. At first actors alone, without women, exercised the infamous theatrical art. In the decrees of the synods issued at this time against actors, no mention is made of women of the stage. Cecchini of Ferrara, a famous actor who published a book in praise of his profession in the year 1616, asserts that for less than fifty years it had been established that real, not fictitious, women should come forth upon the stage and act female mimes with their male mimes.

VIII. St. Charles Borromeo, the most strenuous defender and vindicator of ecclesiastical discipline, above the others in Italy declared war upon spectacles and called princes and magistrates to his aid, as is found in part 2 of the Acts, title 66: *We have also judged that princes and magistrates must be admonished concerning these things, so that they may cast actors and mimes, the other itinerant performers, and lost men of that kind out of their territories.*

Bollani, Bishop of Brescia, called a second Ambrose, established the following in the year 1573: *Let them not be spectators of itinerant performers and of base men of that kind.... Let them altogether avoid places where dances are led, comedies performed, and mimes, actors, and other things of that kind are employed.* This is from the Acts of the Church of Brescia printed at Venice in the year 1608.

IX. The Council of Tours in the year 1585 commands the following: *This Synod prohibits comedies and scenic or theatrical games under penalty of anathema, and commands each and every rector of the parishes, if they do not obey this decree, that by his ordinance they be denounced and published by name as excommunicated.* I could report innumerable other synods if it were necessary and leisure permitted.

The Ritual of Metz in the year 1605 forbids ecclesiastical burial to be granted to comedians and actors. The Ritual of Paris declares the art of comedians infamous and excludes them from Holy Communion. The Ritual of Chalon, printed at Paris in the year 1649, commands the following: *Those publicly unworthy are to be kept away, such as the excommunicated, the interdicted, and the manifestly infamous, such as prostitutes, concubinarians, and comedians.* The Bishop of Arras commands the same thing more severely in the year 1695. The University of Paris established the same in the year 1648.

X. I am pleased to transcribe here the words of the Synod of Toulon in the year 1704, rendered from French into Latin: *The assembly of Christians is called a mystical body, whose head is Christ and whose soul and form is the Holy Spirit. Therefore he who maintains that the occupation of comedies is worthy of the Christian profession consequently teaches that Christ is pleased with them and that the Holy Spirit directs Christians toward these exercises; this smells of a blasphemy which not even one of those who shamelessly extol theatrical games would dare to utter.*

It is therefore all too well known and established that spectacles are schools of demons, where they have as many tempters as spectators. Nothing, therefore, is more opposed not only to the spirit of the Christian man but also to that solemn protestation and profession which we all make in Baptism, namely to renounce the demon and his pomps and works. We therefore exhort all the faithful whom Providence has entrusted to us to abstain from these false and fatal pleasures of the age.

But if they should deceive themselves to such a degree as to believe that they themselves perpetrate no evil, they can never purge themselves of the iniquity which others perpetrate. Moreover, according to the testimony of St. Paul, those who know, those who consent, and much more those who cooperate are punished no differently from the authors of the crimes. Therefore we command all confessors to deny absolution to those who, after correction, refuse to abstain from attendance at comedies and theaters. And we command priests, beneficiaries, and all ecclesiastics of this diocese, under penalty of excommunication incurred by the very fact, not to attend dances, theatrical games, and comedies.

XI. Not only bishops in their councils, but also theologians and preachers of every Christian nation, both by voice and by writing, have attacked theatrical spectacles. Passing over the preachers, innumerable numbers of whom have delivered sermons against the revived theaters, I shall indicate the more celebrated theologians.

XII. In Spain, two most celebrated Jesuits, Father Francisco Ribera, who heard the confessions of St. Teresa, in his commentary on Micah, chapter 1, number 63, attacks comedians; Father Juan de Mariana published, as it is reported, an entire treatise against the theaters of today. González, in his notes upon canon 62 of the Council of Elvira, declares the theatrical art infamous by both civil and ecclesiastical law and praises the more eminent theologians of his nation who wrote against this corruption in these words: *Mariana also gathers many things concerning this nefarious art in On Spectacles, chapter 12 and following; Bulenger, book 1 On the Circus, chapter 52; Calatajus in the Paradoxes, chapter 12; Amaya on the single law, chapter On the Hunting of Beasts; Father Faber, book 2 of the Summa, chapter 12; Dempster on Rosinus, book 5, chapter 6; Lantimentus, book 2 On Ancient Monuments, chapter 82; Cabreros On Method, book 2, chapter 8; Ossualdus on Donatus, book 18, chapter 7; and Mendoza, quodlibetal question 9*.

What more? Father Escobar himself execrates comedies; I shall give his words in their place. The most eminent Cardinal Aguirre writes the following, among other things, in volume 1 of the Councils, page 674: *It now happens everywhere that those who approach those theaters chaste and modest return entirely different. How many virgins, how many chaste matrons there conceive loves which they had not felt before, and gradually, shame laid aside, succumb? Few are the spectators, if perhaps any, in whom those amorous phrases, gestures, and inventions do not excite some less pure affection.*

Let the magistrates and governors of the commonwealth therefore see by what reasoning they can permit them, and whether before God they are not guilty of the innumerable crimes which follow from them. Let certain recent writers likewise see at how great a risk to the salvation of others and to their own they loosen the reins in this matter, relying upon one or another testimony of St. Thomas badly understood. Diego Tapia also, a celebrated Spanish theologian, sharpened his pen against comedies, to pass over many others.

XIII. From Italy, Paolo Comitolo in book 5 and Father Alberto de Albertis of the Society of Jesus in the *Paradoxes*, disputation 2, sharply attacked theaters. Father Domenico Ottonelli of the Society of Jesus published three quarto volumes against theaters. Father Girolamo Fiorentini of the Congregation of the Mother of God twice printed a duodecimo volume and inscribed it with this title: *Theater Against Theater*. Among the preachers, all of whom have always declaimed against theatrical vices, Father Paolo Segneri of the Society of Jesus is eminent; I shall touch below upon a specimen of his sermon.

XIV. The French theologians, unconquered defenders of evangelical morality if any men are, have almost unanimously always disapproved scenic representations. Nicole assailed comedies in an entire treatise. The good Merbesius disapproved theaters with a copious pen in his *Christian Summa*. The Most Serene Prince de Conti published a treatise in the year 1669 in which he set forth the tradition of the Church against comedies and spectacles, adducing the testimonies of the Fathers.

Against this treatise there appeared a dissertation by an anonymous author. M. de Voisin, Doctor of Theology and Royal Counselor, published a quarto volume in the year 1671 bearing the title *Defense of the Treatise of Monseigneur the Prince de Conti*. In this work the most learned M. de Voisin thoroughly routed the aforesaid dissertation and showed its author to be wonderfully unskilled in ancient learning, whether sacred or profane, and in evangelical doctrine.

Father François Caffaro published at Paris in the year 1694 a publicly printed letter in defense of comedies. That writing excited so exceedingly grave a scandal in France that it inflamed episcopal solicitude and zeal to guard the sacred deposit of the Church. The Archbishop of Paris compelled the

writer to a recantation; he immediately furnished it, in an example of humility not so frequent, and inscribed his recantation to the archbishop himself.

Not content with this public recantation, the other bishops of France, fearing lest the unlearned faithful, otherwise inclined by their nature to all things which serve to soothe the senses, should be infected, resolved to rout the lax and crafty inventions of the published writing. The most celebrated Bossuet first of all published a little work in the same year 1694 by which he utterly crushed Caffaro's letter and, in his customary manner, greatly illustrated the perennial tradition of the Church against the corruption of theaters.

Likewise in this same year 1694 M. de la Grange, Doctor of Theology, condemned the deceitful inventions of the same Caffaro in a published treatise entitled *Refutation of a Writing Favoring Comedy*. The poet Boursault had solicited Caffaro to write the said letter, which he inserted in his volume bearing the title *Theatrical Pieces of M. Boursault*.

XV. From the things which have thus far been touched upon very briefly, it is sufficiently evident how vain, chimerical, and exceedingly ridiculous is that invention by which the defenders of theaters strive to elude the doctrine of the Fathers, babbling that the ancient Fathers inveighed sharply against the theater because theaters were contaminated with the crime of idolatry. For the successors of the bishops and doctors of the Church adopted the doctrine of the ancient Fathers after idolatry had been wholly extinguished, and opposed the sayings of the ancient Fathers against those very theaters which Christians, insufficiently mindful of their own profession, rebuilt and upon the stage of which they brought back the relics of pagan idolatry.

The councils of our latest age, bishops, and archbishops preeminent in holiness and doctrine kindled apostolic zeal against the revived theaters; all theologians skilled in evangelical doctrine sharpened their pens against the deceits of comedies and tragedies.

XVI. Who, then, are those who have fought for theaters? Theatrical men and actors. Pietro Maria Cecchini of Ferrara, a famous actor, published discourses for the honorableness of comedies; they were printed at Venice in the year 1621. Niccolò Barbieri, called Beltrame among actors, fought for theaters with certain other comedians whose writings there is no leisure to report. Another actor, Riccoboni, called Lelio, scribbled certain things in defense of comedies in his *Italian Theatre*, published in the French language a few years ago.

He relates that St. Charles Borromeo signed with his own hand the comedies to be recited in the theater, although from his acts it is gathered that the comedians departed because they refused to submit to the rules prescribed by the holy archbishop. Certain Italian poets undertook a literary war against Riccoboni because he had written with insufficient fitness concerning the Italian theater. This Riccoboni learned from Italian poets the art of reciting tragedies and was afterward reproached for an ungrateful spirit. More things might be said concerning this quarrel; I pass them over as excessively trifling.

The defenders of theaters are therefore poets and actors. Are these indeed men most skilled and fully instructed in the Christian profession and evangelical doctrine? What is more, the more celebrated and learned poets, when they had advanced in age, lamented the works published in their youth as the faults of youth. The more celebrated poets of both Italy and France illustrate this truth. No one is ignorant of what the most renowned Petrarch did when he became more mature.

What shall I say of that other Italian poet, the most eminent of all our age, Apostolo Zeno? From his very youth he had devoted his labor to purging theaters of obscenity and baseness. But the exceedingly pointed epiphonema with which St. Augustine thus rebuked the reformation of the theaters boasted in his own time had not yet become known to him: *Has the devil also become a Christian?* Therefore, when he had reached old age, he wept over and disapproved the poetic works which he had published in the flower of life.

And, so that to the extent of his powers he might render to God the satisfaction which human weakness is capable of offering for the injury inflicted, he composed sacred dramas, so that in place of the profane love once perhaps excited by his verses he might kindle the fire of divine charity and inflame the hearts of men toward devotion, piety, and the celebration of the divine praises.

Unless I should depart from my subject, I would have very many things to say concerning this most illustrious man, in whom over the interval of many years I admired not only select and vast learning, readiness of memory, and facility of elegant speech, but also the most upright probity of Christian life, and especially a truly singular humility and contempt for the world. But if you desire more, read two most elegant orations: one in Italian, which Father Antonino Valsecchi, the celebrated sacred orator of our Italy and a cultivator of the other sciences, delivered; the other in Latin, which Father Giacinto Menegatti, an excellent lecturer in philosophy, published upon the death of so great a man.

In France, moreover, among others two celebrated poets flourished, Corneille and Racine, who published celebrated tragedies, yet both condemned them as the faults of youth. Father Le Brun, on page 28, proposes the example of Racine for other poets to imitate. On the contrary, Molière, who had greatly fostered theatrical pleasures, left a mournful example to the professors of his art. The same Father Le Brun says on page 259: *What is certain is that his death is a terrible moral lesson for all his fellow actors and for all those who seek only to laugh. A little earth obtained by entreaty is all that he received from the Church; and even then it was necessary to protest that he had given signs of repentance.*

Rosimond, having died suddenly in 1673, was buried without clergy, without lights, and without any prayer in a place in the cemetery of St. Sulpice where children who die without Baptism are placed. The editor of Father Le Brun's work relates on page 260 that a still more severe judgment was exercised against the famous Lecouvreur, an impudent actress who died in the year 1730 without the Sacraments and was buried in a field after the manner of beasts.

XVII. Before I proceed farther, a man of ruined modesty and honor presents himself and must be checked by me. He is the most celebrated buffoon M. de Voltaire, who treats religion as a jest and, whenever occasion is offered or seized, strives with exquisite cunning to expose it to derision. As pertains to our subject, he writes the following against the work of Father Le Brun in letter 23 of his letters sprinkled with the stain of impiety and mingled with the refuse of mockery, in French and translated by me into Latin: *How can an art which sovereign powers reward with prizes, which the most eminent men cultivate, and which nations admire, be marked with infamy? How can it rightly be understood that at the same bookseller, beside the immortal works of Racine, Corneille, and Molière, there is found the impertinent declamation of Father Le Brun against our spectacles?*

A man of shameless brow calls the detestation of pagan superstition and the just defense of evangelical morality an impertinent declamation. It suffices to have noted this in passing, so that we may keep Christians away from reading works of darkness of this kind, which otherwise are worn

even by the hands of little women. But the discipline of our religion has fallen to that degree of evils that a bookseller has been found who was not ashamed to reprint these infamous letters. But let us pursue the interrupted road.

XVIII. Let the authors of theatrical dramas, the actors, and all female mimes meditate seriously upon these things. But I fear that their minds, pregnant with fictions, lies, and fables, and their polluted spirits, have become stupid and unfit for meditating upon divine truths. Another invention which theatrical men are accustomed to thrust forward had almost escaped my memory: namely, that St. Francis de Sales favored comedies, chapter 23 of part 1 and chapter 33 of part 3 of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. But M. de Voisin, Father Le Brun, and many others vindicate him from this excessively gross imposture. See what I myself wrote in volume 4 of *Christian Theology*, page 426 and following; there is no leisure to linger longer over an evident matter.

Certain casuists, just as they have obscured with lax opinions the very first commandment of loving God, have likewise admitted theatrical pleasure more widely than is right. Yet even they detest obscene and shameless comedies with one voice. Nor do I doubt that the defenders of theaters would be ashamed to allege as their protection the most inept paradoxes of one or another casuist which are opposed to common sense.

XVII. I ought here to review the testimonies of the theologians who wrote in the last three centuries, and I would demonstrate that their doctrine is the same as that of the ancient Fathers. But I shall do this below and shall make plain how great is the ignorance and how vain the boasting of those who are not ashamed to babble that the Fathers disapproved theaters because of idolatry alone. For the present I shall transcribe one or two.

Francesco Patrizi of Siena, Bishop of Gaeta, in book 2 of *On the Institution of a Commonwealth*, title 6, writes the following against tragedies and comedies to Pope Sixtus IV: *Almost every tragedy is to be driven from the best commonwealth. Solon forbade Thespis to teach it as useless and called it false speaking. The Lacedaemonians also ordered the books of the poet Aeschylus to be carried away from the city of Sparta as useless and published rather for corrupting the morals of men than for any discipline of the good arts....*

Comedy, which they say was first invented in Sicily, likewise does not please us when recited in spectacles; for it corrupts the morals of men, renders them effeminate, and drives them toward lust and luxury, and so forth. Rarius, book 8, title 14: *The system of theaters is less necessary in our times. For all fables have been cast out and hissed away, and by severity of morals and the holiness of religion they have been expelled from the cities. Therefore it would be altogether superfluous to say more concerning the establishment of theaters, since the old spectacles are destroyed and new ones are by no means built.*

XVIII. Giacomo Pignatelli, volume 8, consultation 153, relates the following: *At Rome permission to make spectacles publicly is given to no one. Indeed, in the days of Carnival they are scarcely permitted to be performed in the house of some magnate. Clement VIII enjoined this custom in the Jubilee year 1600. Pope Urban VIII preserved it inviolate, adding also that itinerant performers or traveling apothecaries should by no means come forth publicly to perform games during Advent, Lent, and the whole octave of the Nativity and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, likewise on Friday and on other vital feast days consecrated to the honor of God.*

On the other days, however, it is granted to them by reason of mercy that among the wares they sell they may mingle something of honorable jest for the recreation of the assembled people. At Naples, by a special pragmatic law,

comedies and any other mockeries of actors are forbidden to be represented in public places, as is found in pragmatic law 1, title That Nothing Be Done in a Public Place, which Rovito adorned with his commentary.

Chapter VII — An Account of What Four Authors of Our Age - Caffaro, Bossuet, Lamy, and Vulpius - Wrote Concerning Theatrical Games

CHAPTER VII

An Account of What Four Authors of Our Age - Caffaro, Bossuet, Lamy, and Vulpius - Wrote Concerning Theatrical Games. A True Conception and Faithful Image of the Theater of Our Time.

I. Father François Caffaro in the year 1694 had composed a writing by which he defended the harmless use of the theaters which prevail in our age. The book was published without his knowledge. As soon as it saw the light, it moved the archbishops, bishops, and all the wise men of the Gallican Church, and vehemently kindled their zeal to vindicate sound doctrine. So that the author might avoid the penalty of just indignation, he offered to the Archbishop of Paris a recantation of the published little work with the greatest submission of spirit and in a singular example of modesty and humility. I place it here as both a lucid testimony of a most modest writer and a powerful protection of sound doctrine.

To the Most Illustrious Lord Archbishop of Paris, Duke and Peer of France, Commander of the Royal Orders, Provider of the Sorbonne, and Superior of the Royal College of Navarre.

Having heard that I was commonly circulated as the author of a certain little book composed in French in defense of comedies and inscribed Letter of a Theologian, etc., and having been unable not to know at the same time the offense which arose from it, Most Illustrious Archbishop, I could not but be struck with keen grief. I judged it incumbent upon me, both for the usefulness of the Christian commonwealth and for the honor of the sacred office which I discharge, to profess publicly that this letter is not mine, that I have no part in it, that it did not come to my knowledge before it was published, and plainly to repel from myself every suspicion cast upon me concerning that writing.

Yet I do not wish to be exempt from this humble confession, as is fitting, in which I myself shall disclose what could have been the cause of its being attributed to me, reveal my former opinion concerning its argument, and make known my present one, as it were in expiation of the former. This causes me, Most Illustrious Archbishop, to write to your Eminence, since I regard you as my judge in doctrine and as the judge of the entire flock entrusted to you, from which I count it an honor to belong, born such by divine right, appointed by the Holy Spirit, and constituted by Christ himself. I therefore feel myself bound under that name to deposit with you this explanation of my mind, which you yourself may order to appear in public light if it seems expedient to you.

Ten or twelve years ago a Latin writing concerning comedy fell from me, in which, without first making a mature examination of the matter I was treating, carried away by the levity of a youthful mind, I stood on the side of vindicating it as I imagined it was conducted at Paris, although I had never attended any performance and from accounts sometimes heard from others had formed in my mind a purer image of it. And indeed I cannot but confess, suffused with shame, that the headings and arguments of the letter published without my knowledge are the very same as those contained in my private writing, although the two differ in certain things, where the author of the letter has something which I did not touch and speaks of other matters in a different manner from that which I used in my writing.

Thus, in patronage of comedy, he rashly adduces, Most Illustrious Archbishop, your silence concerning it, from which he infers that it is approved by you at least by tacit consent. I offered nothing similar in my writing, in which I said

nothing that could in any way regard your Eminence by name. The excellent M. Pirot, who examined this not long ago at your command, can give you assurance of the distinction between the two, no less than concerning the occasion of the other books which they call Rituals; for the letter appears to receive them as though it exhibited less observance toward them than is fitting for this kind of book, worthy of such reverence, of which it speaks thus: certain Rituals; while in my writing I nevertheless have candidly: certain Rituals of some dioceses.

There is no reason for me to deny that, if the letter be compared once with my writing, it will be perceived that it was collected from it almost word for word, and thus that the letter unhappily arose, against my intention, from my hasty writing. I never determined that my writing should be committed to the press; nor was it worked out so accurately that I should contend that it be made public property. The argument which I treated in it was not sufficiently investigated by me, nor were the testimonies of the authors whom I brought forward on either side sufficiently ascertained; especially what I sought from St. Charles, whose authority I forced as though it favored my opinion.

Indeed, I did not even know in what manner comedy was presented at Paris, since I had never read any of Molière's comic verses and had read very few of those of others, and not with an attentive mind; and from elsewhere I possessed only a common knowledge of the Rituals by report, without even having read the Parisian Ritual itself. Through this defect of attention and examination it happened that in my writing, which I never intended to publish openly, I pleaded the cause of comedy. I vehemently repent of this design and would willingly do anything by which the unforeseen stumbling block arising from it might be removed.

It was not a difficult labor to lay aside my first opinion concerning comedy and to take another in its place, which I shall follow henceforth. Having thoroughly examined the matter, I am plainly persuaded that whatever is brought forward on the other side to have comedy excused is wholly light and frivolous, but that what the Church holds to the contrary is stable and unshaken. For among those whom she decrees must in illness be kept from the sacred Viaticum unless, having entirely abandoned the institution of their former life, they remove the offense thereby inflicted upon the people, she numbers comedians; nor does she wish them to be admitted to Holy Orders if at any time they seek them.

These are two principal provisions concerning those men established in the Parisian volume of Rituals and in very many others agreeing with it elsewhere. I embrace with my whole heart and with complete obedience this discipline of the Church and the doctrine upon which laws of this kind rest, and I would subscribe without any exception to all those things contained in your Ritual: both those which at any time touch comedians, whether they directly regard them or are referred to them indirectly, and those which touch anything else in whatever manner.

This, Most Illustrious Archbishop, I religiously confirm to your Eminence with every affirmation, prepared to execute whatever you command, so that I may prove myself and my opinions to the Christian commonwealth and satisfaction may be made to it. With the greatest reverence, Most Illustrious Archbishop, your Eminence's most humble and obedient servant, François Caffaro, C.R. Paris, 11 May 1694.

II. Although this recantation secured the innocence and probity of the author, it was by no means judged adequate to unteach those unskilled persons who could have been seduced by the captious little arguments of the published work. Therefore the most learned Bossuet, the most splendid light and ornament of the Gallican Church, judged it worth the labor to overthrow the sophisms and cavilling reasonings of the aforesaid dissertation in a public dissertation, which first appeared in French and afterward in Italian from Venetian presses under the title *Observations on Comedy*.

III. I shall note a few things in passing. *He who*, says Bossuet, *asserts that modern theatrical games are harmless must necessarily defend chaste shamelessness and honorable infamy.* He vividly depicts the conversations, gestures, movements, songs, and other things of comedians which accompany the scenic representations of our time. With incredible clarity and his most abundant power of eloquence he presses and strengthens the common and obvious arguments which prove the depravity of comedy.

He brings under examination two principal sophisms of the adversary. The first rests upon experience: thousands of the faithful of most upright conscience frequent comedies and at the same time the most holy Sacraments of our religion. To overturn this invention, he enumerates the sins which pious men and most approved Christians commit, and he censures either the inexperience or the negligence of spiritual physicians. Often, no differently in spiritual than in bodily illness, diseases which bring death lie hidden from both the sick man and the physician; there are diseases which take away the sense of the soul as well as of the body.

The second sophism is supported by the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas. Bossuet expounds with a full pen and fittingly vindicates the doctrine of this Angelic Doctor in the same meaning. In section 12 he adduces canon 8 of the Council of Tours, in which all those things which soothe the eyes and ears are prohibited. *The cited canon*, Bossuet says, *does not suppose in spectacles that unlawful actions are performed or dishonorable words spoken. It regards only the enticements of the eyes and ears which open the way to turbid vice.... What must be said concerning those spectacles in which amorous verses and soft melodies are mingled together?*

He objects to himself that the aforesaid canon prohibits spectacles to clerics, not to laymen. He gives this reply, rendered in Latin: *This gross hallucination is similar to that of certain doctors who infer from canon 18 of the Council of Nicaea against the usury of clerics that the same thing was not prohibited to laymen. To refute this error, it is enough to consider the reason upon which the canons rest when they prohibit certain things to clerics.... The testimonies of Scripture which forbid both sexes comprehend laymen and clerics alike.*

In section 15 he cuts off another evasion of those who say that the Fathers inveighed only against the baseness of the ancient theater. He answers them: *The tragedies of the pagans - which ought to suffuse us Christians with shame - display such modesty and gravity that our theater could not endure such simplicity.* I pass over the other things and note only this: that Bossuet was never struck with the accusation of excessive rigor, not even by those who count as more rigid all things which are not more lax.

IV. The third writer of our age is Bernard Lamy, who in his treatise *On Poetic Art*, chapter 11, asserts that the comedies of our age are more shameless than the comedies of the pagans. The Church, he says, detests ancient and modern theatrical games alike. *And this is known and established among all those who have read our observations thus far composed on comedy. Since the theatrical works of today have been fashioned with greater artifice, it necessarily follows that they are more dangerous according to the things which have been said in chapter 3.* Read, when leisure permits, that whole chapter and many other things which this most celebrated author writes there; and from them you will gather more clearly that the comedies of our time are fullest of dangers, not to say of crimes.

V. In the fourth place follows the illustrious Giovanni Antonio Volpi, public professor of humane letters at the University of Padua and most skilled in both poetry and the rhetorical art. He published a most eloquent book *On the Usefulness of Poetry*, written in his customary style, in which in chapter 7

he clearly demonstrates by the authority of the holy Fathers and by unconquered arguments of reason that the modern comedies of the Italians are futile, inept, dangerous to integrity of morals. I shall transcribe a few things which present an image of the comedies of our age.

Comedy, he says, *of the common sort, and the fables which we are accustomed today to call pastoral and woodland, a kind of poem derived partly from the idylls and eclogues and partly from the satirical dramas of the Greeks, rightly labor under infamy among the upright and sober. For these dramas, because of the wickedness of their arguments, their lascivious sentiments, the corruption of their diction, the coldness of their jokes, and the improbity of their actors, do incredible harm to talents and morals, bring a great plague and destruction upon the minds of youths and maidens, weaken the sinews of virtue, and fill man, an animal born for serious things, with their futility and levity.*

Passing over these things, I shall rather dwell upon this: that the ancient Fathers of the Church did not rashly impose the mark of infamy upon the comedies and tragedies of their times. Nor did they reprehend poems and spectacles of this kind only because of impiety and superstition, because the theaters were dedicated to Bacchus and Venus so that those who assembled for them seemed to render worship and honor to false deities, but also because of the corruption of morals, the representation of base things, and the doctrine of disgraceful deeds which the spectators drew especially from comic fables.

VI. After transcribing the invective of Lactantius and praising the authority of Chrysostom, he represents and detests the theatrical games of our age in these words: *Now this must be considered: whether the comedy of our times, as it is cultivated by the French and Italians, may or may not offend good morals worthy of a Christian man. It is easiest to judge concerning Italian comedies. For they abound in so many futile, inept, uncivil, obscene, and cold jokes that they seem to have no other purpose than to excite by any means the vilest dregs of men, although no thing is more inept than inept laughter, as Catullus seems to say.*

In the sixteenth century, when good letters greatly flourished, the comedies of the Italians raved somewhat less in this respect, and less coldness and refuse could be observed in their jokes. For they were for the most part accustomed to be composed after the models of the ancients; yet in their arguments, morals, and sentiments you would rightly have called them workshops of impropriety. Nor must it be thought that open obscenity alone in comedies is harmful to upright and chaste youth.

There are many other things, deceiving under the appearance of charm, elegance, wit, and humaneness, full of snares, poison, and pestilence, by which wicked poets at this time hunt for the favor of the people and bring destruction upon morals. For what? In today's comedies, woodland fables, or pastoral dramas adapted to music - a most corrupt kind of poem - do you hear anything more frequently than piety, innocence, and virtue being derided and held in mockery by the speakers, the license of sinning always excused by some appearance or covered and diminished by jests and pleasantries?

Modesty is certainly injured in these things, or at least placed in danger, attacked and shaken by every effort and deceit of lust and intemperance: by words, I say, and maxims which hide poison beneath honey, from which, as through some exceedingly thin covering, vice shines forth sufficiently and by a not obscure signification of base pleasures wonderfully stirs up its own loves. For the worst poets, through actors worse than themselves, dictate that youth is to be enjoyed, that the greatest fruit of life consists in indulging one's inclination, and that sweet and pleasurable things are not to be deferred until old age.

They repeatedly add that beauty profits a virgin or married woman nothing if she lacks lovers; that a woman must beware lest she be content with only one praiser or worshiper, for as many suitors as approach her, so many most certain witnesses of her beauty and charm she will possess. Moreover, they dissuade youths from wishing to contract

pallor by studies and vigils, from being led by the splendor of glory, and from affecting an old man's prudence, since these things will altogether render them hateful to little women, unfit for loves, and burdensome to more elegant men.

Different things befit different ages. Meanwhile, while the blood is warm, effort must be made so that with gladness, drink, generous food, venery, leisure, and sleep the good season of life may be prolonged as far as possible, with the reports and tales of the envious despised.... With these voices and these precepts drawn from the sty of Epicurus, the theaters of today almost resound. In this school youths are instructed; here virgins are taught from their tender nails to meditate upon incestuous loves; here examples of adulteries are proposed to wives.

For they learn how the care of guardians and of the husband can be deceived; how lovers are to be admitted; by what appearance a certain exterior modesty is to be preserved and at the same time, when witnesses have been removed, the reins are to be loosened to lust and intemperance. These things - shame upon it! - are watched promiscuously by all among Christians, are heard, read, learned by heart, and adhere deeply in minds, especially when to them is added the enticement of music and dancing, than which nothing more suitable can be devised for breaking and enervating the manly strength of the mind.

VII. From this you have that the comedies of our age are base and obscene when all the things which accompany them are considered. No one doubts that some are more obscene than others. But since all treat the business of carnal concupiscence in amorous speech, and all look to the same end, that they may soften, infect, provoke, and inflame the passion of concupiscence, it is plain that all are base and obscene.

The difference turns only upon this: that some poets treat the argument of pleasure in a coarser phrase, others in a more delicate. In the former the words will be more obscene, in the latter more restrained; the former openly, the latter more insidiously, besiege, entice, and titillate concupiscence. The latter attain the end more effectively than the former. In their subject matter, therefore, all the comedies of our age which are promiscuously acted by female and male comedians in public theaters are obscene.

What, you will say, do you allege the authority of a poet and rhetorician to define a controversy of Christian theology? Are these authors suitable for resolving the dissensions of theologians? Certainly. These are the men who suffuse with the gravest disgrace certain persons devoted to the study of moral science and ancient learning, who are not ashamed to furnish patronage to comedies and tragedies and to their spectators.

Giovanni Antonio Volpi, illustrious not so much for singular eloquence and learning as for sweetness of morals and Christian piety, devoted not to sacred things but a layman, raises a resounding voice against the corruption of comedy. He represents its deformed picture with an elegant brush and eloquently describes the absurdities which follow from it. He had no need of the help of theological science; but, endowed with good sense alone and instructed by knowledge summoned from the first principles of nature alone, he perceived, abhorred, and execrated the depravity and vices of comedy, comedians, and spectators.

From him I did not seek the protection of theological authority, but set forth the state of the case. I did not wish to bring forward Merbesius, Noël Alexandre, Pontas, Genet, and the other most grave theologians, lest the Probabilists thrust forward the inveterate refrain of Rigorism. From Bossuet, a supreme bishop, from Lamy, a most learned writer, and from the illustrious Volpi, a layman and most

learned professor of the University of Padua, I wished to delineate the state of the controversy, so that it might be plain what it is concerning which there must be dispute.

Chapter VIII — A Clearer Conception of Baseness and Obscenity

CHAPTER VIII

A Clearer Conception of Baseness and Obscenity. Baseness Is of One Kind in Represented Matters and Gesticulations, and of Another in Words. All Present-Day Public Comedies Are Base and Obscene, Either Because of the Matter Represented, the Words and Gesticulations, the Dances, or the Interludes. Men Dressed in Women's Clothing, or Women in Men's Clothing, Are Abominable Before God.

I. The things I have said thus far would be enough and more than enough for anyone to be able to possess a true conception and image of base comedies. But the nature and condition of the argument which we are treating is such that it is exposed to very many equivocations, evasions, openings, and various meanings of words, since the theater is a certain work compounded of many actions. Therefore, unless with the greatest clarity we elucidate what a base comedy is, what baseness is, and what obscenity is, our labor is vain and we waste our effort. All theologians and casuists detest base comedies. Father Girolamo Fiorentini, in his *Theater Against Theater*, cites very many theologians, and even more benign casuists, against base comedies. He himself, with an assured pen, condemns both the performers and the spectators of comedies of mortal sin: *notably base*, he says, *and very obscene* comedies.

II. But neither he in his whole little work, nor several others whom I have read, distinctly explain what a base and very obscene comedy is. Hence readers profit nothing from reading them. Everyone cries out: Our comedies are by no means base; rather, they are far removed from obscenity, or at least they cannot be called notably base or very obscene. Under these wrappings of words they conduct the business of pleasure and venery most subtly; and the obscure manner of writing of not a few casuists has offered an occasion of error to them. Therefore, so that I may close every opening and passage of escape to these defenders of theaters and comedies, it must first be explained clearly and lucidly what baseness is and what a base and obscene comedy is.

III. Baseness, or obscenity, betrays a vice which either savors of lasciviousness or opens the way to lasciviousness. Baseness is one thing in words, another in the things signified by words. Base things can be expressed with honorable words, and chaste and honorable things can be conveyed by a base word. The baseness of words is the use of some term which, when regarded according to common judgment, estimation, and rule, offends chaste ears. The baseness, or obscenity, of things is the very matter of carnal pleasure; that is, it is the narration and representation of actions and deeds which lead, either immediately or closely, more or less, to venery, or prepare the way for it.

One kind of baseness is putrid: with filthy words, movements, and gestures it displays the image of profane love. Another is delicate: covered with cunning devices and paints, it depicts with a subtle brush the specter of pleasure and venery, and, through the well-ordered arrangement of words and figures, administers the bewitching potion of lust and instills it little by little without perception. I could confirm these conceptions or descriptions with examples, if that did not disgrace a Christian theologian. The sophistries and cavillings of casuists and of certain Christians have compelled me to premise so many distinctions, otherwise superfluous and therefore neglected by our Fathers.

IV. All present-day comedies which, by the craft of male and female mimes, represent and enact an affair of profane love and concupiscence under the veil of marriage are base both materially and formally. Materially, because they treat the matter of concupiscence, namely, the reciprocal love of a woman and a man, by which they are mutually joined; formally, because they strive to excite in the minds of the hearers delight concerning the argument which they treat. To this tend all the desires and efforts of the male and female mimes, so that they may entice to themselves a greater attendance of hearers. This is so true and well established that male and female mimes who do not entice us by the sweetness of their voice, by a delicate bending of the body, by a marvelous representation of gestures, and by the darts of their eyes, and who do not move the little hearts of the spectators, are rejected as inept, insipid, and coarse, because the attendance of spectators would continually cease.

This alone is the distinction of danger: some comedies, as I have indicated, promote delight in concupiscence by the putrid lasciviousness of words, sentiments, and gestures; others promote it more craftily, masked by a refined phrase of words. The former reveal the extreme wickedness of poets and comedians joined with extreme ignorance, but they do less harm to the bystanders, who are disgusted by a banquet prepared with coarse lard and seasoning that is excessively rich. The latter are more harmful to the spectators, and at the same time reveal poets who are both more wicked and more learned, who more cunningly and insidiously instill the poison of pleasure and more powerfully lead men to drink it. The former, not the latter, are commonly judged obscene and base, although it is certain that the latter are the more harmful to the extent that they display a greater appearance of honor. Of this kind are the dramas of a very celebrated poet, published many times, which offer the poison of pleasure the more efficaciously because they more delicately tickle and pluck the human heart, the senses, and concupiscence, and thus dominate the affections and drive them wherever they wish. This is especially true when there is added a vivid representation by little women, harmony, sweetness, and the other enchantments of theaters.

V. From this you have that present-day comedies are base and obscene under one single head, namely, from the matter of impure love which they treat. Baseness and obscenity increase under other heads. First, from the form of the clothing. In some places, more comely youths, and those closer to the female sex either in voice or in beauty, put on women's clothing, and that of the vainest kind. Why? Remove evasion and assign the cause: so that, under the appearance of a little sweetheart, each may plead with another youth an affair of reciprocal love and both may kindle mutual love. Here are two crimes of obscenity. The first is that men put on women's clothing. This is indeed a crime of abomination and detestation before God, who execrates this in Deuteronomy 22: *A woman shall not be dressed in a man's garment, nor shall a man use a woman's garment; for he who does these things is abominable.*

VI. What? Do men dressed in women's clothing who come forth upon the stage sin? Does not this custom prevail even in holy colleges themselves? Whether or not this corruption creeps into the houses of religious men, it does not thereby cast off its wickedness. For several years, under the discipline of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, I applied myself to humane letters; and never in the representations which are customarily made in their colleges did I see either an argument of profane love treated or youths adorned with women's clothing come forth upon the stage. I therefore make this known so that, when occasion is given, I may bear testimony to the truth. And I confirm it from the Rules of that illustrious Society itself. For in the book *Ratio Studiorum*, page 13, no. 25, these

things are contained: *The argument of tragedies and comedies, which ought to be in Latin and exceedingly rare, must be sacred and pious; nor may anything be inserted between the acts which is not Latin and decorous; nor may any female character or costume be introduced.*

Therefore, in whatever college this false transformation of clothing occurs, it is not without sin. Yet the superiors who permit it, and those who perform it, certainly suppose that they perpetrate no crime. But whatever they themselves may think, the divine command must be regarded, which all agree is not merely ceremonial, as some suppose, but also moral. Cornelius a Lapide has the following on the said chapter 22, verse 5: *This is indecent in itself: namely, that a man should lie by his clothing that he is a woman, or a woman should lie that she is a man; and also lest place be given to hidden lusts and other vices. For honorableness of clothing is the best guardian of chastity; for, as the Poet says:*

What modesty can a helmeted woman display, who flees from her sex?

Whence it appears that this precept is partly natural and partly ceremonial, and that it is now abolished insofar as it bound under mortal sin. For now it is not a mortal sin if a man or woman exchanges the garments of the sexes from levity, provided scandal, intention, and danger of lust are absent, as St. Thomas, Cajetan, and others teach.

VII. No milder interpretation can be devised. Yet even this very mild interpreter declares it indecent in itself for a man to lie by his clothing that he is a woman. He attests that this precept is partly natural. It is therefore evident and beyond controversy that those who put on women's clothing sin at least venially. Let us suppose no other wickedness than a venial one to be perpetrated. Is it lawful for Christians every year, at a fixed time, to open a school of crimes, even if venial ones? Is it permitted to approve and confirm such a profession by one's own presence? What of the fact that Cornelius a Lapide frees this false form of sex from mortal sin only in the case that it arises from levity, provided scandal, intention, and danger of lust are absent? What if this feigned transformation of sex is made not from levity but deliberately, and for the purpose of representing more vividly amorous arguments between little sweethearts of both sexes? Perhaps not even Cornelius a Lapide himself would exempt this lie about sex from grave scandal, from grave danger of lust, and therefore from a graver crime. What scandal is more criminal than to teach youth the art of love, the language of concupiscence, and its secrets? The men of the world cry out: In holy colleges themselves youths come forth upon the stage as women and enact an amorous affair. Why therefore will the same thing be lawful for you and not for us?

VIII. But let us hear the Fathers. St. Cyprian, book 1, letter 10, to Eucratius: *Since by the law men are forbidden to put on a woman's garment, and those of this kind are judged accursed, how much greater a crime it is not only to take women's clothing but also to express base, soft, and womanish gestures more earnestly by the teaching of an immodest art.* What cause is there why youths put on women's clothing in holy colleges, unless they are to represent women's affections and amorous allurements more exquisitely? If the clothing itself is a crime, what crimes will those be which pursue the end of this clothing?

IX. Augustine, book 2 of the *Soliloquies*, chapter 16: *I believe that those who display themselves in female attire are rightly held infamous and incapable of bearing testimony; I do not know whether I should better call them false women or false men. Nevertheless, without doubt we can call them actors and truly infamous.*

X. The Council in Trullo, canon 62: *We decree that henceforth no man shall be dressed in a woman's garment, nor a woman in a garment suitable to a man. Therefore those who henceforth undertake any of the things which have been written, when it has come to knowledge, if they are clerics, we order to be deposed; but if laymen, to be*

excommunicated. Excommunication is not inflicted for a venial crime. Prescription, or the opposing mask of custom, does not prevail against those things which by their very nature are vicious.

XI. The Council of Braga and the Roman Penitential, book 7, chapter 1: *He who has transformed his face in women's clothing, and a woman in the clothing of a man, after amendment has been promised, shall do penance for three years.*

XII. Clement of Alexandria, book 3 of the *Pedagogue*, chapter 3, writes these things: *This is the invention of broken men and of beasts inclined to lust.... Boys taught to deny nature feign women. O pitiable spectacle! O nefarious pursuit!... O how great is this iniquity!* I revere and admire the ancient legislators of the Romans because they held the pursuit of a womanish and effeminate life in hatred. And shortly afterward he concludes: *These must be called not men, but bataloi and little women.*

XIII. St. Thomas interprets the text of Deuteronomy in I-II, question 102, article 6, reply 6, and among many things teaches these: *Another reason is the avoidance of lust. For by the various mixtures in clothing, every disordered mixture of intercourse is excluded. But for a woman to put on a man's garment, or conversely, is an incitement to concupiscence and provides an occasion for lust*. Modern men, however, are so robust and heroic in chastity and are established above every dart of lust, that they deny entirely that this change of clothing offers an occasion of lust and is an incitement to concupiscence. St. Thomas expounds this same passage of Deuteronomy in II-II, question 169, article 2, reply 3, saying: *It is vicious in itself for a woman to use a man's clothing, or conversely, because this can be a cause of lasciviousness; and it is specially prohibited in the law.* The Angelic Doctor there excuses necessity alone from so great a depravity of baseness and abomination, and Sylvius explains it more fully in the same place.

XIV. Moreover, if this feigning of the female sex is vicious in itself and of itself and abominable before God, as Scripture and all the Fathers attest, it will surely be most vicious when it is undertaken for this end: that a woman's love and affections may be represented more vividly and that a sweeter spectacle may be offered to spectators and bystanders. To what dangers does a comely youth not expose himself when, adorned with women's ornament, he bursts forth upon the stage? The individual parts of women's clothing, which are very numerous, while he puts them on, are most apt for impressing the basest images upon the mind of such a youth. Shall I describe the specters of immodesty which the Demon sends in when the youth strives to bind and tighten his loins in a woman's manner, to swell out the breast, to paint the face, to fashion curls with the curling iron, to diffuse perfumes, to scatter powder, and to put on the other vain feminine enchantments?

What of the fact that by gesture, voice, gait, and bending of the body he strives with all his effort to counterfeit the part of a woman in love, and her deceits, enticements, cunning devices, snares, and craftiness? What shall I say of the other youth who plays the person of the lover of a woman? These youths are innocent, you say, and do not even perceive anything evil. Are those adolescents exempt from original sin, from concupiscence, and from the temptation of demons? It must therefore be one of two things: either demons and concupiscence never tempt those youths, or especially on this most opportune occasion they assail them with the specters and enchantments of softness and immodesty. The first cannot be said. Therefore the second is true.

The enormity of baseness and obscenity increases by reason of the time. For these things are performed during the interval of Carnival, when the whole world renews the superstition of the Bacchanals and concupiscence, from the public theaters of its pleasure, enlarges its dominion to the

incredible destruction of souls. What shall I say of that time when youths, reciprocal little lovers, commit those fables to memory? They conduct private skirmishes and prepare themselves so that, in the public scene, they may be able vividly to display the persons of a little woman and a man captivated by mutual love. It harms our cause that the things which are frequently done in those profane exercises cannot be related in speech.

XV. Hence I wish you to conclude that Holy Scripture, all the Fathers, the more grave theologians, the most lucid arguments, not to mention manifest experience, demonstrate that this feigned form of women's clothing is abominable before God, an incitement to lust, and a corrupter of innocent youth.

XVI. Finally, those comedies are very base and display the highest degree of theatrical obscenity in which male and female comedians, male and female mimes, or women themselves, having trampled upon and broken the bridle of modesty, come forth upon the stage together with their sweethearts to plead the cause of love or venery by the artifice of dances, the sweetness of song, the efficacy of speech, the bending of the whole body, and the language of the eyes, hands, and mouth. No one, unless he wishes to renounce both the Christian profession and the common sense of a sound mind, can deny that theaters of this kind are most base, not to say base beyond measure.

The true conception of theaters and comedies, therefore, must be taken not from the drama alone, or from the little book published in print, but from the consideration of all the circumstances: namely, from the modulation of the music, the sweetness of the singing, the movements, gesticulations, and sighs of the female dancers, female mimes, and actors, the clothing, the scenes, and the splendor and majesty of the other apparatus, and all the cunning devices which are employed on the stage to bewitch the senses and to entice and provoke concupiscence.

XVII. From the conception of theaters and comedies alone which has been premised, it necessarily follows that present-day comedies are very base and exceedingly obscene, because they consist of all those things which I have described, and of more which I have omitted. I could confirm what has been said by the agreement of all theologians and casuists. I shall now indicate one or two.

Giacomo Pignatelli, volume 8, consultation 153, no. 926, says: *Those comedies are base and foul in which men and women play, act, and converse about loves.* Father Rocaglia, in Noël Alexandre's *History*, century 4, chapter 6, no. 3, note 1, after relating the testimony of Girolamo Fiorentini against base and obscene comedies, adds: *To these must be added those comedies in which women, modulating sweetly and softly expressing the affections of the mind, with clothing also fashioned for lasciviousness, have very great power to assault innocence.*

Chapter IX — Present-Day Theaters Are Baser Than the Ancient Because in Ours, Unlike Theirs, Christian Women Act as Mimes

CHAPTER IX

Present-Day Theaters Are Baser Than the Ancient Because in Ours, Unlike Theirs, Christian Women Act as Mimes. Yet Even If the Ancient Theaters Were More Obscene, Present-Day Theaters Would Not on That Account Be Free of Obscenity and Baseness.

I. It is certain that in ancient times women sometimes came forth upon the stage, and Phrynichus is reported to have been the first who introduced them into the theater. Among the Lacedaemonians noble women, hired for payment, acted as mimes; the Lacedaemonians themselves afterward eradicated this corruption. Among the Romans women came forth naked in the Floralia, with their private parts covered; but they were prostitutes of ruined modesty, and only the dregs of the people attended those games, which were celebrated only once in the year. Tertullian makes mention of these women in chapter 17 of *On Spectacles*, saying that *filth is represented on the stage by women, and public victims of lust are brought forth upon the stage by women.* Chrysostom also, in several places and especially in homily 6 on chapter 2 of Matthew, detests so great a crime of women.

II. Except, however, for the Floralia, women did not come forth in Roman theaters, at least not commonly, to act as mimes. The testimonies of the Fathers concerning this are lucid, for everywhere they direct the curse of God against actors dressed in women's clothing. Tertullian says in chapter 23 of his book *On Spectacles*: *He is accursed in the law who is dressed in women's garments*, and so forth. St. Cyprian, book 1, letter 10, to Eucratius: *Since men are forbidden in the law to put on a woman's garment and those of this kind are judged accursed, how much greater a crime it is not only to seize women's clothing but also to express base, soft, and womanish gestures under the instruction of an immodest art*. Gregory Nazianzen, in Iambic Poem 3:

They basely cast off the form and dignity of men,
And break the male sex by bendings of the body;
At once they are women and at once men:
Not males, not females - I do not speak falsely -
For now they remain neither males nor females.

Clement of Alexandria mockingly calls the actors who come forth upon the stage adorned with women's clothing *bataloi* and little women. Lactantius, book 6 of the *Divine Institutes*, chapter 20, rebukes actors also under this head: that their enervated bodies, their womanish gait, and their dress imitate shameless women with dishonorable gestures.

III. Actors, therefore, in the age of the ancient Fathers commonly sustained the characters of women upon the stage. If women sometimes acted as mimes, it is gathered from the Fathers that they were not Christians; for none of the Fathers, so far as is established to me after reading them seriously, reproaches women because, with modesty overthrown, they violated the reserve and shame innate to their sex and the precepts of the Apostles Peter and Paul against the luxury, pomp, and wantonness of women. With what torrent of eloquence would the Fathers not have overwhelmed them if, with

brazen brow and having abjured their baptismal profession, they had acted as female mimes in the theater?

IV. The most learned Bossuet, in his treatise against comedies, pages 64 and 65, no. 17, asserts that the ancient theaters were immune at least from this corruption of female mimes: *They were exempt at least from this indecency which is seen among us, of bringing women onto the stage. The pagans themselves believed that a sex consecrated to modesty ought not thus to surrender itself to the public, and that this was a kind of prostitution.* The pagans themselves regarded it as a kind of prostitution for women consecrated to modesty to come forth into the theater.

V. What more? The author of *The Italian Theatre* himself asserts that in the age of the Fathers women did not act as mimes in the recitation of tragedies, comedies, and Atellan farces, saying in the preface, page 32: *I am obliged to demonstrate, in a separate dissertation which will be placed at the head of the second volume, that in the ancient dramas women did not act, but their part was sustained by men.*

VI. Father Girolamo Fiorentini, in his *Critique of Comedy*, conclusion 11, page 314, no. 839, teaches that women were not stage performers in ancient times, saying: *But that in those first times not real but feigned women appeared in spectacles, I produce witnesses greater than every exception: Tertullian, saying in chapter 17 that the pantomime destroys the sex of modesty; St. Cyprian, in the letter to Eucratius, that the Devil was pleased, as he stained the divine handiwork, by the crimes of a corrupted and enervated body; St. Gregory Nazianzen, in Iambic Poem 3, that they are at once women and at once males; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the Mystagogical Catecheses, who denounces the wantonness of mimes filled with every insult and shamelessness, and the dances of effeminate men; St. Jerome, in the letter to Salvina: "Let no actor softened into a woman walk beside you"; and St. Chrysostom, in homily 37 on chapter 11 of Matthew: "The youth has his hair drawn back behind him and strives, by making his appearance, clothing, gait, and other things of this kind effeminate, to reduce nature to the image of a tender little girl."*

And indeed Cecchini, a native of Ferrara, a famous actor and leader of actors, in the book which he published in the year 1616 in defense of honorable actors, asserts that the custom, already received in his own time, by which real women practiced the theater, had prevailed for fewer than fifty years. Thus, as I write this, a hundred years have now elapsed since so pernicious an abuse gained strength.

These things having been presupposed, and so many and such great witnesses of this truth having been adduced, he proves the present conclusion fully and efficaciously. Father Francisco Ribera, insofar as with strenuous words he deplores the calamity of the present time, in which real women are upon the stage, says that "greater fires may be kindled."

Father Thomas Hurtado objects against this that the ancient actors mingled together in the public theater and performed other wicked works, and that therefore the Fathers and Councils so severely execrate and reprehend them. But Hurtado does not appear to have sufficiently considered that ancient custom, by which real women did not act; for he would easily have understood that a mixture of this kind was not real but feigned and, as St. Augustine speaks, imaginary. And although St. Cyprian describes a man lying within a man, he nevertheless does not reprehend this other act under the name of mixture, but only as the dishonorable embrace of two persons entwining one another. If the holy Fathers are so rigidly indignant against crimes of this kind attempted between a man and a man, what, I ask, would they say today, when in public theaters, with the approval of rulers, at least tacit, they would see similar things, and when, if graver crimes are not completed with real women, as I hear, they are at least thus begun so as to be perpetrated in secret? Thus what Minucius Felix once said in the Octavius *is true: "The mime*

either sets forth adulteries or shows them; now the enervated actor, while he feigns love, inflicts it," and so forth. For what the mime or enervated actor then feigned, a fornicating woman now performs, so that spectators may be delighted more and greater incitements of lust may be stirred in them.

It remains, for the greater confirmation of this conclusion, that I note that those called stage women, of whom mention is very frequent among authors - and I recalled one above at no. 115 and others at no. 643 - were not actresses upon the stage, as Father Ottonelli easily believes in his book On the Christian Moderation of the Theater*, chapter 3, point 18, folio 106 in my copy, but were enslaved to public merriment in servitude to theatrical spectacles.* Thus far Father Girolamo Fiorentini.

VIII. Father Francisco Ribera, a most illustrious theologian of the Society of Jesus and a most celebrated interpreter of Holy Scripture, in his commentary on the twelve Minor Prophets, chapter 1 of Micah, no. 63, after transcribing St. Cyprian's keen declamation against the theaters and spectators of his time, with bitterest tears mourns the new corruption introduced and unknown to former centuries, namely, that women act as mimes upon the stage:

What would St. Cyprian do if he now sat in the theaters of Christians, if he watched the comedies which are performed? Males are no longer effeminated, but women themselves become men; a man is not broken into a woman, but a woman is strengthened into a man. It was not enough for the enemy of the human race that feigned baseness should be enacted; he brings forth real things. A woman comes forth upon the stage and acts a woman, the character which was accustomed to be acted by a man. And she moved less then. Now a beautiful female mime, adorned and ornamented in body but most base in morals, comes forth into the midst so that greater fires may be kindled. The same woman also acts a man, or a youth captivated by love; she mourns, is desperately in love, destroys, and exhibits to the eyes those things which ought to have been concealed in women and which, because they cannot be spoken honorably, are thought dishonorably. Bodies dance and bend lasciviously, and while avaricious husbands and fathers perhaps endure these things and worse, Aetna does not seethe with greater fires than the breasts of those who look and listen, and so forth.

Hear therefore, O kings, and understand; learn, judges of the ends of the earth; give ear, you who hold dominion over multitudes and please yourselves in crowds of nations, because power is given you by the Lord and strength by the Most High, who will question your works and search your thoughts. And because you are his ministers, as the Holy Spirit says, restrain these emissaries of the ministers of the Devil whom I have now mentioned. And I adjure you who are able to do so, by the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is to judge the living and the dead, and so forth.

No. 65. I also adjure all who will read these things - if anyone, however, should wish to read them - by the same Lord, that either in sermons, or in sacred confessions, or in private conversations, whenever occasion shall offer itself, they admonish kings and princes, royal senators, and governors of cities; and not only admonish them, but also adjure them through Jesus Christ to act severely against those corrupters of Christian morals, to remove those books from the midst, to banish far away the infamous male and female performers of comedies of this kind, and somehow to drain this foul sewer of the commonwealth. The judges and patrons of the Catholic faith would seem to me to do a thing worthy of their office and of the zeal of their office if, just as they prohibit by public edict books suspected of doctrine, so also they prohibit those of which I have spoken. For just as the former corrupt the faith, so the latter corrupt good morals and chastity, whence the passage to heresies is easy and whence all heretics began. For the passage to heresies is not made from charity, humility, prayer, fasting, penance, and self-denial, but from an immoderate love of the world, swelling of spirit, forgetfulness of God, feasting and drunkenness, leisure and lust, and blind love of oneself.

VII. Before I proceed farther, it concerns my cause to indicate briefly how greatly this most celebrated Jesuit shone with holiness of morals and abundance of sacred learning. Among many things, Father Philippe Alegambe writes the following concerning him in his *Library of Writers of the Society of Jesus*, page 132 of the first edition: *He withdrew to his native town so that he might devote himself wholly to the study of sacred letters and join scholastic doctrine to it as a greater foundation, aided by the protection of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, in which he was exceedingly skilled.... He used the aid of prayer, which he practiced at length by day and night, for understanding Sacred Scripture. He added frequent fasts and more severe mortifications of the body; and if some more involved difficulty occurred, he would withdraw for several days and prepare his spirit for divine visitations by spiritual exercises. They say that when he was once preaching he was seen to shine with a great splendor around him, and that Christ the Savior, resting with serene countenance upon the shoulders of him as he spoke, cherished him as though in an embrace.... On the third day after his death he was seen on high in heaven, near the throne of God and conspicuous with much glory; from the breast of God a ray of light was directed into his breast, which at once suffused him with a most beautiful appearance and with joy. This reward was attributed to him because in his writings he had regarded nothing flowing and perishable, but only the worship and service of the one Majesty.*

IX. Behold the wisest Jesuits, whom I set before myself as masters to be revered and followed: men who in their writings regard nothing flowing and perishable, but only the worship and service of the one Majesty. Thus this most learned and most pious Jesuit presses upon us three things to be reconsidered. First, that in the age of the holy Fathers women did not come forth upon the stage to act as female mimes and comedians. Hence, burning with divine fervor, he cries out: What would Cyprian now do if he sat in Christian theaters and watched women themselves, adorned, painted, and caparisoned with all the pomps of the Devil, act as mimes to the utter destruction of modesty, shame, and chaste youth?

Second, he urges and compels everyone, whether in sermons, in sacred confessions, or in private conversations, to admonish kings, princes, senators, and governors of cities; and not only to admonish them, but also to adjure them through Jesus Christ to act severely against male and female comedians. Mourning, the most pious Father Ribera cries out: What would Cyprian do if he now sat in Christian theaters? Groaning, I too cry out: What if Father Ribera lived among us at present and heard some men, both in speech and in writing, urging access to the theaters?

The third thing which Father Ribera counsels us to meditate upon more deeply is what I expounded at length in the preceding preface: namely, that from a soft, idle, voluptuous life; from theaters, shameless comedies, and the love of women; and from swelling of spirit, there arise heresies and finally impiety itself, whether positive or negative - that is, the indifferentism and indolence which dominate and everywhere prevail in our age - which, with Christ the Savior assisting, I shall in due time depict in vivid colors and attack to the extent of my strength.

X. If I abounded in leisure, I could adduce other witnesses by whom I would prove that in the ancient age of the Fathers women, at least Christian women, did not act in the theater. Tertullian, Chrysostom, and others sometimes make mention of little stage women because they really did appear in the Floralia and because, as Father Girolamo Fiorentini observes, those little women were enslaved to the service of theatrical affairs and of the actors.

XI. What will the defenders of the theaters of our age say to these things - men who are in no way ashamed to reproach theologians with ignorance and want of knowledge of the doctrine of the

Fathers? Men who dare boastfully to proclaim that they write in defense of religion, while they lay snares for religion and recommend to Christians that they see and hear male and female mimes who display the allurements of profane love? To reduce them to extremity: either women recited comedies from the stage in the age of the Fathers, or they did not. If the first, our theaters are equally base with the ancient, especially because today's women, unlike the ancient, are Christians. If the second, ours are baser than the ancient. Father Ribera therefore rightly cries out: What would Cyprian do now, what Chrysostom, what Augustine, what Jerome, what Bernard, what Thomas Aquinas, what Antoninus, what Charles Borromeo, if they watched Christian women practicing as female mimes in the theater? For it is beyond controversy that in the age of St. Thomas Aquinas, Antoninus, and Charles Borromeo women did not come forth upon the stage. Therefore those who thrust forward the doctrine of St. Thomas in defense of the theaters of our age err vehemently.

XII. They object: theaters in which castrated youths, adorned with women's clothing and smeared with paint, perform are baser and more obscene. For those wanton eunuchs, so that they may counterfeit the female sex more vividly, burst forth and are broken into movements, gesticulations, postures, and embraces more shameless and more bereft of modesty than those of the little women themselves. For this commonly happens in every imitation: that the predetermined limits of the prototype are overstepped. What follows from this? Nothing except that theaters from which women are excluded are also base, as were the ancient ones. Does it therefore follow that theaters in which women act as mimes are chaste? Those who make this objection, says St. Basil, either do not know how the very modesty of women itself is a most effective enticement and allurement for softening even the iron breasts of men, or they are a most marvelous beast, midway between the two natures.

What? That great man Augustine confesses in book 3, chapter 2, of the *Confessions* that he was captivated by the allurements of the theaters: *Then in the theaters I rejoiced with lovers when they enjoyed one another through crimes, although these things were enacted only imaginatively in the play of the spectacle.* And do the corrupted, effeminate men of our most corrupt age boast that they are stronger than Augustine amid the allurements of little matrons? Did Solomon not speak of them in Ecclesiasticus, chapter 9: *Gaze not upon the appearance of a strange woman; many who admired it became reprobate. For her conversation blazes like fire.*

No one possessed of reason can deny that those theaters are more obscene and are the sewer of more crimes in which men and women, loaded with the whole feminine world - that is, the pomp of the Devil - with gems and paints, sustain and act the characters of a lover and his sweetheart. For to what end do the most wanton women, who come forth upon the stage not with masked face but with a most shameless brow, direct their gesticulations, songs, dances, and bendings, unless to delight, titillate, and soften the spectators and to pour lasciviousness into their minds? How many most noble youths, driven mad by love of female dancers and singers, squander their patrimonies, overturn their houses, and bring mourning and infamy upon their entire posterity! But discussion of this will return below.

XIII. But if I am asked which extreme is worse - whether comely, castrated youths in women's clothing and ornament, or women themselves, are brought upon the stage - I answer first that desire for the female sex extends more broadly and more powerfully inflames the hearts of all men, even of those who burn with a nefarious love of boys, not to mention honorable men. The love of a man toward a woman is according to nature; toward boys, against nature. God implanted in the bodies of

both sexes the heat of mutual desire, by which they might seek and join one another for propagating the human race. Second, I say that a greater evil threatens when women attend the theater: for when elegant youths act as mimes upon the stage, men are greatly kindled and inflamed; but when beautiful and wanton girls, lasciviously adorned, come forth upon the stage sustaining the characters of female mimes, they are kindled more vehemently. Behold the certain resolution of the little question.

XIV. At the end of this chapter I wish to press somewhat more strongly those clever men who are by no means ashamed to babble that the holy Fathers rightly inveighed against the theaters of their times because they were excessively obscene and shameless, but that those same declamations cannot be turned against the theaters of our age because ours are honorable and chaste. Those who pour out such things proclaim that they have not read the Fathers and reveal that they are ignorant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Come, then; let us touch briefly upon the reasons of the Fathers and the excuses of Christians in this cause. Christians then cried out that those theaters were honorable, just as our people cry out now, as was shown by the testimonies of the Fathers adduced. They murmured then that they were touched by no depraved affection, just as they boast now. They objected then, just as now, that they attended the theaters for recreation of spirit and lawful solace.

What did the Fathers reply? We have already brought forward their reasons. They especially emphasized the allurement and softness of song and music. They cried out that the song was fornicating and the music meretricious. But all, to a man, who are most skilled in the art of music assert and attest that the singing of our age is softer than that and its music more effeminate. They cried out that the concourse of men and women flowing together there, where they led the pomp and vanities of dress in triumph and where each man and woman sees and is seen, was a reef of chastity. They opposed the dangers spontaneously undertaken, the splendor and majesty of the scenes, the scandal which the spectators introduced, the presence which they lent to the exercise of the infamous histrionic art, and the grave crime by which they polluted themselves through that presence and attendance alone.

XV. Proceed farther. Are Christian women now more modest than the Christian women of that age? Did the pomps of vanity, luxury, and pride flow more widely then than now? Are our stages humbler? Do female and male mimes now practice the art of loving less vividly than then? Do they now devote themselves less effectively than then to the study of pleasing their hearers? But how can they please them unless they soothe the senses, enchant the ears, kindle concupiscence, pride, ambition, or anger, and teach deceits? Are male and female mimes now simpler than then? More stupid? Less changeable and cunning? Are the women more modest? More bashful? Is the art of love lawful now, but not then? Finally, if the matters or arguments represented in the age of the Fathers are considered, are the tragedies recited today in our theaters more modest than the tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides, and Seneca?

Who, unless he is utterly unskilled, will deny that many present-day comedies and tragedies are far baser and more apt for softening spirits and corrupting morals? Therefore those who publish abroad that the theaters which prevailed in the age of the Fathers were rightly reprobated but that ours cannot likewise be condemned reveal that they are ignorant of learning, of the doctrine of the Fathers, and of the Gospels of Jesus Christ; and unless they repent, they will pay eternal penalties for their ignorance. For just as, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, our times, being nearer to the

last age, abound in greater wickedness, so also the theaters are more obscene, more shameless, and more criminal.

O men, men! Impiety, infidelity, and unbelief, with their forces united, attack the whole Christian religion in this most unhappy age of ours, and strive to overthrow it both with satirical speech and with most criminal little books, making a violent assault. And meanwhile do those very men who wish to be called Christians, theologians, and... not fear to babble that theaters may now lawfully be frequented? Impiety ranges everywhere; and at the same time do all things breathe honorableness, modesty, and innocence?

XVI. What more? Did not all the councils, all the bishops, all the Doctors of the Church, and the holy men who succeeded the Fathers of the first five centuries adopt the doctrine of those same Fathers and allege it against theaters down to these very times? Was the Church ignorant of the doctrine of the ancient Fathers? Did the councils and the holy Doctors of our latest age unskillfully bring forward the doctrine of Tertullian, Cyprian, Basil, Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and Augustine against theaters? The present-day antiquarians and petty scholars who defend comedies must therefore do one of two things: either they themselves must deny the tradition of all centuries which detests theaters, or they are compelled to confess their own ignorance.

XVII. But so that I may close off every hiding place for escape, I myself willingly grant that the theaters which prevailed in the age of the holy Fathers were baser, more obscene, and more shameless. Above, in chapter 2, I recounted certain pagan emperors who restrained the excessive shamelessness and lasciviousness brought into the theaters. Imagine also that the very comedies and tragedies of the poets provoked to lust more shamelessly and vehemently. These things, and as many more as you wish, I do not refuse to grant you with the greatest liberality. What follows from this? Because the ancient theaters were most base, are the present honorable? Because those were most obscene, are ours chaste? Because the ancient were most shameless, are ours modest? If the truth of the fact is considered, just as in our age some theaters are base, others baser, and others most base, so also it happened in ancient times.

Nevertheless, to reduce the defenders of the theaters of our age to extremity, let the ancient theaters, so far as I am concerned, have been, as I have said, most base, most obscene, and most shameless: our theatrical men can gather no protection from this. For, with every comparison between the ancient and present-day theaters removed, from the most certain notions which I have given and which lie beyond the hazard of dispute, I shall clearly demonstrate that those who frequent present-day theaters sin gravely, even if they were less obscene and less shameless than the ancient. It is enough for me that our theaters are not immune from baseness and obscenity, so that I may rightly infer that they are unlawful and harmful to all Christians.

The dispute, therefore, whether the ancient theaters were more obscene and shameless than ours, having been dismissed, the present controversy comes down to this: whether present-day theaters are obscene and base, either by the nature of the argument treated or by reason of the words, gestures, clothing, singing, music, dances, and other conditions by which they are represented to hearers. These are, as we have said elsewhere and as must be repeated more often, the boundaries of our dispute, within which we have resolved to confine our adversaries - that is, the champions of theatrical pleasure and mimetic baseness.

XVIII. These matters having been touched upon, and the conception of the theaters of our age having been clearly expounded, I enter upon the cause. I give only this warning beforehand: there are very many and indeed cunning evasions, and innumerable sophisms, by which men too devoted to the pleasures of the age strive to paint over the corruption of theaters. For this reason the discourse will run farther than would otherwise be fitting. For a cause which is exposed to many cavillings and entangled in various passages of escape cannot be touched upon in a few words.

Many will accuse our discourse of being verbose and declamatory. But I count these censures as nothing. This is not because I am so senseless as to consider my diction immune from many blemishes - indeed I acknowledge it to be faulty - but because those censors are wholly ignorant of the method of conducting a cause in which we undertake to instruct and form morals. I strive to follow the same road which all the wisest and most eloquent Fathers of the Church traversed. Matters which serve only for convincing the mind admit even a geometrical style and method. But when we undertake combat against a prevailing corruption which rages everywhere and is fixed more deeply in men's hearts, then, besides the weight of reasons which subject the understanding, the force of eloquence must also be employed in defense of the cause, and repeated blows are needed so that inveterate and destructive customs may be torn out.

By vivid figures and a raised voice the will must be subdued and the senses beaten down. The battle line of arguments must be directed now under one aspect, now under another, so that victory may be obtained. The disposition of spectators is various, their minds diverse, their affections opposed. One is convinced by this reasoning; another is captured by another argument, another manner of speaking, another figure, according to the diversity of spirits and affections. Thus I judge. If others judge otherwise, let each abound in his own sense.

Chapter X — Christian Women Who Come Forth upon Present-Day Stages to Act as Mimes Sin Mortally and Are in a State of Damnation Together with Their Actors, No One of Sound Mind Dissenting

CHAPTER X

Christian Women Who Come Forth upon Present-Day Stages to Act as Mimes Sin Mortally and Are in a State of Damnation Together with Their Actors, No One of Sound Mind Dissenting. The Pretext of Marriage, beneath Whose Veil Stage Impurities Are Customarily Covered, Is Rejected as an Inept Invention.

I. The truth proposed must be mourned with the bitterest tears rather than confirmed by reasons. Nothing in Sacred Scripture is more frequent than modesty and shame implanted in the female sex; than the destruction of souls which flows from a woman adorned, vain, and bereft of shame; than vigilance and caution in turning the eyes away from her; and than the need to avoid familiar friendship, conversation, and company with her. I would fill several pages if I wished to report the divine testimonies pertaining to this. It is enough to indicate the things St. Paul teaches in chapter 2 of the First Epistle to Timothy, where he forbids women even to teach the divine law: *I do not permit a woman to teach*, and so forth. He orders that they adorn themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly clothing; that they learn in silence with all subjection; and finally that they pray in church with veiled head.

This is, says St. Thomas on chapter 10 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, *on account of the priests and for their caution, lest from the sight of unveiled women they be provoked to concupiscence.* Paludanus, in book 4, distinction 16, says that Barnabas cursed men who played with women.

II. Christian women who are female mimes renounce the modesty and shame implanted by nature; they trample upon silence and reserve; and they carry in triumph luxury, pride, and the most vain pomps which they abjured in Baptism. There is no clothing and no garment so vain, so shameless, so lascivious, that the most shameless female mimes, stripped of all reserve, do not assume it. Therefore, adorned all around with all the pomps, paints, enticements, and enchantments of the Devil, they come forth upon the stage to exercise the teaching either of venery, pride, anger, or ambition; to teach young men and girls the art of loving one another and of mocking and deceiving one another; to enchant the eyes and ears of all the spectators by sweetness of song and nimbleness of dancing; to kindle concupiscence and exalt ambition and pride; and, the more fitted they are to produce all these things, the greater an attendance of hearers they entice to the theater and the greater a sum of gold, applause, and approval they obtain for themselves.

Moreover, town by town, together with the actors, these female mimes - Christians, if it please the gods - traverse Italy, Germany, and all Europe if occasion brings it. They play with the actors, converse with them, and exult; in turn they animate one another to instill pleasure, lust, and softness into the minds of their hearers. They spend their whole time and life itself in learning the fables of poets and in representing them. They continually have their mind and tongue fixed in the mire of Venus and in the art of advancing amorous business, ambition, pride, and the excitation of the passions.

III. Who would not affirm that this is an infernal society; that those female and male mimes are missionaries and pseudo-apostles of demons, deserters of the Christian religion, and most infamous ministers who strive with every effort and art to destroy the Kingdom of Christ and to establish and enlarge the tyranny of the Devil? Therefore, female and male mimes who represent present-day comedies and tragedies perpetrate not one most grave crime but a multitude of crimes, and they open a school of every vice.

IV. Although this truth is established beyond the hazard of dispute and cannot be called into doubt by anyone of sound mind, nevertheless, because there is nothing so unspeakable that it is not defended by someone today, I wish to confirm by the authority even of the more benign casuists the things which have thus far been said both in the preceding chapter and in this one.

V. Father Francesco del Monaco, Cleric Regular Theatine, in *Paraenesis*, class 4, page 27: *Those comedies are base in which there is treatment of the secret affairs of lovers, the adulteries of spouses, the secret arts, poisons, and loves of prostitutes, pimps, girls, and young men; and, to speak more distinctly, those are base and foul in which men and women play, act, and converse about loves. Since, therefore, in the comedies of our time which are exhibited by these venal little prostitutes and actors, both men and women come forth upon the stage, deal with loves of this kind, converse before the stage, dance, and play, it also remains most certain and evident that all the comedies of our time are obscene, dishonorable, and base.*

I define it thus: I have heard no one call the comedies of our time honorable except authors of basenesses or their favorers - only those men who, so that they may carry out and repeat the foulest crimes with greater immunity, cover them with a feigned veil of honorableness, wrap them in the name of wicked license or in the custom of the ages, and say that this is lawful and not dishonorable.

VI. Luca da Penne, on law 51, chapter *On Scenic Spectacles*: *What would the holy Fathers say, what the pious authors who in every age proclaimed against the histrionic art, if in our time they saw women themselves - whom, without the crime of rashness, I judge to be shameless - acting promiscuously with men in the theater?*

VII. Father Reginald of the Society of Jesus, in *On the Prudence of the Confessor*, chapter 3, section 8, teaches that *it is not to be permitted that in comedies and the spectacles of games lascivious women should come forth upon the stage; this is a corruption of morals unworthy of the Christian name.*

VIII. Niccolò Baldelli, book 3, disputation 19, no. 2: *The poets and actors sin mortally by the sin of scandal if the comedy is very base and greatly excites to venereal things.... And those in which women converse appear especially to be of this kind. For hearing their voices is much more dangerous to the life of souls than hearing the hiss of the basilisk is to the life of bodies, as St. Augustine teaches*, and so forth.

IX. Giovanni Battista Frugoso, *On the Rule of a Christian Commonwealth*, part 1, book 1, disputation 2, question 4, no. 181: *From the things said, infer what must be said concerning comedies exhibited in the vernacular language, where many shameless and obscene things are mingled and where younger women are introduced to sing and dance, who by gesture, gait, and wanton gesticulation lead the hearers and spectators to base love*, and so forth. *I answer that this is in itself a mortal sin, that the actors are in a state of damnation, and that the spectators for the most part sin mortally. This is deduced from St. Thomas.* Cajetan, Sylvester, Soto, and Alexander of Hales say the same.

X. Father Antonino Diana, coordinated volume 7, tract 5, resolution 11, no. 2, says these things: *I say, therefore, that when a woman fears that she may be loved lasciviously by a particular person, she is bound to guard*

herself in public and to abstain from an action that occasions another's ruin, when she can do so without grave proportionate harm; for we are bound to avoid the sins of others when we conveniently can. Hence it must be deduced that a woman sins when she goes to this church for the sacred rite, where there is someone by whom she is basely loved, when she can conveniently go to another church free of that danger; likewise, when she goes along this street while able conveniently to go by another; when she hears the sound of the horse carrying her lover and, without necessity, presents herself at the window to be seen; when she speaks words in the presence of her lover by which he is to be inflamed, if she can remain silent without an appearance of incivility; likewise, when she leaves the house knowing that she is awaited in order to be seen, if there is then no necessity.

XI. All theologians, and not theologians only but even the laxer casuists, with no one dissenting, confirm this doctrine of Diana. Moreover, if a woman sins when she is about to go to the temple of God to hear the sacred rite, when she can avoid the scandal of a man who loves her, how many crimes, I ask you, will a woman perpetrate when she approaches the sanctuary of Venus, fortified with a more exquisite and elegant ornament of vanities and pomps, so that by her love, gesture, tongue, eyes, and song she may arouse all the spectators? Therefore, in the judgment even of the mildest theologians, women, especially Christian women, sin most gravely and turn all the crimes of the spectators upon themselves when they come forth upon the stage to plead the cause of profane love.

XII. Nor may you object that these female mimes receive the Sacraments from confessors, since usurers, adulterers, fornicators, and pimps also frequent the Sacraments. And this is the extreme calamity of all the evils of our age. But more fully concerning this in its own place.

XIII. Even the defenders of spectacles themselves cannot rightly deny that theaters are schools of the amorous business and incitements to the violation of chastity, since the comedies and tragedies themselves are full of these loves of little women and men. Therefore, so that they may offer some veil of honorableness to the disgraceful art, they say that those amorous representations are directed toward marriage and have marriage in view. Let it be so. What follows? Do they therefore kindle the foul pitch of concupiscence less in the spectators? Marriage brings it about only that mutual love and intercourse between spouses are honorable by reason of the mutual pledge of the contract and Sacrament and the perpetual bond.

But what effect does marriage produce in the spectators and hearers of the amorous business? Does it restrain concupiscence in them? Does it render lawful and honorable the venereal delight excited by the mimetic representation? So that the frivolity of a pretext of this kind may appear more clearly, imagine a very beautiful and highly adorned young wife coming forth upon the stage together with her husband, each provoking the other to marital embraces and vividly representing the actions of married life. Would they inflame the concupiscence of the spectators less? Would they inflame and pollute the eyes and ears less if they were bound by no marriage? Concupiscence and the human senses are struck and provoked by their proper object. They neither perceive nor care for the name and meaning of marriage; they gape and pant for pleasure alone. Nothing more inept, therefore, can be thrust forward to render theatrical impurities honorable than marriage, which makes the office of concupiscence lawful for spouses alone, but not for others.

Chapter XI — Certain Considerations of Reason Which Prove That the Theatrical Entertainments of Our Age Are Depraved and Full of Crimes

CHAPTER XI

Certain Considerations of Reason Which Prove That the Theatrical Entertainments of Our Age Are Depraved and Full of Crimes.

I. Nothing have poets ever held more important, from the very origin of their art onward, than to purge comedies and tragedies not only of the stain of every crime but even to claim for them the splendor of honorableness. To what end, they say, do dramatic poems, comedies, and tragedies tend, unless to arouse a horror of vices and an affection for virtue? Theaters are schools in which the hideous face of crimes, their fatal consequences, punishments, and torments are depicted in their native colors; and, on the other hand, so are the characters, prerogatives, and rewards of the virtues. With these petty reasonings - or rather, trifles - they strive to put a gloss upon things for the credulous rabble.

And as far as this is concerned, in one respect they deserve something for themselves, if not pardon, at least compassion. For who has ever abominated his own art and his own offspring? From where would they obtain wages, praises, and applause? There are also many things which urge the spectators of comedies to defend their honorableness. Chief among them is this: that they may blunt the stings of a barking conscience, so that calmly, and with every admixture of bitterness driven away, they may gorge themselves upon every pleasure and diversion.

But so that we may easily evade all the sophisms, we judge only this warning necessary: at present we are by no means instituting a discourse about spectacles and comedies considered, as it were, in some metaphysical meditation. For who, if he is rightly minded, would dare deny that poets, if they wish, can draw subjects from the principles of Christian philosophy and inflame the minds of men to persecute vices and cultivate virtue? If this can be done in prose, why not also in verse? Certain holy Fathers of the Church, and even most pious modern poets, have accomplished this. My discourse, therefore, concerns the spectacles which are performed in these times and which I delineated in the preceding chapter. Those who wish to purge these of the stains of crimes draw water with a sieve and wash an Ethiopian, as the experience of all centuries has established.

II. From the many considerations of reason which have been indicated more fully and here and there by the Fathers against spectacles, I shall touch briefly upon a few, so that the reader may be able to contemplate them together under a single view. Moreover, so that, as far as can be done, we may cut everything to the quick, I am willing freely to grant that recent poets observe - what is generally false - every rule of modesty, reserve, and chaster speech. What follows? Are not the aims of all poets, and the very precepts of the poetic art, directed solely to this: that they may please their hearers, caress the senses, excite the passions, and kindle love? Do they not choose for treatment those subjects which they judge more powerful for exciting these passions? Let all comedies, tragedies, and tragicomedies, both ancient and recent, be examined: do they treat subjects other than love, hatred, anger, revenge, despair, or cruelty? But what they treat more frequently is the cause of love. This subject is more pleasing, more powerful for kindling concupiscence, and more effective for increasing the attendance of hearers.

They pursue two paths in order to obtain their wishes. Some, with obscene words, present base deeds and naked Venus to the eyes with brazen brow and without any sought-for disguise. Others, more skilled in their art, temper and conceal the monstrous poison of lust with poetic honey, as Horace says. With exquisite art they depict the deceits, frauds, snares, and assaults of lovers. They represent those lovers now as near to happiness, now cast down into the extremity of miseries, now joined in sweet embraces, now drawn apart into distant regions. What if I were to recount the sweet conversations by which they provoke one another? They distinguish all these things by figures and tropes so that they may pierce the soul and mind. They veil them with so many paints and allurements that they may savor of nothing sordid, but of an honorable and tender benevolence. Beneath this amiable appearance they penetrate hearts more safely and enter their innermost recesses. There they gradually titillate concupiscence and kindle its sparks.

The poets of the former kind, although they are exceedingly criminal if their intention of doing harm and spreading the plague is considered, are nevertheless in fact less harmful and less destructive, for their putrid foulness induces nausea and disgust. Those of the latter kind, however, produce a more fatal destruction of souls the less malice they display. The satirical sayings, witty remarks, and jests with which they sprinkle their discourses, and by which they boast that they offer vices to be ridiculed, are certain choice condiments which sweetly titillate the palate and irritate and provoke the appetite still more. Poets of this kind are entirely like those women who display a false image of a certain reserve, shame, and modesty, and who therefore pretend with elaborate cunning to resist and contradict the first advances, because they have learned by experience that by this road they invite lovers more effectively and attach their minds to themselves by this artful prelude, so that they may arrive where they are striving to go. For goods freely offered lose their value, and dishes which abound in excessive richness disturb the stomach.

Therefore they defend their dramatic poems as honorable and innocent ineptly, altogether foolishly. For the subjects which they treat, those of love and benevolence, by their own nature warm and kindle concupiscence; and the more polished and chaste the language they employ, the more deeply those subjects penetrate, strike, and kill. The sacred heralds of God expose to lustful eyes the most dreadful eternal punishments, illuminated by the lights of divine faith. They open that horrible furnace of the fire of Tartarus and strain every sinew of heavenly eloquence; they magnify in graver words every terrible thing that can strike fear and restrain the appetites; they do not cease to recall even the bodily diseases which men contract when they drink down the poison. And yet what harvest do they gather? And do poets become so insane as to persuade themselves that, by rubbing lasciviousness with certain Plautine salts, jests, and little quips, men can be aroused to detest it at the very time when, with the apparatus of every allurement, they teach and instill love of it? These are chimeras and monstrosities which poets alone would dare fabricate.

Tell me: is it lawful for a Christian to kindle sparks of profane love, to provoke concupiscence, and to fascinate all the senses with vain spectacles? What do you reply? You say that the loves which are aroused have chaste marriages in view. But this fiction is worse than the others. Does concupiscence kindled by the representation of the amorous business think about marriage? Nothing less. The actors in comedies, just like the spectators, have nothing less in mind than marriage. They enjoy the pleasure at hand. Marriage is holy, not as an exercise of carnal pleasure, but as an instrument of

human procreation. But it would take too long to pursue every point. Let us hasten to the weightier matters.

III. If the subjects of profane love, strengthened both by their own nature and by the elaborate artifice of poets, exercise dominion over the heads and almost over the fortunes of men, who will be able to disclose that incredible force which they acquire from the most vivid representation of comedians and actors? What, I ask, is more powerful for enchanting the eyes than an expressive hand? What is more effective for caressing the ears than harmonious voices? What, finally, is more powerful for exciting the whole troop of the passions, for softening hearts, and for bending the will itself in whatever direction you wish, than the gesticulations of women? Before they come forth upon the stage, do not both actors and actresses instruct all the members of the body for speech, so that they may be able more successfully to express everything to the life? Add the majesty of the scenes, the splendor of the garments, the paints of the faces, the mutual desire to please, reciprocal sympathy, harmonious concerts, and dances not sufficiently modest. Tell me, please: if these things are not stumbling blocks to chastity and dangers to innocence, what will be? Augustine confessed that he was carried away by these spectacles: *The theatrical spectacles carried me away, full of images of my miseries and tinder for my fire.* Will you then stand unmoved and undisturbed? Are the men of our age stronger than Augustine, wiser than Solomon, holier than David, more robust than Samson?

IV. Thus far we have made manifest the wickedness of spectacles by considerations drawn from human reason alone. The discourse must now be raised higher and recalled to the precepts of the Christian law. The heart of man, whose happiness is love, can rest in God alone, whom it is bound to prefer to all creatures. It endures violence, sadness, and torments when it wanders from this, its one center. Moreover, nothing draws men away from God more vehemently and effectively than spectacles. For these collect the scattered and various delights of earthly things into one, contract them into a compendious image, paint them with charms and enchantments, and devote every effort to concealing and covering over the sadness, troubles, anguish, and innumerable inconveniences which they produce. And the more they exalt sensible blandishments and pleasures, the more they cloud the splendor of eternal glory and draw men farther away from it.

For men accustomed to these false delights and simulacra of happiness disdain divine and eternal goods. A mind saturated with the banquets of obscene thoughts belches forth nothing but lust and holds heavenly joys in hatred. And this is one of the principal reasons for which Augustine teaches that Christians must be kept away from theaters: namely, that spectacles, while they fill the mind with false images, draw it away from truth and fasten the soul in the mire of carnal pleasures. Hence it happens that spectators, drunk with the wine of prostitution, drink the cup of slumber and drain it to the dregs.

V. It is added that spectacles of this kind render Christians unfit for almost all the duties of the evangelical religion. Christ commands, and presses more deeply upon us, that we pray continually, meditate upon the last things, despise laughter and worldly joys, wash away the stains of sins with tears, restrain carnal appetites, and declare war upon flesh and blood. But what conflicts so directly and openly with those divine laws as the frequent viewing of spectacles? What is so hostile to the pursuit of prayer, meditation, mortification of the flesh, and Christian penance necessary for eternal salvation as that devotion which the followers and devotees of comedies profess with deliberate and obstinate mind? For they caress their senses, fatten the flesh most delicately, and indulge in the

pleasures of this age. I wish you would say whether Turks, Hebrews, or pagans of any age devote so much labor to the art of satisfying carnal appetites as those Christians expend who habitually frequent comedies and spectacles.

VI. Christ, through the voice of the Apostle Paul, admonishes and commands that all things be done for God, and that every action and even the pleasures of drinking, sleeping, and eating be referred to his glory. Can deliberate and frequent visits to spectacles be referred to the glory of God? Do the applause with which the spectators of comedies offer sacrifice to actors and female dancers; or the sweet conversations by which, from adjacent boxes, they address their female companions and call them goddesses, their little hearts, their souls, and their very vitals through sacrilegious idolatry, conduce to the glory of God? What of the fact that these spectacles disturb not only the duties of the Christian profession but also civil affairs themselves, the administration of offices, the administration of justice, and the order of the whole polity? They turn night, destined for sleep and rest, into day, and conform the custom of human life to the habits of beasts. *Night was made; in it all the beasts of the forest shall pass through. The sun arose, and the followers of scenic games and dice gathered in their beds.* What shall I say of the loss of time, what of vain conversations?

VII. Another precept of the evangelical law forbids providing others with an occasion to sin. This is one of the chief characteristics of Christian instruction: namely, to remove not only ourselves but also our brethren from the danger of sinning. By the force of all laws, the profession of comedians and actors is infamous and criminal. Nor may you reply that this is true of the ancient profession of pagan actors. For we have proved that present-day spectacles, as far as morals are concerned, savor equally, and sometimes more, of pagan wickedness.

And, to say this in passing, who will be so brazen as to dare defend as honorable that profession in which a Christian woman comes forth upon the proscenium and there, now as an actress, practices the art of loving, dancing, and singing, so that by the gestures of her hands, the artful motions of her feet, and the movement of her whole body she may fascinate the eyes, caress the ears, and kindle the pitch of impure love? Does not the whole world regard theatrical women in the place of little prostitutes? But if you refuse to concede all these things - although not only these things, but even worse things, are most true - tell me, please: where in this woman is the shame, modesty, and reserve which St. Paul and the evangelical law so severely command women that even in the very temple of God it advises them to veil their heads on account of the angels? Therefore do not equivocate. Unless you wish to renounce reason and the common and innermost sense of all, you must at least confess the profession of female dancers in theaters to be shameless, unbridled, immodest, and dishonorable. If the profession of actresses is vicious, that of the actors with whom they dance, act, and associate must also be culpable.

Since these things are so, does it not follow by a necessary inference that you sin gravely whenever you frequent theaters, even for this reason alone: that by your presence you offer and foster an occasion of sinning to the comedians and the other spectators? Whichever way you turn, you will not escape. For you sin either because you indulge carnal allurements, or because you assent to lascivious thoughts, or because you expose yourself to the danger of assenting, or because you spend time uselessly, or because you squander money, or because you are a scandal to others - that is, you provide an occasion of sinning and nourish and foster the frivolous and infamous profession of comedians and dancing little prostitutes. You must therefore do one of two things: either bid farewell

to theaters, spectacles, and all comedies, or abjure the Christian profession. There is no refuge to which you may withdraw, nor any fissure through which you may evade the force of the argument.

Yet, in confirmation of the things I have said, I wish again to oppose to those who dare parade themselves as unmoved amid familiar conversations with women this testimony of St. Basil: *If anyone should say that frequently to speak and associate with women brings no danger, he either does not partake of masculine virtue and is a certain most marvelous beast, situated as though midway between both natures; or, if he does partake of it, he is so submerged in the passions that he does not perceive the danger, after the example of drunkards and madmen, who, although they suffer the gravest things, nevertheless think themselves established beyond the passions. On the Monastic Constitution*, chapter 4.

Chapter XII — It Is Necessary for a Christian to Do One of Two Things: Bid Farewell Either to the Divine Scriptures or to the Theaters

CHAPTER XII

It Is Necessary for a Christian to Do One of Two Things: Bid Farewell Either to the Divine Scriptures or to the Theaters. Their Chief Sophism, Namely That They Experience No Evil, Is Refuted. The Gravest Crimes Which They Perpetrate While Shrouded in the Darkness of Culpable Ignorance Are Indicated. The Common Sense of Christians Cries Out That Comedy Is a School of Shamelessness, a Pandering to Corrupted Chastity, and a Means of Seduction.

I. Why do you beat the air, why do you waste your leisure, in order to condemn those who watch theatrical entertainments? Are you the examiner and judge of our consciences and our interior chastity? Who will value your arguments more than our long experience? For many years we have frequented the theaters without ever being touched by a sense of impure pleasure; we scarcely look at the dancing women and do not lend our ears to the words of the comedians. We are delighted only by the sweetness of the singing and cheer a sorrowful spirit. We refer our consciences to the more celebrated confessors, disclosing our more secret mysteries. They find nothing in us to condemn. Therefore they admit us to the sacred table, and indeed frequently.

What more? Are not dramas published in print read with impunity? Do not woodland fables, tragedies, and other poems come forth into the light by the authority of the Church? Why, then, do you deafen our ears? Why do you fabricate sins and torture the consciences of Christians? How long will that Rigorism declaim, dominate, and rage?

II. These are, more or less, the arguments of soft Christians, which I shall overturn step by step. First, I shall not repeat with Tertullian the things I said above: namely, that they are guilty of foolishness when they assemble there to spend three or four hours where they obtain no fruit. They reply that they frequent the theaters so that they may address male and female friends, converse with them, and taste the fruit of friendly society. Many of them enjoy the pleasurable goods which attendance at the theaters produces. Concupiscence, long kindled by the sight of spectacles, has been trained in cultivated minds; with their mind instructed in the school of Venus, men and women have already emerged as laureled masters, and mutual bonds of friendship between males and females have been formed. For these people the theaters become suitable places no longer for looking or learning, but for carrying out what they have learned. Why should they spend time looking at images when the time is present for enjoying the things which the comedians represent?

They approach the theaters as opportune places where they may either carry out the business of concupiscence in the best manner they can or deliberate upon the manner of carrying it out. Some of them, though few, are truly foolish, because they abstain from the grosser vices not from love of virtue but from dullness of character; and they lead a life perpetually dissolved in idleness because they do not know how to perpetrate worse things. But I shall soon disclose the gravest crimes, of which they are ignorant, committed by all those whom I have just recalled.

III. I now address those who do not go to the theaters as altogether foolish men, but in order that they may see and contemplate the representations of the comedians, their gesticulations, harmonious

motions, the majesty of the scenes, the luxury and pomp of the garments, and all the other things; that they may hear the sweet song of the music and the harmonious sounds of the instruments; and, finally, that they may caress the senses of sight and hearing. For this is the end of theatrical entertainments. In the preceding chapter I made manifest that Epicureans alone purge these actions of vice, since the whole doctrine of the philosophers condem all these things as criminal. I now recall the same things to the tribunal of the Holy Scriptures.

IV. I shall produce a few testimonies of Divine Scripture which condemn curious looks upon women, and especially upon dancing women. Ecclesiasticus, chapter 9: *Gaze not upon a virgin, lest perhaps you be scandalized by her beauty.... Turn away your face from a woman adorned, and look not about upon another's beauty. Because of the beauty of a woman many have perished; and from this concupiscence blazes like fire.* Again, chapter 42: *Do not remain in the midst of women. For from garments comes the moth, and from a woman the iniquity of a man. Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing good.* Again, chapter 9: *Look not upon a woman of many desires, lest perhaps you fall into her snares. Be not constant with a dancing woman, nor listen to her, lest perhaps you perish through her efficacy.*

One of two things therefore follows: either these oracles of God are false, or the Christians who excuse dancing women in the theater from guilt are liars. What do you say to these things? You say that Holy Scripture threatens danger, not sin. Let it be so. But in chapter 3 God cries out in the same book: *He who loves danger shall perish in it*. Now no fissure for escape remains. Either God is a liar, or the spectators of dancing women are liars. The first is blasphemy. Therefore the second is true. Let us proceed farther. If Scripture condemns the mere sight of adorned women and mere conversation with them as a fire that inflames concupiscence, what must it say of a comic woman who, by song, gesture, and the enticements of words, pleads and commends the cause of Venus in the theater?

V. I shall now transcribe a few of the things which command shame and modest adornment in women. The Prince of the Apostles, Peter, First Epistle, chapter 3: *In like manner, let women be subject to their husbands.... Considering your chaste conversation with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel.* St. Paul, First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 11: *But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled disgraces her head.... Judge for yourselves: is it fitting for a woman to pray to God unveiled?* Again, First Epistle to Timothy, chapter 2: *In like manner women also, in becoming apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly clothing, but with what becomes women professing piety through good works.* Passing over six hundred other oracles, I form the following argument.

VI. Shame, reserve, modesty, and sober adornment are the endowments of a Christian woman. Both Christian women and Christian men renounced luxury, vanity, and pomps in the profession of Baptism. I wish you to recall another doctrine of Holy Scripture: namely, that our senses - touch, hearing, sight, and taste - are doors through which crimes enter the fortress of the soul. When the doors are open, the demon occupies the fortress.

Imagine now that men such as I am about to describe are found. They spare neither industry nor labor to learn which men and which little women throughout all Italy, not to say Europe, excel after abjuring shame, modesty, and reserve: some in caressing the hearing by sweetness of song, others in enchanting the eyes either by dancing of the feet, by artifice of gesture, or by recitation of dramas. As soon as they discover those more skilled in this art, both men and women, they hire them for an agreed and indeed enormous price. Then they solicit poets also to write poems more suited to the

predetermined end; and they summon tailors to make garments displaying such luxury, pomp, and vanity that human art can devise nothing more vain, more shameless, or more immodest; and they press painters and artisans to adorn the theater most splendidly and paint the scenes exquisitely.

When all these things have been completed, the little comic women come forth into the theater, associated with comic men and clothed in pompous garments, vain, shameless, and unbridled, so that they may practice their hired art. At the great report of the affair, the young and old, men and women, of the whole city flock in troops to the spectacle. Then the actresses and actors besiege the senses of the spectators on every side, by song, by gesture, and by dance; they fascinate the eyes and enchant the hearing; they irritate concupiscence and instill and teach the art of fornication and adultery; and finally, insofar as it can be done by them, they lay waste reserve, shame, and modesty.

VII. Let us now compare hands. Are the aforesaid women, who live by such a hired art, such as God wills them to be by his law: modest, reserved, sober, and chaste? Are they not treacherous sirens who entice by every kind of enchantment and strive to drag souls into the snares of perdition? Are they not infamous and wicked? Does not the whole world regard them as prostitutes? Tell me. What now of the men who hire them and pay them wages? Are these less flagitious, less criminal, fountains of wickedness? But who are those men of such abandoned conscience who hire this crowd of comedians and female mimes to lay waste simplicity, corrupt chastity, and despoil the flock of Christ redeemed at so great a price? Who are they? All the spectators - let this be said with their good leave - all who are present, even with their eyes closed. These, I say, pay all the wages.

I am mistaken. The spectators not only pay the wages of all the performers and not only meet the expenses of the tailors, painters, scenes, and ornaments, but they also furnish the payment to the aforesaid men who hire the comic men and little comic women. For those contractors would never undergo so many inconveniences unless they hoped to receive profits from the spectators. And they fail to receive profit from the spectators at one time only. When? When they have selected performers less suited to softening the hearts of the spectators, titillating concupiscence, and producing pleasure. Only then do they pay the penalty of negligence or bad fortune. But the more excellent the comedians they select for corrupting morals, the greater the profits they also obtain from the spectators.

VIII. Is this enough to refute your sophism? By no means. The crime you perpetrate is still graver. I prove it. Either you truly go to the theater captivated by the enticement of pleasure, or not. If the first, you are a liar when you assert that no pleasure from the enchantments of comedy touches you. If not, then you sin from sheer malice when you furnish wages to the comedians so that they may practice an infamous art, while you taste no joy and perceive no benefit. Those who, seduced by the enticement of pleasure, frequent a comedy certainly sin, but from the weakness of nature; you, however, from the wickedness of a depraved mind.

Have you now something to object? I have. Even if I am absent from the theater, others who frequent it are not therefore lacking. My payment contributes nothing to that work, since, even if it is withdrawn, there are nevertheless others who pay the performers their full price. Again you are mistaken. Every individual spectator, every individual comedian, and every individual contractor of comedians could babble the same thing. Even if I did not act in a comedy, others would. You see a band of robbers plundering treasuries. Why, you say, will it be forbidden me to snatch some part when they are prepared to seize everything? Is this lawful?

IX. The other things which are objected are exceedingly slight. Comedies, tragedies, and other dramas of the poets come forth in print by the authority of superiors. Therefore they can be read. Let it be so. What follows? You can also speak with women, see them, and associate with them honorably and soberly. Therefore can you meditate upon, address, and receive in familiar company a little woman adorned, singing, gesticulating, and provoking to venery? The reading of a comedy is cold, barren, and unpleasant. The theatrical condiments which I have recounted are added, and then they provoke and seduce the senses. Neither this soldier nor that one alone is able to besiege the fortress; all joined together conquer and demolish it. When we assert that theatrical entertainments are destructive of integrity of morals, we understand all the enchantments which form the theater. Those who object that the separate parts are lawful are like men who, in order to defend as harmless a poison compounded by art, thrust forward the parts which, perhaps, could be eaten if taken separately.

X. I shall now touch briefly upon the gravest crimes which the spectators of comedy perpetrate. All of them, whether they are captivated by the enchantments of the comedians and the allurements of the little women or otherwise - let them be bronze statues deprived of every sense; let them be insensible marbles; let them reproach and ridicule Paul, Jerome, Martinianus, and the other most holy anchorites who suffered tribulation of the flesh and were buffeted by the stings of concupiscence; let them despise those men as wretched slaves of the flesh and boast that they themselves are transparent crystals and fragrant carnations - I am willing to grant them even these things. But I submit this: all those men pay wages to the actors; they feed, clothe, and sustain the male and female practitioners of an infamous art. Therefore all the crimes, all the wicked deeds, and all the scandals which follow this art fall and are turned upon the heads of the spectators as accomplices, connivers, and participants.

In a single thought run through the many young men, the many girls, the many wives who in the theater, having lost shame, reserve, modesty, and simplicity, like so many Eves awakened by the serpent's hiss, learned the art of loving and of satiating concupiscence. Run through the many fornications and adulteries perpetrated either in mind or in deed. Consider the many young men who, seduced and fascinated by the enchantments of comedy, either take concubines or betroth to themselves as wives sirens who sing, dance, and recite, while their parents mourn, their patrimony is dissipated, and not rarely their families are extinguished. We see and mourn daily these monstrous abortions of theatrical entertainments, these prodigies born of comedies. Moreover, those who by their presence attend spectacles - or assemblies of vanity, shamelessness, and wickedness - perpetrate, at least by reason of consent and cooperation, as they say, all these and innumerable other crimes and wicked deeds which I pass over in silence.

Chapter XIII — The Opinion of Those Who Concede That Theaters Indeed Conflict with Christian Profession, but Entirely Deny That Their Spectators Can Certainly and Indiscriminately Be Condemned of Mortal Guilt, Is Examined

CHAPTER XIII

The Opinion of Those Who Concede That Theaters Indeed Conflict with Christian Profession, but Entirely Deny That Their Spectators Can Certainly and Indiscriminately Be Condemned of Mortal Guilt, Is Examined.

I. The whole spirit of the evangelical law consists in combating the flesh and restraining the human senses and appetites. To this it pertains above all that it draw the soul away from vain pomps, luxury, ostentation, scurrility, foul speech, immoderate laughter, and the falsehoods of fables, and separate it from the danger of defiling chastity. By contrast, the pursuits of comedies and theaters conspire solely to caress, irritate, enchant, and delight the human senses and appetites; to promote the luxury of pomps, the business of pleasure, and the diversions of the world; and to allure spectators to devote diligent effort to them. But who is so insane that he does not understand that these two things can by no means be joined? For they conflict with each other no less than light and darkness.

Declaim, therefore, if you wish, against the abuse of theaters and comedies; exhort the faithful to abstain from them. But take care not to define that all spectators of theaters sin mortally: for this lethal crime, which produces eternal damnation, disturbs them exceedingly and embitters and darkens all the pleasure which they obtain from watching comedies.

II. Shall I, a most wretched little man and the vilest son of earth, full of crimes, erect a tribunal and sit as judge, so that I may pronounce souls redeemed by the blood of Christ guilty of mortal sin and therefore of eternal damnation? Far from me be so great a folly. Rather, with every effort I shall strive to withdraw men from perpetrating grave crime and incurring damnation. But here, reader, I wish you seriously to consider how dreadful and at the same time lamentable is the blindness of those who argue, as I have indicated: Take care not to define that spectators of theaters offend gravely. Tell me: does it depend upon my decision whether the aforesaid corruption is deadly or otherwise? Will it cease to be deadly, on the supposition that it is so; or will that depravity become lethal, when in fact it is not, because I define it as such? But moved by what reason do they exhort me to abstain from manifesting the gravity of the iniquity? Have they discussed this most grave controversy according to its merits? They have not even saluted it from afar. And with the cause unknown they suggest suspension of judgment.

What if they were to advise a judge not to decide that the estate about which the litigants contend belongs to Peter rather than to Paul, while they themselves are entirely ignorant of whom it truly belongs to? Would this advice alone be free of grave guilt? They should have advised, and ought to advise, that judgment not be pronounced rashly, nor except after an exact and mature discussion of the controversy and after the Fathers, the Canons, Christian profession, and all the circumstances of the theaters have been seriously consulted. Many times in my *Christian Theology* I abstained from defining the gravity of malice, because it is not free from danger to decide it unless the truth is manifest. And immediately many imputed such suspension of judgment to me as a fault. So diverse

are the dispositions of men. Those demand a definitive sentence even in more obscure matters; these demand that it remain suspended even in the noonday light, according as it is in their interest. But, despising these rumors of men, I shall bring forward the most splendid reasons and documents which disclose the gravity of the crime, so that everyone may be able to discern and judge what must be embraced and what rejected. Before I do this, however, I must premise several things.

III. First, the question concerning the distinction of venial sin from mortal is the most difficult of all, as St. Thomas says in Quodlibet 8: *Every question in which mortal sin is treated is determined dangerously unless the truth is possessed.* There are three kinds of venial sins. First, from the object, as an officious lie. Second, from the smallness of the matter, as the theft of a single obol. Third, from imperfect deliberation of the will, as if someone, while the temptation of Venus presses and the delight of concupiscence entices the will, is negligent in repelling it. Sins of this third kind are most difficult to judge. Only from external signs and from the quality of the conscience of the person tempted can theologians gather whether sins of this kind are venial or mortal. They commonly define them to be mortal when men cast themselves into occasions of temptations, because then they commonly indicate that they deliberately will temptations and delights of this kind, as will be said more fully below. What of the fact that the most hidden recesses of his own conscience lie concealed even from the tempted man himself? He himself cannot determine with certainty whether the delight from the temptation which he suffers from viewing spectacles is mortal or venial.

IV. Second, it is certain that venial sins prepare the road to mortal sins, as all the Fathers and theologians teach. I shall indicate one or two things in passing. St. Augustine, Letter 264, formerly 108, says: *Sins, although small, nevertheless creep in frequently; and if they are collected against us, they will so weigh us down and oppress us like some one great sin. For what difference does it make for shipwreck whether the ship is opened and overwhelmed by one great wave, or water gradually creeping into the bilge and, through negligence left and despised, fills and sinks the ship?* St. Thomas, First Part of the Second Part, question 88, article 6, reply 1, says: *Venial differs from mortal as the imperfect from the perfect, as a boy from a man. But just as a boy by his nature becomes a man, so venial sins, although they do not in themselves become mortal, nevertheless, so often repeated, wound the soul and extinguish fervor so that they lead to death.* The Fathers and theologians drew this doctrine from Holy Scripture itself. *He who despises small things shall fall little by little,* says Ecclesiasticus, chapter 9.

V. Third, I premise that at present I speak of the sins which are commonly perpetrated in theaters and which everywhere follow the corruption of theaters. Whether events and cases can afterward occur in which some persons may go to the theaters without guilt, I shall examine below in a chapter of its own.

VI. Fourth, it lies beyond the hazard of dispute that in theaters very many and almost innumerable venial sins are committed, not from surprise but from the deliberate choice of the will. I shall indicate a few things from St. John Chrysostom, Homily 38 on chapter 11 of Matthew, where he has these words: *What is that so great noise of theatrical men? What so great a tumult? What diabolical cries? What Satanic clothing? For all things which are simply done there are most base: clothing, haircut, gait, voices, songs, melodies, the rolling of the eyes, the movements of the flute, and the very subjects of the fables; all, I say, are full of base lasciviousness.* Again, in Homily 62 to the People, he adds: *In the theater there are laughter, foolishness, diabolical pomp, dissipation, expenditure of time and superfluous consumption of days, inducement to evil desire,*

meditation upon adultery, a training school of fornication, a school of intemperance, exhortation to baseness, material for laughter, and an example of dishonor.

Many of the things recounted by Chrysostom are mortal sins. Imagine that all are venial. Is it permitted to Christians to open schools in which there is a public profession of venial sins? Imagine again that I can by no means define that the spectators of comedies sin mortally. I grant it. Can you clearly decree that they offend only venially? What do you reply? Do you possess a certain scale by which you may weigh the degrees of that malice? Do you possess a balance by which you may define that the delight perceived from the sweetness of song, from the vivid representation of the amorous business, and from the sight of a female singer does not cross the boundaries of venial guilt? If I, you say, lack this balance for deciding that the guilt is only venial, neither do you possess one by which you may conclude clearly that the crime is mortal.

Suppose, after severe examination, that neither I nor you can render a certain sentence for either mortal or venial wickedness, and that the matter remains suspended and doubtful. What follows? It is then certain among all that you sin mortally when you attend the theater, because you commit yourself to the hazard of offending mortally. No fissure for escape is open here. I ask again: how many Scriptures, how many Fathers, how many Councils have you seriously examined so that you may sit as judge in this controversy? If you wish to speak candidly, you will be compelled to confess yourself empty of all these things and to pronounce sentence while the cause is unknown. This is a most grave crime. For he who in a most grave controversy such as this affirms that the crime is mortal, and likewise another who denies it, subjects himself to a lethal danger of offending gravely unless he has first discussed the cause before the tribunal of the sanctuary with exact diligence. You see how many most grave crimes the many petty scholars perpetrate who, without consulting the Gospels and the Fathers, proclaim access to the theaters lawful: they show themselves guilty of rashness, presumption, and ignorance; indeed they perpetrate a most grave scandal because they wage war upon the Gospel and obstinately defend antichristian doctrine.

VII. Nor may you insist that you are certain of experiencing no pleasure from viewing the theaters, because that escape has already been closed above by Tertullian, Chrysostom, and the other Fathers, and discourse concerning the same matter will recur again below. At present the dispute concerns what happens commonly and for the most part. But so that I may press briefly those heroes of chastity who in the consistory of shamelessness - to speak with Tertullian - boast themselves most spotless lilies, I propose to them a doctrine common among the more benign casuists themselves, not to mention all the Fathers and theologians: the virtue of chastity is so delicate that it often suffers mortal wounds even when the mind scarcely observes and perceives its own death. And the loss of a virtue of this kind is the easier, the more fragile and muddy is the human body in which it resides. Concupiscence perpetually plots against it. *But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin which is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Thus Paul, Doctor of the Gentiles, in Romans 7.

Are our men who watch theaters exempt and free from this law, or unbridled concupiscence, which fights furiously against chastity? Why do you mutter? Now prick up your ears. If, while this concupiscence paints its masks and images for the chaste mind, you deliberately contemplate them and detain yourself in the practical consideration of them, you immediately kill your soul with a lethal wound, because you have either consented to the thing itself or are in proximate danger of

consenting. And you often sin, and indeed mortally, without expressly and actually observing that you sin. This doctrine, otherwise most clear, is dreadful; considering it, St. Jerome cries out in the Letter to Pammachius: *Since these things are so, in comparison with evils I shall endure diseases more tolerably, provided that I lack the one most grave mistress, lust*.

Moreover, if you sin while you deliberately remain in an internal practical lascivious thought because of the danger of consenting, will you be freed from sin while you approach the external and most grave occasions of comedies and voluntarily rush into an abyss of temptations, not once but frequently? You say: in the theater I am delighted not by lasciviousness but by the sweetness of the singing and by the artful skill of the dancing women. He who speaks thus is covered by a veil of blindness. Amorous things are sung; and have you learned to separate the sweetness of song from the pleasure of lust? Metaphysical abstractions are excellent in other arguments; in the venereal business they are futile and vain. The mind distinguishes, but untamed concupiscence and the blind will do not distinguish; they delight in the things themselves. The argument already made returns. You sin while you are culpably ignorant that you sin. You drink down the poison of impure pleasure, smeared with the paint of melodious sweetness.

VIII. Everyone can look without guilt upon a beautiful, adorned, and ornamented woman; therefore he can also lawfully attend the theater. Thus theatrical men argue foolishly. First, God says in Ecclesiasticus 9: *Turn away your face from a woman adorned.... Gaze not upon a virgin, lest perhaps you be scandalized by her beauty.* Next, is it expedient to associate familiarly with a beautiful, adorned, and caparisoned woman and to mingle mutual amorous conversations with her? What if this beautiful and elegant woman should inflame, allure, and irritate you to love? These things happen in the theater, together with very many other enchantments. Female singers caress your ears with the modulation of song. Dancing women thoroughly seize your eyes by the artifice of their movements. Little sweethearts represent with all their powers that they languish for the love of a man, and exquisitely reproduce the pleasure of love, so that they may soften and titillate your heart; and those who are not fitted to excite pleasure in the minds of spectators are rejected as inept.

IX. From all these things gather how unskilled are the defenders of the theaters of our age. For no one fails to see that theatrical enchantments are most effective for enchanting all the senses and, above all, for irritating and inflaming the beast of concupiscence. Everyone is tempted by his own concupiscence even when theaters and comedies are removed. In venereal delight there is no smallness of matter. The malice of venereal delight and its degree often lie hidden from us. We recognize the evil, but the gravity of the disease often escapes the sight of our mind. The theatrical men cry out that there are no scales for weighing the degree of that depravity. Therefore, they say, we are undeservedly condemned of mortal guilt. Rightly and well. Therefore the claim that there is only venial guilt is also undeservedly defended. If the first consequence stands, the second is also most firm.

But all theologians to a man, even the more benign, teach that you sin mortally when you do what you certainly recognize to be evil but are ignorant of the gravity of its malice. You know certainly that poison is in a cup, but you do not know whether it is deadly or merely harmful. Will you deny that you sin mortally if you drink it down or offer it for others to drink?

X. Thus far we have used the argument which they call *ad hominem*. But would all the Fathers throughout the perpetual succession of the ages - not to mention the pagan philosophers themselves

- have inveighed so vehemently against spectacles of this kind? Would they have published lengthy treatises? Would they have denied the sacraments to theatrical men if frequenting the theaters were only a venial fault? What of the fact that in the first ages of the Church scarcely even the discipline of confessing venial sins prevailed? But the mask must be torn away from men who frequent the theaters, and the cause must be disclosed why they do not wish attendance at the theaters to be defined as harmful with grave guilt.

The reason is obvious. They refuse to bid farewell to this solace. Yet they do not wish to become publicly sordid with so great an iniquity and to appear defiled, since they are not ashamed to perpetrate mortal crimes for the sake of recreation. For wickedness so enormous - especially if they are men established in some rank - they feel to be exceedingly opposed to the reputation of a good man, to civil commerce, and to progress in business and dignities. This is the principal cause why they do not endure the theaters to be condemned of grave guilt. Yet they most gladly concede that many venial sins range through the theater, because they drink these sins like water and because these do not make one infamous.

There is also another reason. Lovers of carnal pleasure search out all things which can increase, not diminish, their delights. A recognized mortal sin disturbs and gnaws at least the consciences of many. Therefore, so that they may drink the potion of Venus more fully and sweetly, they strive with every effort and cunning to remove from their solace at least the guilt of grave crime. Hence they evade without difficulty even the gravest considerations of reason which prove the gravity of the malice, and greatly extol their own petty reasonings, and exhaust themselves in mutual antinomies. Holy Scripture cries out: *Turn away from evil and do good.* It does not say, turn away from mortal or venial evil, but from evil. The holy Fathers likewise, without distinction of lethal evil from venial, cry out absolutely that one must abstain from evil. If we, imitating their practice, exhort men to abstain from evil, they immediately reply that the evil is light and venial. If, on the contrary, we assert that the evil is grave, then they ask from where we received the scale for weighing the gravity of this malice. O dispositions of men!

XI. But, so that I may confirm more clearly the things expounded above, I appeal as judges to those very men who, although they are considered patrons of the more benign ethics, nevertheless detest present-day theaters, which have been openly demonstrated to be base and obscene, and condemn both actors and spectators of mortal sin. Paolo Comitoli, a most distinguished theologian of the Society of Jesus, in book 5, question 11, brings forward the doctrine of the Fathers and theologians - or the universal and perpetual tradition of the Church - in these words: *By five paths we demonstrate that both those who act and those who hear shameless comedies do not escape mortal guilt. The first is that of the sacred sanctions and civil laws.... The second is that of the holy Doctors and most ancient writers who flourished in defense of our religion, and so forth. The third is that of the leading theologians and of those who published books concerning the principles of Christian duty; theologians agree wonderfully with the Fathers and the writers of Summas, and so forth.... The fourth is the path of arguments drawn from the principles of moral philosophy and theology. And first it must indeed be proved that those who act comedies with baseness and obscenity make a crime for themselves; then, those who go to hear them. Against the former these are the arguments.*

1. To deprive oneself and others of that virtue without which eternal salvation is given by God to no one is an enormous crime, for it extinguishes charity. But he who openly occupies himself with the imitation of obscene things

voluntarily deprives himself and others of cleanness of heart, without which no one shall see God. Therefore, and so forth.

2. He acts exceedingly wickedly who overturns the foundations of cities and commonwealths which have been wisely instituted. These scoundrels attempt this when they exterminate shame, modesty, temperance, and chastity from cities. Therefore, and so forth.

3. Whoever are an impediment to children so that they may not be instructed toward honorableness and civil splendor sin most gravely. The most impure actors of impure comedies do this. Therefore, and so forth. With five other arguments, which I pass over for the sake of brevity, he confirms his proposition.

It is next that we turn the points of the arguments upon the spectators. Let the first reason, therefore, be this. To furnish a cause of deadly wickedness is deadly; but spectators by their attendance and presence furnish to scenic performers the cause of imitating and acting those base things. Therefore, and so forth.

2. To lavish money upon actors of that kind is a monstrous vice, according to St. Augustine.... Therefore, since those who hasten to the stage do this, they are in a monstrous vice, as though sacrificing to the Devil.

3. To take pleasure from mortal guilt, or from a thing which is not without mortal guilt, is a mortal crime. But those who attend obscene comedies draw pleasure from an action of the actors which is criminal in them. Therefore the spectators are infected by the same crime.

4. The Doctors of the Christian Church and the masters of Sacred Theology think as we do concerning the sin of the spectators. It is not lawful for us to believe and opine otherwise.

Father Thomas Sanchez does not desert the tradition of the holy Fathers and theologians so skillfully asserted by Comitoli, saying in book 9, disputation 46, no. 42: *Those who compose or represent comedies which contain very base things exciting to venery sin mortally, because they are the cause of ruin to many.* And he adds that this *is true although the composer or performer does not intend it, because of itself it furnishes a sufficient cause of ruin.*

XI. Father Reginald, book 22, chapter 1, section 4: *It is a mortal sin to attend comedies in which base things are represented or the manner of representing is base.*

XII. Marcello Megalius, in the *Epitome of the Institutes*, page 166, no. 16: *He sins mortally who in comedies or elsewhere speaks words inciting to lasciviousness and fornication, even in jest and only for relaxation of the spirit. Those also are guilty of mortal crime who voluntarily hear them, although they hear them without sensual delight and only for the sake of recreation.*

XIII. Gabriel Biel, who nevertheless is not to be numbered among the lax casuists, in book 4, distinction 15, question 13, article 3, doubt 3, teaches these things: *Whoever delights in mortal sin sins mortally, especially in those things which are evil not because they are prohibited, but because they essentially include baseness, such as altogether are the comedies of our time; from the Apostle to the Romans, chapter 1: not only those who do them but those who consent to those doing them are worthy of death.*

XIV. I pass over recounting others now, because below, as I have said, I shall allege very many others, so that I may discharge the pledge given at the beginning of the disputation: namely, that I defend the common doctrine of the Fathers, theologians, and casuists, and therefore of the Church.

Chapter XIV — On the Authority of the Reverend Father Paolo Segneri, Most Pious Professed Member of the Society of Jesus, Theaters and Obscene Comedies Are Condemned

CHAPTER XIV

On the Authority of the Reverend Father Paolo Segneri, Most Pious Professed Member of the Society of Jesus, Theaters and Obscene Comedies Are Condemned.

Day by day a more raging persecution rages against the most holy moral doctrine of Jesus Christ. If the same things which near the end of the last century were preached with the greatest freedom from the pulpit were inculcated in our age from the evangelical chair, what murmurs, what satires, what reproaches against the preacher would not resound from the mouths of very many? Indeed, I would scarcely dare now to preach what, as the preceding century was drawing to its close, Father Paolo Segneri, that most eminent Jesuit, uttered against the spectators of theaters with apostolic freedom, without stirring up many and great evils against myself. Therefore, so that I may summon a protection for my cause, I have judged it worth the effort to invoke the authority of this most celebrated Jesuit, who cannot fall under suspicion of Rigorism, since he committed three letters to writing in order to defend Probabilism.

There will perhaps be some who will say that it is the custom of preachers, among whom Father Segneri exercised his office with most abundant fruit, to exaggerate matters beyond what is just by means of the customary figures and amplifications of rhetoricians. If any of the apostolic ministers should do this, he is so much the more unworthy of his office. This exceedingly black charge cannot be fastened without rashness upon Father Segneri's work entitled *The Christian Instructed*. Since that work is composed from the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Fathers, and especially of St. Thomas, it always has been and always will be held in the highest esteem by learned men. I wish, therefore, to excerpt from this work a few things against comedies and theaters.

SINGLE SECTION

A Specimen of the Things Which Father Paolo Segneri Teaches in His *Christian Instructed*, Part 3, Sermon 31.

I. At the very beginning of the sermon he writes these things at no. 1, page 293: *Leaving everything else aside, I wish to fasten upon the one thing which St. Maximus offers me when he reports a custom of the ancient Christians. It was this: to place together with the energumens those faithful who had taken the liberty of frequenting theatrical spectacles - the devotees of spectacles. And why this? For no other reason, I believe, than to make us see that the spectators of profane representations are so many possessed persons, not in the body, which would be the lesser evil, but in the spirit. And this is what I wish to use in order to make you abominate corrupt comedies.*

I wish to give you the reason for the custom just mentioned by showing you that theaters of this kind are a public resort of demons; that the actors are so many magicians of consciences; that the listeners are so many persons bewitched in the soul; so that, finally, those things which appear to be entertainments in jest are true spells cast upon and bewitchments of the will, and so forth.

II. I render these things into Latin, preserving the sense and not the letter. It was the custom of the early Christians, as St. Maximus relates, to place together with energumens the faithful who

frequented theatrical spectacles. Why was this? In my opinion, for no other cause than that we might understand from it that the spectators of profane representations were so many persons possessed by demons, not in body but in spirit. And this is the lesson which I shall use in order to exhibit obscene comedies to you as worthy of abomination.

I shall give the reason for the ancient custom indicated above by showing that theaters of this kind are a public resort of demons; that the actors are so many poisoners of consciences; that the listeners are so many persons affected by witchcraft in their souls; so that, finally, those entertainments which appear jocular are true spells cast upon the will and acts of poisoning.

III. These things occur in the exordium. Before he enters upon the cause itself, he sets forth clearly the notion of the comedies which he undertakes to condemn in these words: *To speak plainly, I condemn those comedies which either by their nature or accidentally move those who hear them to do evil. By their nature are all those which contain either an obscene subject, immodest words, irreligious propositions, or representations of shameful deeds. Those may be called such accidentally which, although they have a subject otherwise not opposed to good morals, are nevertheless infected by the admixture of interludes which are called pleasant but are foul, or by the appearance of women lasciviously adorned, who by their presence and speech awaken affections exceedingly harmful to honorableness.*

This quality of works, unfortunately all too common in modern theaters as it already was among the ancients, I undertake to strike in today's discourse, pronouncing that they amount to a most dreadful witchcraft, by virtue of which the listeners remain foully bewitched, that is, possessed in soul by a cursed spirit of hell with strange violence.

IV. To set forth the argument clearly, I condemn those comedies which either by their nature or accidentally move their hearers to evil. Those are such by their nature which contain in themselves either an obscene subject, such as an amorous affair suited to arousing concupiscence, or immodest words, or irreligious propositions, or representations of base actions. Those, however, may be called such accidentally which consist of a subject otherwise not opposed to good morals but are nevertheless defiled by intermediate acts which are called pleasant but are base, or by the appearance of women who, lasciviously adorned and reciting, by their presence and their speech excite affections exceedingly harmful to honorableness.

This quality of theatrical actions, exceedingly common indeed to present-day theaters no less than to ancient ones, I undertake to assail in the present discourse; and I decree that comedies of this kind are a most dreadful poisoning of souls, by the force of which spectators remain foully defiled by witchcraft: namely, their souls, possessed by a cursed spirit of hell, are harassed by a monstrous tyranny.

V. This is the argument, or proposition, which Father Segneri undertakes to demonstrate in his discourse, and he proves it by the clearest reasons. First, in section 1, no. 2, he has these things: *Every species of witchcraft is reduced to three heads: amorous witchcraft, hostile witchcraft, and sleep-producing witchcraft. Such are the three raging heads of this Cerberus. The first witchcraft, therefore, is amorous, by which the Devil excites toward someone an affection so unbearable that it is rather a fury.... While the comedians represent feigned loves upon the stage, with them they inflict true wounds upon souls. While he feigns love, he inflicts it. That word "inflicts" is a term which shows us not only wounding, but wounding deeply, as precisely happens in our case.*

For among all the passions of our heart there is no other more to be feared than this.... Now such a beast, whose chains should always be reinforced within its pens, is set at liberty by obscene comedies, so that it may be fitted for

slaughter. No other subject but love is spoken of upon the stage; no other discourses are heard; from beginning to end no other kinds of knots are entangled and untied, and so forth.

The actors then have two great advantages in persuading youth of this so harmful liberty just mentioned: the persons in whom they represent such loves, and those whom they principally employ to represent them. The persons in whom they represent such loves are commonly illustrious persons, warriors, paladins, princes, and kings; and these are feigned to have gone mad after a most vile little woman, and so forth.

The other diabolical advantage for persuading more effectively to this same liberty in loves is to cause them to be represented all too vividly by the very women who ascend the stage. Since such a fever is not rarely continuous in them, do not doubt that they know well how to express in action all its symptoms before the eyes of those looking on.... What can he not persuade who is such? St. Paul does not wish women to preach in churches because of the danger incurred in hearing them, as St. Anselm interprets.... Now, if among Christians it cannot be tolerated that a woman speak in the pulpit of divine love, how shall it be tolerated that she speak on the stage of profane love?

Let her speak to youth, so disposed to conceive flames of shamelessness. Let her speak adorned from head to shoe with a thousand ornaments invented by lasciviousness. Let her speak with jests, phrases, and gestures which could not be endured without shame even among shameless barbarians. And why did I say, let her speak? Let her speak and sing at pleasure. St. Cyprian says that it is more tolerable to hear a basilisk, which hisses, than a woman who sings: "It is more tolerable to hear a hissing basilisk than her singing." St. Jerome informs us that there is found among the spirits a race of devils whose office is to foster loves, infatuations, and little songs of love: "serving loves and amorous songs."

It is fitting that these devils should be the first to assist at those theaters where their disciples, those sirens, sing, so as to dictate to them no less the notes than the words. They contrive that the women be summoned even from distant countries, salaried and maintained at expense, and that there, by the greatest crowd of people, they be heard with more attention than is ever given to the Gospels in churches. Then, to cover so putrid a wound with some excuse, it is said that honest loves are composed and sung. Would that the excuse were true! But even if it were true, it would not suffice. Is it fitting even for honest loves to be sung by a woman from a public theater? Plutarch relates that Cato expelled a certain Manlius from the Senate because he had dared to kiss his own wife in the presence of his little daughter. Therefore, not even that which is honest in its kind can be exposed to the eyes of all.

I hold it most certain that that wise consul, although a pagan, would have banished not merely from the city but from the world those bold women who upon public stages, with an instrument in hand, feign that they swoon and faint from the yearning for a spouse, who descends from heaven to render them blessed. See whether this is not to pretend oneself bewitched by that amorous spell which is spoken of, in order to bewitch the others, and so forth.

VI. There are three kinds of witchcraft: amorous witchcraft, hostile witchcraft, and sleep-producing witchcraft. These are the three raging heads of this Cerberus. The first witchcraft, therefore, is amorous, by which the Devil kindles toward someone so vehement a love that it appears to be fury rather than love.... While actors relate feigned loves upon the stage, they inflict true wounds. While he feigns love, he inflicts it. This word "inflicts" indicates not merely a wound but a deep wound, as happens in our case. For among all the movements of the soul desire is so unbridled that the most eminent philosophers regard it as madness. This beast, however, which ought always to be restrained within its pens by stronger chains, is granted liberty in obscene comedies so that it may be stronger for slaughter. In the theater there is no other subject and no other discourse than that of love. To this, from beginning to end, the schemes, pursuits, and negotiations are directed.

Moreover, actors are most suited to persuading youth to this destructive liberty of love, both because of the lovers whom they represent and because of the women whose services they employ to instill this love. They depict as infected by this plague of desire illustrious soldiers, paladins, princes, and kings, whom they portray wonderfully as seized by an impotent affection and driven mad for a most vile little woman.

Furthermore, actors promote this commerce of love more powerfully and more successfully because they take care that it be conducted more vividly and delicately by the ministry of women. Who does not recognize the most effective power possessed by those sirens, to whom the fever of desire is familiar, for expressing flames, impulses, languors, sweetnesses, and the other snares of that passion, and for inflicting them upon the eyes and souls of those present? What can one who is such not persuade? St. Paul forbids women to preach in the Church because of the danger to which the hearers are exposed, as St. Anselm interprets. Therefore, if among Christians it is not permitted for a woman to speak from the pulpit about divine love, by what reason can it be tolerated that a woman plead from the stage the cause of profane love? Let her plead before youth to be inflamed, since by its nature it is so prone to conceive those shameless sparks.

Let her plead caparisoned from head to shoe with every apparatus of ornaments devised by lasciviousness. Let her plead with jests, pointed sayings, and gestures which cannot be endured without shame even among the more savage barbarians. But what did I say, let her plead? Let her speak and sing at pleasure. St. Cyprian says that it is a lesser evil to hear a basilisk that hisses than a woman who sings: *It is more tolerable to hear a hissing basilisk than her singing*. St. Jerome teaches us that a race of demons is found whose office is to foster amorous songs and inflame little lovers, *serving loves and amorous songs*.

These devils must be the first to assist at the theaters in which those sirens, their disciples, sing, so that they may dictate to them no less the notes than the words. The devils themselves contrive that the women be summoned from distant regions, hired for pay, and heard by an enormous concourse of people with greater attention than the Gospel is heard in church. And so that so putrid a wound may be covered by some pretext, it is said that they sing honest loves. Would that the excuse were true! But even if it were true, it would not suffice. Is it fitting that a woman sing even honest loves from a public theater? Plutarch relates that Cato expelled from the Senate a certain Manlius because he had dared to kiss his own wife before his daughter. Therefore, not even an honest thing is to be exposed to everyone's eyes and ears. That wise consul, though a pagan, would, in my judgment, have driven into exile not merely from the city but from the whole world those bold women who upon public stages, holding an instrument in the hand, feign that they perish from desire because of anxiety for their spouse, as though he were a deity who descends from heaven to make them blessed.

VII. *The other species of witchcraft is called hostile witchcraft, and by it such vast slaughters are wrought that a single man named Elzana is reported to have killed more than eight hundred persons in the space of two years by his enchantments. Yet sorcerers should not believe that they surpass the slaughters of actors even in number, just as they do not surpass them in ferocity, since the slaughters of the latter are slaughters of souls, whereas theirs are slaughters of bodies, which sooner or later must one day die. To say something about so vast a matter, so that at least the number of the slain may be collected in confusion, we can affirm that among the infinite dangerous occasions by which men are incited to sin, there is no other which supplies all our adversaries with such great weapons as corrupt comedies. You know that we have three most terrible enemies: the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.*

Now this World, so opposed to divine wisdom, from what does it receive greater assistance for maintaining the rebellion which it continually professes against truth than from the gestures and actions of comedians? At present there is brought upon the stage one who by deceit, iniquity, perfidy, and even sacrilegious enchantments makes his road now to reign, now to revenge himself, now to conquer; and with prosperous fortune he is seen nevertheless to have arrived where he aspired so wickedly. A young man is represented who by ingenious stratagems eludes the guardianship of a jealous husband. An infamous pimp is exhibited who with money purchases for others the honor of a virgin. A duel is set forth to be contemplated as a spectacle worthy of esteem and remembrance; and a trophy is raised to an action forbidden by divine law with such severity and thundered against with so many curses by ecclesiastical law.

Christian continence is debased as simplicity; an impious policy is admired as wisdom; the Gospel is discredited; faith is mocked; fortune is deified; and those maxims which serve as the foundation of atheism are established. Now with dishonest equivocations, now with heretical amphibologies, virtue is painted as vice, by ascribing everything to chance and taking the reins of government from the hand of Providence in order to place them in the hand of fate. These are the operations, these the sentiments, these the outcomes which constitute a good part of public plays. Therefore on what other occasion does the World ever succeed better in establishing its dogmas than in that of comedies, where applause is given upon the stages to those teachings which, if they were uttered upon level ground, would be just matter for a great trial? Nor is it valid to object that such errors are feigned upon the stage and are not believed, for the World does not therefore fail to gather its advantage from them, since persons are introduced speaking who present them as if they believed them and take glory in them, and so forth.

The flesh, which is our other enemy, assails us more dangerously, since it fights us from within by domestic sedition and arms our very selves against us. It accomplishes this by continually making us desire new pleasures, so that the food of one satisfied appetite becomes hunger for another. Now in this same betrayal it receives greater assistance from no other worldly pastime than from obscene comedies. First, because on other occasions it makes an alliance with only one or another of our senses, but in the theater it joins itself with them all. "Other crimes claim separate portions for themselves," says the holy bishop Salvian. Other diversions, although evil, are content with one part of us. One corrupts the imagination, another the eyes, another the ears, and so of the rest; hence, if one sense sins through them, another can meanwhile remain without sin.

It is not so in theaters. "In theaters nothing of these is free from guilt, because both the mind is polluted by concupiscences, the ears by hearing, and the eyes by sight." In theaters the slaughter is most universal, nor does any faculty remain in us which is exempt from guilt. This is so manifest that it made itself seen even in the darkness of unbelief. Hence Seneca went so far as to say that, for utterly corrupting morals, there was no more powerful enchantment than spectacles, which by the sweetness of pleasure implanted every vice in the heart from every side: "Nothing is so harmful to good morals as to sit at some spectacle, for then vices creep in more easily through pleasure." Letter 7, and so forth.

Finally, our third enemy, who surpasses all the others, if not in deed at least in the desire to harm, is the Devil. Now from public stages and theaters he draws so much revenue that he regards them as his own. Hear what Tertullian gravely relates, in order to frighten the faithful away from so destructive an entertainment. A certain lady, although a Christian, yet more a lover of pleasure than of the Cross, allowed herself to be drawn by curiosity to go to the theater.... Once the Devil had entered into her, he began to torment her with great fierceness, until, when she was brought before an exorcist, she learned the true cause of her evil. "How," said the exorcist, crying out to that unclean spirit, "did you dare to invade the members of a Christian woman who by virtue of baptism has become a temple of the Holy Spirit?" "How did you dare to attack one of the faithful?" But here is the answer: "I have done it according

to every rule of justice; for am I not master," said the Devil, "to take that wild beast which is within my preserves? I found her in my own domain," concluding that the stages are a possession most properly belonging to hell.

Therefore see how shameless representations serve him for this purpose more than any other of his masterly inventions, since in theaters he opens a public school for teaching men to sin in thought, word, and deed. St. John Chrysostom said that theaters are "a meditation upon adultery, an exhortation to baseness, examples of dishonor." And first, one is taught there to sin in thought: "a meditation upon adultery." The eyes are the dearest to us among all the senses, and the dearest to the Devil, who cannot be denied to employ them in various ways for our ruin. He employs them by giving us obscene books to read.... He employs them by giving us lascivious paintings to contemplate.... He employs them by causing us to encounter women now too greatly adorned, now badly covered....

Yet our eyes never become better suited to the Devil's purpose than in theaters, where books are living, paintings are vocal, sight is joined to words, and words are animated by gestures, applause, lyres, songs, symphonies, and so forth.... St. John Chrysostom takes up the matter again: "You depart from the theater, and behold, another action begins again in your memory, so much the worse for you as it is more inward. The things which you have seen return to memory." The impure sayings which you heard, the jests, the expressions, and the audacious gestures return to the mind; and you yourself become a portable theater, actor, scene, stage, spectator, subject, and whatever you wish, and so forth.

VIII. Another witchcraft is called hostile, which produces so many slaughters that a single man named Elzana, in the space of two years, is said to have destroyed more than eight hundred persons by his enchantments. Nevertheless, let the enchanters not persuade themselves that they exceed the slaughter of actors even in number, just as they do not exceed its very atrocity, since the latter kill souls, not bodies, which certainly must finally perish either soon or late. To sample something from so vast a matter, from which at least a confused number of the slain may be gathered, we can affirm that among the infinite dangerous occasions by which men are driven to sin, none occurs which supplies our adversaries with weapons so powerful as base comedies.

No one is ignorant that we have three most terrible enemies: the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.... The World, opposed to divine wisdom, receives no stronger weapons with which to foster the rebellion against truth which it continually maintains than from the deceptions of actors. Today one is brought upon the stage who by fraud, iniquity, perfidy, and even sacrilegious enchantments prepares a path for himself to a kingdom, revenge, or victory; and by prosperous fortune he is seen to have arrived at that for which he longed. A young man is represented who by cunning art eludes the vigilance of a jealous husband. An infamous pimp is depicted who with money purchases a virgin's honor for others. A duel is proposed for contemplation as worthy of memory and esteem. An action disapproved with such severity and with so many curses by both divine and ecclesiastical law is extolled. Christian continence is debased as foolishness; impious cunning is regarded as wisdom; the Gospel is disgraced; faith is mocked; fortune is erected into a goddess; and those maxims which form the foundations of atheism are established. Now by dishonest witticisms, now by heretical amphibologies, virtue is depicted as vice. All things are ascribed to chance, and the government having been taken from Divine Providence, it is attributed to Fate.

Actions, sentiments, and outcomes of this kind constitute a great part of comedies. Therefore, where does the World establish its dogmas more solidly than in comedies, where applause is given from the stage to those dogmas which, if they were pronounced elsewhere, would be subject to the gravest censure? Nor does it matter that you object that errors of this kind are feigned upon the stage and

not believed, since the World obtains no small profit from them when the actors pronounce them as if they believed them and the listeners applaud.

The flesh, our other enemy, assails us more dangerously by domestic sedition and arms us against ourselves. It accomplishes this when it so sharpens in us the hunger for pleasure that the satiation of one appetite becomes the hunger of another. In this betrayal the flesh derives from no other worldly entertainment so many weapons as from obscene comedies. For on other occasions it enters into an alliance with only one of our senses, but in the theater it binds them all to itself. *Other crimes claim separate portions for themselves in us*, says Salvian in book 6. Other entertainments, although depraved, attack a single sense. One defiles the imagination, another the ears, another infects the eyes, and so of the others; so that if one sense sins, another can restrain itself from sin. In theaters, however, no sense is free from guilt, because the mind is polluted by concupiscences, the ears by hearing, and the eyes by sight. In theaters the slaughter is most universal: no faculty of ours there escapes guilt. This is so clear that it was recognized even amid the very darkness of unbelief. Hence Seneca in Letter 7 pronounced that for thoroughly corrupting morals no poisoning was more effective than spectacles, which by the sweetness of pleasure pour vice from every side into the human heart. *Nothing is so harmful to good morals as to sit at some spectacle; for then vices creep in more easily through pleasure*, and so forth.

Finally, our third enemy, fiercer than the others if not in deed at least in desire, is the Devil. He holds theaters and stages as his own estates, from which he collects immense revenues. Hear what Tertullian relates in *On Spectacles*, chapter 26, in order to restrain the faithful from spectacles. A certain matron, although a Christian, yet more a lover of pleasure than of the Cross, went to the theater, captivated by curiosity. The Devil invaded her and tormented her with cruel tyranny. When she was brought to an exorcist, she learned the cause of her calamity. "How," cries the exorcist, "did you dare, unclean spirit, to attack the body of a Christian woman, which by virtue of baptism is a temple of the Holy Spirit?" "I did it with the greatest justice," the spirit replies. "For the theaters and stages are my estates. I found her in my own domain." It is therefore evident that comedies are most fertile infernal fields, from which demons collect richer revenues. Here they open public schools in which they teach spectators to sin in thought, word, and deed. Therefore Chrysostom rightly says: "Theaters are a meditation upon adultery, an exhortation to baseness, examples of dishonor."

And first the mind is instructed to sin in thought: *a meditation upon adultery*. The eyes are dearer to us than all the senses. The Devil especially employs these in various ways, as being more suited to our slaughter. He employs them when he opens obscene books for us to read. He employs them when he exhibits lascivious paintings for us to contemplate. He employs them when women either too greatly adorned or too little covered meet us. Nevertheless, the eyes never serve the Devil's purpose more than in theaters, where books are alive, paintings are vocal, sight is joined with words, and words are vivified by gesture, applause, lyre, song, and symphony. "You depart," says Chrysostom, "from the theater, and immediately in your mind the scenes revive, so much the more destructive as they are the more inward." The impure sayings, jests, pointed phrases, and bold gestures return to the mind, and you yourself have become for yourself a walking theater, actor and spectator, scene and stage, and whatever you wish, and so forth.

IX. *But let enough have been said thus far about this disorder, and let it rather be concluded with Tertullian that, just as comedies in practice become the inventresses of a thousand shameful wicked deeds, so they change the theater*

into a temple dedicated to all the devils, or at least to as many as are the persons who come there. "There sit as many unclean spirits as the place contains men." On Spectacles*, chapter 12. This being established, let whoever can now deny that, if the comedians furnish our enemies - the World, the Flesh, and the Devil - with the most unconquered weapons, they are so many enchanters of souls, and that those who listen to them willingly are so many persons bewitched, to be placed in church among the energumens. "The enchantment of triflers obscures good things."*

"*It obscures good things*" *in order to demonstrate the third species of enchantment, called sleep-producing, by which consciences remain asleep in their evil and almost stupefied.... Sleep is a certain immobility and a certain stupefaction of sense. Such is their sleep with respect to faith, which does not act, and with respect to the proper spirits of a Christian mind, which do not move.... It can well be said of these lethargic bewitched persons that they see vain things: "they see vain things," because they discover and hold as valid certain wholly frivolous excuses for exculpating themselves. We can reduce them to three heads. Some, hearing these corrupt comedies frequently, excuse themselves; others excuse the comedies; and others, worse than all, accuse those who censure them.*

The first of these lovers of their dreams, therefore, excuse themselves, asserting that although they are continually in the theaters and hear representations unworthy of being heard, nevertheless they derive no evil from them but use them as innocent entertainment.... I believe that one who speaks thus is like a bird asleep in the snares.... St. Paul, wishing to name concupiscence, called it a law: "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind." But why give it such a name? I believe that the Apostle was moved to this by two reasons. First, because law is inexorable and is not like the legislator, who can hear petitions and can change a sentence. It is always fixed in one manner. Such is concupiscence. It does not grow gentle and is not altered, but always dictates to sense in one and the same form that it procure every possible pleasure.

The other reason was that law is universal and constrains all its subjects equally, without acceptance of persons. Thus concupiscence commands all its tyrannical precepts and equally burdens all its subjects. How, then, do these men boast of so strange an exemption from a law at once so cruel and so common that it made even the Apostle himself groan in resisting it? Is it possible that for them alone it has laid aside every tyranny, so that they can see, hear, imagine, think, and speak about so slippery a matter, under the impulse both of outward examples and inward evil habits, without falling into error? The saints do not hold themselves secure even in inaccessible solitudes, and with St. Jerome they experience amid deserts the tempests and whirlwinds of the theaters; and sinners will believe, and wish others to believe, that in the midst of theaters they enjoy that quiet which is scarcely found in solitude, and that the stages know how to change themselves into a desert? "No one comes to pleasure without affection," says Tertullian, "and no one suffers affection without its accidents." And Salvian says that "in those images all the people fornicate with the fornications; and those who perhaps came pure to the spectacle return from the theater adulterers." And from propositions so universal some wish so easily to exempt themselves alone? It is plainly seen that they dream without measure.

Moreover, when comedies are evil, this is enough to make you evil who go to hear them without necessity, by reason of those sins to which at least you lend encouragement.... Speaking of the works of the Gentiles, the Apostle said that "worthy of death are not only those who do them, but also those who consent to those doing them." How, then, are we not persuaded that we are bound not only not to perform them, but likewise to keep ourselves far from those who perform them? Do you believe that those shameless comedians would return continually to the stages to speak worse than ever if the support of those who go so eagerly to hear them were lacking? "Those who praise them by speaking persuade them to practice these things," says St. John Chrysostom, Homily 6 on Matthew.

And do not reply that hearers would come even without you, for this is not a valid excuse. First, I do not find that the saints ever made this distinction between those who go first to the theater and those who go last; rather, they always rebuked in the same way all those who go there. Then tell me: if a conspiracy ordered to take the prince's life, or even only to stir up his state and diminish his subjects, were already at the point of attaining its effect without you, could you take part in supporting it by some act of benign assistance? Indeed, you have so much the more to keep yourself far from it as you desire not to be numbered among those felons who give their work to it as guilty of high treason. Why, therefore, do you not wish the same to be said in our case? I do not know whether in the Church Christ suffers a conspiracy similar to that which is woven against him in the lascivious theater. Those who excuse themselves there as though guilty of nothing because they are not the first to go plainly dream.

But no less do those dream who excuse the comedies, that is, modern comedies. Let it be told to me: what more dangerous or even more destructive thing could the ancient comedies so greatly censured by the saints contain? What the saints reprehended in them was either the subject, the costume, or the appearances. And are not all these three parts equally free in our days? Why did I say equally? Would to God they were not more detestable. Do you know what harms the cause? It is that one cannot speak freely from this place. Otherwise, what unspeakable thing seen in our days upon Christian stages would I not tell you? "The impurities of theaters alone are things which cannot honorably even be accused," Tertullian, On Spectacles*, chapter 7. It is therefore fitting that I content myself with affirming to you that, if Tertullian gave the ancient theaters names so reproachful, calling them now consistories of shamelessness, now shrines of Venus, now asylums of every infamy, not one of such titles can be denied to those modern theaters of which I speak.... "At the altar of luxury they are slaughtered in theaters as though victims." Is the failure of the Christian people to recognize these truths not an argument of the magical lethargy which oppresses them? Is the wish to defend such abuses by bold and absurd reasons not to dream? Is giving credit to such distorted reasons not even to love dreams as though they were revealed truths?*

What then shall we say of those who not only excuse themselves and excuse the comedies, but in addition accuse those who reprove them? And yet it comes even to this. If preachers do not act as mute dogs, it is said that they do not distinguish between a secular and a solitary; that they are indiscreet, unreasonable, and enemies of public recreation, although it is innocent. The dreams of feverish men, says the philosopher, are wont to be monstrous. Who then can doubt that the monstrosity of such propositions is enough to declare unhealthy in sentiment one who forms them in a manner so remote from what is fitting?

First, as to making no distinction between a secular and a solitary, I would make it more than great; and I would judge that a worldly man ought at all times to guard himself with greater care from the dangers of sinning than anchorites do. For which of the two seems to you more properly to fear the tusks of a fierce boar: the hunter who has taken his position in a lofty tree, or the hunter who finds himself upon the level ground? But if those preachers who openly reprove theaters are indiscreet, unreasonable, and enemies of public recreation, then it will be necessary to place among these indiscreet, these unreasonable, and these public enemies the best of the sacred Doctors already adduced by me; it will be necessary to place there the legislators of the world, the Councils, the Canons, and, I almost said, the Church herself, which expressly condemns theaters among those diabolical pomps which she causes every faithful person to renounce in holy baptism.

We have from Tertullian that in ancient times by this more than by anything else a Christian was recognized: by abandoning the public stages. "Hence the pagans especially understand that a man has become a Christian from his repudiation of spectacles." That zealous man therefore judged that not to care for that distinguishing mark by which he was recognized was almost to renounce baptism: "Therefore he manifestly denies who takes away that by which he

is recognized." Nor should you believe that this happened because some worship was given to idols in those stages. He said that the theater was forbidden to the Christian because shamelessness was forbidden to the Christian: "You have, therefore, the prohibition of the theater from the prohibition of shamelessness." The holy bishop of Marseilles held the same sense when he affirmed that "in spectacles there is apostasy from the faith." Hence he added to every faithful person with lively ardor: "How then, O Christian, do you follow spectacles after baptism which you confess to be the work of the Devil?" And yet they wish to accuse modern preachers who loudly condemn what is so unbecoming to a true Christian?

It is plain that the defenders of lascivious theaters have lost little less than the faith, or at least have lost that light which it infuses into us for judging things.... Modern Christians have lost the idea of Christianity, since they have in great part lost the Spirit of Jesus, that Spirit which they received from him in baptism as reborn to a life entirely different from that of the old Adam; hence they can scarcely any longer be recognized as what they profess themselves to be. "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his." It appears that they do not follow a God crucified amid sufferings, but a Sardanapalus treading amid delights and amusements. And if anything else is discussed than passing time in cheerful gatherings, they understand not a scrap of it, and so forth.

The reasons I have brought forward to detach you from profane comedies are so clear that whoever does not wish to understand them has no sense. What deception, then, is this, not to attend to them? Is it not an enchantment, a spell, an act of sorcery? And who, then, are those by whom you allow yourselves to be so distorted? What are, what are, so to speak, those magicians who have bewitched your imagination? "O senseless men, who has bewitched you not to obey the truth?" Galatians 4. They are a band of vile people whom you yourselves regard as infamous, and who are held infamous by the imperial laws, which for a long time continued to banish them from cities. One can say that they are held much more infamous by the Church, which excludes actors and renders them incapable of all sacred orders.

Answer, therefore, the arguments of Tertullian, who says to you as he said to the pagans: either the profession of the comedians is unworthy or it is honorable. If unworthy, how then do you praise the one who practices it? How do you run to hear them? How do you approve them? How do you love them? How do you give them so lively an applause? And if honorable, how then can you deny them honors? How do you exclude them from public offices? How do you exclude them from private society? How would you be ashamed to have kinship in common with them? I do not understand, says this Doctor, so perverse a way of proceeding. "How great the perversity! They love those whom they punish. They magnify the art; they mark the artists." If in truth these are infamous people, who taught you to abandon the true way for them? This is that rabble to which St. Augustine gave the title not of foul, but of most foul: "the most foul theatrical men," and so forth.

Enough concerning this baseness; and let it be concluded with Tertullian: just as comedies in practice become the inventresses of a thousand shameful wicked deeds, so they transform the theater into a temple dedicated to all the devils, or at least to as many as there are spectators who assemble there. *There sit as many unclean spirits as the place contains men.* This being established, who will deny that comedians, who supply our enemies - the World, the Flesh, and the Devil - with stronger weapons, are so many poisoners of souls, and that the listeners are so many persons infected by poison? *The enchantment of triflers obscures good things.*

It obscures good things. From this we gather the third kind of witchcraft, called sleep-producing, by which consciences remain stupefied with opium.... Sleep is a certain stupor of sense. Of this kind is their sleep, which both makes faith idle and enchants the spirit of the Christian mind. These lethargic sleepers are rightly said to see vain things. They see vain things because they regard as solid excuses

things which are altogether unable to purge them of crime, and which are reduced to three heads. Some excuse the hearers of base comedies; others excuse the comedies themselves; others, worse than the rest, censure those who condemn them.

The first, therefore, lovers of dreams of this kind, excuse themselves, affirming that they are continually present at theaters and behold these representations, unworthy as they are to be heard, without contracting any stain, but use them only as an innocent entertainment.... One who speaks thus, as it seems to me, is like a bird caught asleep among snares.... St. Paul calls concupiscence a law: *I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind.* But why did he impose the name of law upon concupiscence? For two reasons. One is that law is not like a legislator, who can hear supplications and change a sentence, but remains inexorable, every variation being excluded. Such is concupiscence, which never grows gentle and is not changed, but, continuing in the same form, persuades sense to procure pleasures for itself with every effort. The other reason is that law is universal and equally constrains all subjects without exception of persons. Thus concupiscence prescribes to all its appetites commands, although tyrannical, and burdens all in the same way.

With what face, therefore, do the spectators of comedies boast of so unusual an exemption from a law at once so cruel and so common, under whose yoke even the Apostle himself was compelled to groan as he resisted it? Can it happen that for those theatrical men alone it has so put off its tyranny that they alone can see, hear, imagine, think, and speak about so slippery a matter, while outward examples and inward depraved habits impel them, without experiencing any lapse? Holy men consider themselves by no means secure even amid inaccessible solitudes, and with St. Jerome they suffer in the very deserts the tempests and whirlwinds of theaters; but wicked men will dare to delude themselves and others that they enjoy a tranquility of affections scarcely flourishing in solitude and that the stages themselves are transformed into a desert? *No one comes to pleasure without affection*, says Tertullian, chapter 17 of *On Spectacles*, *and no one suffers affection without its accidents*. The spectators of stages contend so shamelessly to exempt themselves alone from so universal a law. It appears splendidly how deep a sleep holds them.

What of the fact that, since the comedies are base, this is sufficient to make the spectators guilty when they approach to hear them under no compelling necessity, at least because of those sins which their presence fosters? Speaking of the works of the pagans, Paul says: *Worthy of death are not only those who do them, but also those who consent to those doing them.* It is therefore established that not only can we not act comedies, but we must also abstain from looking at them. Would shameless actors come forth upon the stage to perform if the presence of listeners were lacking? *Those who praise them by speaking persuade them to practice these things*, says Chrysostom, Homily 6 on Matthew. Do not reply that listeners would not be lacking in your absence. The reply is inept. The holy Doctors never mentioned a distinction between those who first and those who last approach the theater, but continually reproved all in the same manner.

Moreover, if a conspiracy against the life of a prince or to stir up subjects against him were near execution without you, could you assist or favor it without crime? Indeed, you ought to be farther from it in proportion as you more ardently desire not to be numbered among those rebels who, guilty of high treason, give their efforts to it. The same must therefore be said in our case. Scarcely any conspiracy in the Church against Christ is similar to that which the authors and spectators of a base

theater devise against him. Therefore those who proceed there and consider themselves free of guilt because they are not the first to go are plainly deluded, as Bardi, Ferantinus, and Diana dream.

Nor are those less deluded who excuse comedies, that is, modern comedies. I ask: what more dangerous, or even more destructive, did the ancient comedies so greatly censured by the holy Fathers present? What the Fathers censured in them was either the subject, the custom, or the appearance or representation. Are not these three things practiced equally freely in present-day theaters? But why did I say equally? Would that they were not more detestable. It harms our cause that one may not speak freely in this place. Otherwise, what unspeakable thing seen in Christian theaters would I not disclose? *The impurities of theaters alone are things which cannot honorably even be accused*, says Tertullian, chapter 7. Finally, let it suffice me to have said this: of so many reproachful titles which Tertullian ascribes to ancient theaters, which he calls now the consistory of shamelessness, now the shrine of Venus, now the asylum of all crimes, not one of such titles can rightly be denied to the modern theaters of which I speak.

At the altar of luxury they are slaughtered in theaters as though victims. That the Christian people are ignorant of this truth proceeds from the fact that they lie oppressed by a magical lethargy. And do not those who are not ashamed to defend such corruptions with bold and absurd petty reasons plainly rave? Do not those who place faith in these vain inventions love dreams as though they were luminous truths?

What, then, must be said of those who not only excuse themselves and the comedies, but also censure those who condemn the comedies? It has finally come to this evil. Unless preachers become mute dogs, the cry immediately goes up that they do not distinguish laymen from solitary men, that they are unjust, imprudent, and enemies of public recreation, although it is innocent. The philosopher says that the dreams of feverish persons are monstrous. But no one fails to see that the portent of these excuses most abundantly manifests the delirium of those who conceive such monsters.

As regards the distinction between a solitary and a worldly man, I confess that it is great, and in my judgment a worldly man ought to be more vigilant than an anchorite in guarding himself from the danger of sin. For which of two men is more constrained to fear the bite of a fierce boar: the hunter who sits above upon a lofty tree, or the other who walks on the ground? But if those preachers who detest theaters are to be called imprudent, fanatical Rigorists, and enemies of public quiet, then among these unjust men, fanatics, and enemies of public tranquility must be numbered the principal Doctors of the Church praised above, the legislators of the world, Councils, Canons, and the Church herself, which expressly rejects theaters among those pomps of the Devil which all the faithful abjure in baptism.

Tertullian testifies that the pagans recognized a man as a Christian by nothing more than his absence from theaters: *Hence the pagans especially understand that a man has become a Christian from his repudiation of spectacles*. Tertullian judges that one who does not care for this prerogative by which he is recognized almost renounces baptism. *Therefore he manifestly denies who takes away that by which he is recognized*. Nor should anyone bring himself to believe that this happened because worship was exhibited to idols in the theater. *For this reason*, says Tertullian, *theaters are forbidden to Christians, because shamelessness is forbidden to them. You have, therefore, the prohibition of the theater from the prohibition of shamelessness*. Salvian affirms the same thing: *In spectacles there is apostasy from the faith. How then, O Christian, do you follow*

spectacles after baptism which you confess to be the work of the Devil? Thus speak the Fathers; and bold and ignorant men do not hesitate to bite modern preachers because with raised voice they execrate theaters as conflicting with Christian profession.

It is inferred clearly enough from this that defenders of base comedies have almost lost faith itself, or at least that light which faith infuses, by which we value truths. They have lost the image of Christianity, or the notion of the present-day Christian. For they have in great part so lost the Spirit of Jesus Christ, whom they received in baptism in order to live a new life entirely different from that of the old Adam, that the religion which they profess can scarcely be recognized. *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he is not his.* They appear to profess not Christ crucified amid sufferings, but Sardanapalus amid delights and entertainments. They perceive no other discourses except those of feasting, playing, and conversing merrily.

The considerations of reason against profane comedies are so clear that those to whom they do not shine must lack common sense. Is it not a great delusion not to turn the mind to them? Is not that an open enchantment, poisoning, and bewitchment? Finally, who are those by whom Christians are perverted? Who are, who are those poisoners who have bewitched your mind? *O senseless men, who has bewitched you not to obey the truth?* They are the vilest race of men, the dregs of the people. You yourselves regard them as infamous; the imperial laws condemn them as infamous, laws which for a long time expelled them from cities; the Church regards them as infamous, since she declared them unfit for sacred orders. Tertullian argues satisfactorily: either the profession of comedians is infamous or honorable. If the first, why do you praise its professors? Why do you run to hear them? Why do you love them? Why do you applaud them? If the second, why do you deny them honors? Why do you exclude them from public dignities and restrain them from your domestic society? Why would you be ashamed to have kinship in common with them? What perversity! They love those whom they punish. They magnify the art; they mark the artists. You repudiate truth so that you may adhere to an infamous race. This is that vile race upon which Augustine placed the most sordid title: *the most foul theatrical men.*

Chapter XV — Certain Observations upon the Doctrine of Father Paolo Segneri Just Reviewed, against the Defenders of Theaters, Who Are Not Ashamed to Babble That the Fathers Condemned Theaters because of Idolatry, but Not because of Shamelessness

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Certain Observations upon the Doctrine of Father Paolo Segneri Just Reviewed, against the Defenders of Theaters, Who Are Not Ashamed to Babble That the Fathers Condemned Theaters because of Idolatry, but Not because of Shamelessness.

I. In a single discourse, in his Attic style, the most eloquent Segneri encompassed all the arguments, both of the ancients and of the later age, against obscene theaters. He yields the palm to no one in attacking this corruption, whose monstrous depravity and hostile opposition to Christian profession he marvelously lays bare. He utterly weakens the excuses, sophisms, and evasions of the defenders of theaters, arranged under three heads; and he proves that those defenders are suspect in faith and devoid of common sense. And since men of this kind will perhaps thrust forward the stale refrain that Father Segneri, after the manner of preachers, condemned the use of theaters beyond what was just by means of the customary figures and amplifications of rhetoricians: but the more celebrated Fathers inveighed against theaters with the same force of eloquence. But, you say, the Fathers also attacked theaters rhetorically, not theologically or casuistically.

II. Those who speak in this manner - and very many do speak so - undermine the chief foundations of our religion, which rest upon the Holy Scriptures and Traditions. What? When the Fathers and sacred orators expound from the evangelical chair the canons of faith and morals, do they exaggerate? Do they speak rhetorically, not theologically? We shall therefore be unable to confirm the dogmas and commandments of our Catholic religion against Lutherans, Calvinists, and other heretics by the authority of the Fathers. For the Lutherans, Calvinists, and Socinians will employ this same answer: namely, that the Fathers spoke rhetorically and after the manner of preachers when they confirmed the articles of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and the veneration of sacred images. Sacred orators certainly bring into the open either the gravity of vice or the excellence of virtue, and endeavor to impress it upon the minds of their hearers by the efficacy both of words and of figures and similitudes. But they sin, and indeed most gravely, if they adulterate the truth of doctrine, if they increase or diminish the gravity of wickedness beyond what is just.

III. But let those who oppose us hear with what clarity Father Segneri explains the notion of the comedies which he declares detestable and circumscribes their quality. *I condemn*, he says in the exordium, *those comedies which either by their nature or by accident incite their hearers to evil. Of this kind by their nature are those which contain either an obscene subject, immodest words, irreligious propositions, or the representation of base actions. Such by accident are those which indeed are composed upon an honorable subject, but nevertheless are polluted by the intermixture of interludes which are called pleasant but are base, or by the appearance of female mimes lasciviously adorned, who by their presence or speech while acting - or dancing - excite affections opposed to honesty. This is the quality of comedies all too common in present-day theaters which I undertake to overthrow.*

IV. Let the strenuous defenders of theaters explain to us what word in this exposition of the case is subject to just censure. Indeed, the very state of the case has been set forth so clearly that it eludes all the cavils, intricacies, and sophisms of the adversaries and closes off every escape. By their nature comedies or tragedies which contain an obscene subject move toward evil. They contain an obscene subject when amorous intrigues are intermingled, even though it be expressed in a poetic drama otherwise most honorable. For things which aim at soothing concupiscence are altogether base and obscene. This is so certain that no one can deny it unless he both lacks common sense and in his delirium wishes to call the base honorable and the obscene chaste. Comedies or tragedies composed upon an honorable subject are also base by their nature when they are represented with immodest words or recount immodest actions. Comedies and tragedies are obscene by accident, or apart from their design, when they are composed upon a subject not opposed to good morals but are polluted by an afterpiece - commonly called an intermezzo - which is acted either by shameless dancing women or by infamous buffoons and most impudent jesters. Let all the comedies and tragedies hitherto published and represented in the theater be brought forward: not one will be found which is not base and obscene under some one of the heads which I have just reviewed.

V. Hence the escape remains closed to those who say that poetic dramas are honorable because they have been approved by public officials. Are the afterpieces, the lascivious adornment of little women, their gestures, sighs, glances and darts of the eyes, movements, gestures, bodily inflections, postures, and countless other diabolical tricks performed by male or female mimes approved? Neither this soldier nor that one, but all of them jointly, with their forces mutually united, storm the citadel under the leadership of their commander. The Devil likewise besieges the citadel of the soul and enters it, accompanied by the whole army just reviewed.

VI. The most excellent orator just praised demonstrates, strengthens, and confirms the state of the case, set forth so plainly and distinctly, by the most luminous reasons drawn from Holy Scripture, the Fathers, the Councils, and the very nature of things, with the abundant force of eloquence and in a marvelous order, and with the assistance sought from the more solid rhetorical art, without pronouncing anything by exaggeration. He places the most base consequences of theaters before the eyes. He rushes upon his adversaries, breaks their petty objections, crushes them, and utterly overthrows them. Justly and rightly he declares the defenders of the theaters of our age to be bewitched by the enchantment of vanity and of pleasure which darkens the mind. For what bewitchment can be conceived more ruinous than that by which a bewitched Christian, after renouncing Satan and the pomps of the world in baptism, dares to assert that attendance at theaters is lawful? Other vices, as Father Segneri wisely observes with the Fathers, assail one sense, as though one part of our body and soul. But theaters are infernal camps in which the World, the Flesh, and the Devil everywhere undermine the Gospels of Christ. They directly assail chastity, penitence, humility, charity, meditation upon heavenly goods, and the other Christian virtues. There ambition, luxury, pride, carnal pleasure, snares, frauds, base amusements, anger, revenge, cupidity, and all the unsheathed weapons of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil unfurl their banners and sing their triumphs; they attack all the Christian virtues and endeavor to exterminate them.

Chapter XVI — From the Principles of Probabilism Itself, Theologians Demonstrate That the Actors and Spectators of Base Comedies Sin Mortally, because They Expose Themselves to at Least the Probable Danger of Grave Guilt

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From the Principles of Probabilism Itself, Theologians Demonstrate That the Actors and Spectators of Base Comedies Sin Mortally, because They Expose Themselves to at Least the Probable Danger of Grave Guilt.

I. It has thus far been demonstrated by invincible considerations of reason that the present-day comedies commonly represented in public theaters are base and obscene, and by their nature criminal; that a morally certain and proximate danger of many crimes is attached to them. It has likewise been shown that the male and female actors are the sources of all the crimes which follow from them. Now, so that we may fortify our opinion on every side, let us permit for the sake of disputation that the danger of sinning in this manner is not morally certain but only probable.

II. A morally certain and proximate danger, says the eminent Doctor Father Francisco Suarez, volume 4 on the Third Part, disputation 32, section 2, number 4, is called that which by its kind is such that it frequently induces men to such a sin. The obscene theaters which I have described, in view of the extreme weakness of men and the intimate connection of the matter or represented object with the sensitive appetite, frequently impel men into venereal delights and carnal desires. Those, therefore, who deliberately frequent such theaters expose themselves to a morally certain and proximate danger. Consequently, according to all theologians, spectators of theaters of this kind sin mortally.

III. Even the Probabilists themselves call that a probable danger which probably, though not certainly, induces to evil. For reasons that are not light but probable and grave occur which indicate the probable event of a future sin. A light or remote danger, supported by light reasons, is regarded as no danger, as Father Cardenas, disputation 18, chapter 2 and chapter 7, number 77, learned and most moderate among the Probabilists and a vigorous enemy of lax opinions, teaches. All prudent men fear a probable danger in civil commerce, and he who voluntarily undertakes it without grave necessity does not escape the mark of rashness. Merchants entrust their goods either to maritime navigation, exposed to pirates, storms at sea, and the fragility of ships, or to a journey by land, exposed to robbers and other accidents. Although that danger is not morally certain and evident, because only eight or ten in a hundred perish in business of this kind, nevertheless, because the danger is prudently feared and reasons that are not light but grave occur which indicate it, prudent merchants pay six, eight, ten, and more according to the diversity of dangers for insurance and indemnity from such a danger. Therefore, although this danger is not morally certain - for if it were such, neither would the merchant thus expose his goods nor would insurers be found who would wish to render the goods immune from so great a danger - but only probable, nevertheless prudent men pay a price for the redemption of that danger and fear it. Cardenas says that all theologians defend this doctrine, and all prudent men put it into practice in every temporal transaction. Who, when necessity has been removed, would voluntarily wish to expose his life, his honor, his goods, or his patrimony to a probable danger? If an argument from the lesser to the greater, from perishable things to the eternal

salvation of the soul and to the infinite riches of divine grace, has force, it follows by a most evident inference that all Christians are imprudent and foolish who voluntarily undergo the danger of theaters, even if it were only probable, when every grave necessity has been removed.

IV. Theologians distinguish a threefold necessity. They call the first a necessity of charity or justice, by which a surgeon is bound to treat a woman laboring under a grave disease in her private parts and who lacks another physician. The second is called physical, such as the detention of an enemy in prison together with his foe, with danger of striking or killing him. The third is that by which a son of the family is bound to inhabit his father's house, in which a woman who is gravely dangerous to the young man's chastity dwells.

V. Probabilist authors commonly affirm that when one of these three necessities presses, a Christian man can with a safe conscience permit, suffer, or undergo that probable, not certain, danger. But when every necessity of this kind has been removed, they assert that he sins who voluntarily exposes himself to this probable danger. Certain laxer Probabilists, such as Gobat, Leander, Hurtado, and Busembaum, extend this necessity to recreation of the mind, entertainment, and the satisfaction of curiosity. Nevertheless, all commonly deny that, when no grave necessity presses, it is lawful to enter a probable danger of sinning mortally.

VI. It must nevertheless be observed, and indeed seriously, that at present we speak only of the probable danger of falling into a crime of lust, an impure delight, or a depraved desire, and so forth. For grave necessity has force to excuse only from undergoing this danger. But no necessity in the world can excuse either the actors who represent obscene comedies or the spectators from the sin of cooperation or consent, as has been demonstrated above and will be made clearer below. With these things premised, I form this argument, exact according to the rule of Probabilism itself.

VII. One who without grave necessity exposes himself to a probable danger of sinning mortally sins mortally. But all who attend obscene comedies which provoke to lust, pressed by no necessity and for the sole recreation of the mind and entertainment of the senses, expose themselves to a probable danger of sinning mortally. Therefore they sin mortally. All true theologians and, commonly, the more benign Probabilists themselves admit the first proposition. The second is established by reason, the authority of Holy Scripture, and daily experience. Yet because someone might cavil at this alone, it is useful to confirm it briefly. An obscene comedy is one which consists of the fables of poets, amorous intrigues, and scurrilous interludes; male and female mimes represent it with fornicatory singing, meretricious music, motions, measured dances, and gestures displaying most tender love. These are the obscene comedies of our age. Comedies of this kind by their nature stimulate concupiscence and kindle, irritate, and inflame it. Therefore the danger of consenting is at least probable. Come now: will you deny that harmonious music with the sweetest song soothes the ears, and that the marvelous movements and gesticulations of a most shameless dancing woman delight the eyes? Why is this? Because every sense is delighted by its own object, as all philosophers attest. Therefore concupiscence also by its nature is delighted by its own object of obscene love, described in the fable and represented by the voice and gesture of a male and female mime. What to these things? I press you more closely. You must distinguish the external occasion from the danger of inward consent. The external occasion is the obscene comedy itself, which, equipped with all the tricks just reviewed, undertakes to storm your senses and your concupiscence. This attack and siege of the citadel of your soul is grave by its nature, and victory probably adheres to it. Unless you are a fool,

you cannot deny this. Therefore, although you were a vigorous soldier and absolute master of your concupiscence, you nevertheless sin mortally because you expose yourself to this external occasion most full of dangers.

VIII. You reply: this external occasion has no force with respect to me. I am an honorable and well-born man, and, taught by experience, I testify that I am not moved even a little. I myself would be dishonorable and morose if I denied belief to you, an honorable man. Yet I say that you nevertheless sin because voluntarily, and under no compelling necessity, but solely from curiosity and empty entertainment, you expose yourself to an occasion which by its nature has absolutely joined to it a probable danger of mortal sin. This reasoning certainly appears valid, but manifest experience contradicts it. I have often, you insist again, watched the aforesaid comedies and have suffered neither delight, temptation, nor the stings of concupiscence. Very well. I rejoice and congratulate your fortune, because amid the heats of the Dog Star you do not feel the rays of the sun. But St. Basil replies, *Constitutions for Monks*, chapter 4, that you are a most astonishing animal. Jerome replies, as St. Antoninus testifies in the *Summa*, part 2, title 6, chapter 6, that he does not believe a man *if he says that he escaped unharmed*. Chrysostom replies, Homily 1 on Psalm 50, that you are not a man subject to the common weakness but *a rock or iron*. Augustine confesses that he departed injured; even Seneca himself confesses the same. But I press you more closely. Are you truly chaste or unchaste? If chaste, you are therefore subject to temptations. Therefore, when you cast yourself into an occasion to which a probable danger of falling is attached, you sin gravely. Moreover, will you emerge victorious over the gravest temptations and theatrical allurements by your own strength or by the grace of God? If you assert the first, you are a Pelagian heretic. If you need the grace of God, will God impart this grace and his aids to you while you voluntarily cast yourself into grave dangers? *If you do not avoid danger as much as you can*, says Augustine, *you tempt God rather than hope in him.* The first grace which God confers preserves one from a free occasion of temptation. *Remove from me the way of iniquity. And lead us not into temptation. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.*

Either you are free from the stings of concupiscence and the temptations of the Devil, or you are not. You cannot assert the first without presenting yourself as a fool. Therefore the second is true. Consequently, if you are subject to the blows of concupiscence and the temptations of the Devil, then concupiscence and the demons will certainly attack you and rush upon you with their whole force; they will send specters, masks, and the tricks of shamelessness into the citadel of your soul when they find you entangled among theatrical snares and bewitched. Moreover, especially in a venereal conflict, the grace of God inspires flight, not an assault upon temptation. You have resisted the grace that inspires flight. Therefore you will succumb in the conflict. What more? Are you stronger than David, Solomon, Samson, or Paul? Are you stronger than Anthony, Hilarion, Augustine, Jerome, Benedict, and all the other saints, some of whom cast themselves into thorns, while others, amid the lairs of beasts and scorpions, restrained the stings of the flesh with fasts and scourges? But will you, fattened amid the very fans and fires of lust, sated with exquisite feasts, besieged within and without on every side by the satellites of Venus, emerge victorious and unstained? Nor should you insist that some in fact have emerged chaste from the theater. How is that known to you? Who is the judge? Add that an extraordinary and unusual event does not break a universal rule. Besides, chastity receives wounds which are not apparent to the senses; and finally, the sin of rashly entering dangers, the sin of consent to the crimes of the actors, and the scandal by which your presence fosters the corruption do not cease. For from this others argue: that most upright man frequents theaters;

therefore such attendance is honorable. Finally, by a most cunning artifice the Devil sometimes does not irritate or inflame the beast of concupiscence, so that with greater security he may slaughter souls in his snares over the course of time. Therefore, although chaste men should fall into no crime of venereal delight, they nevertheless can in no way escape the crime of consent to the corruption of actors, dancing women, and female singers, since they foster it by their presence. Whichever way you turn, you will not escape.

IX. I come to the other part of the dilemma. If you are not chaste but covered with the wounds of lasciviousness, will you proceed into the theaters, or into the contests of Venus, to fight? Wounded on every side, will you obtain victory over the most powerful enemies? You will hear very many speaking thus: we frequent theaters without suffering any disturbance, indeed not even temptation. We assemble there to speak with friends and acquaintances and sometimes to hear something of music or song. But we do not even lend an ear to those tales of love which male or female mimes recite. So it is. They have drunk the chalice of Babylon even to the dregs; they are like weary oxen wallowing in the mud of lust; they are drunk and intoxicated with the wine of prostitution. They are like those gluttons who, sated and stuffed with feasts, taste certain sweetmeats only with the tips of their lips at the end of the table. In like manner their concupiscence, surfeited, filled, and as it were crushed by filthy feasts of lasciviousness, in some measure disdains and scorns the impure dishes. Yet even these men taste the sweetmeats of lust. They taste the sweetness of song and the harmony of music; they soothe their eyes with the splendor of clothing and scenery and with the agility of the dancing women. If they were true Christians, they ought to do penance for the lust they have committed. But, on the contrary, they continue to stimulate their senses in whatever way they can. The Devil does not even tempt these men, because they are his own, but employs them as ministers and preachers of hell who teach similar things in circles and conversations. Theaters and comedies sharpen the appetites of solitaries and ecclesiastics and inflame the concupiscence of those who are by no means practiced in the wrestling-ground of lust. Continual habit has made these men vigorous and unconquered. By preaching such things as apostles of the Devil, they induce others to frequent theaters, and their pestilential doctrine spreads more widely day by day from ear to ear by an uninterrupted tradition. They are like the magician Balaam in Numbers 22, who, hearing from the mouth of an ass a rebuke of his cruelty, was not astonished at all, because, intent upon the enchantments of the Devil and the horrible specters of demons, *he was accustomed to monsters*, says Augustine. In like manner these men feel no flame in the midst of theatrical lasciviousness because they experience nothing new, since they are always burning and being consumed in the furnace of Babylon. Thus St. John Chrysostom, Homily 8 *On Penance*, after describing the theatrical fire, eloquently concludes: *And what is more harmful, not even those who are being burned perceive it. For if they perceived it, they would no longer emit that unrestrained laughter. Therefore this is the very worst evil: when someone is sick and does not know that by which he is sick, and, wretchedly burning, does not feel the calamitous fire.*

X. Finally, to touch upon many things in a few words and to press more closely these heroes of chastity after concupiscence has been satiated, I wish them to know that chastity receives wounds without their being apparent to our senses and mind. One who voluntarily keeps his thoughts fixed, under no pressing necessity, upon some venereal object while a grave temptation beats upon him sins mortally either because of consent or because of the danger of consenting. For all theologians regard that voluntary impure meditation as interpretative consent. Therefore the same must be said when

someone freely casts himself, under no pressing necessity, into external occasions which by their nature irritate and provoke to lust. True and strenuous cultivators of chastity are assailed by impure specters. They are uncertain whether they have consented or not. They open the conflict to their confessor with the greatest grief, not knowing whether they have sinned gravely or lightly, and they confess the matter as it is before God. The confessor then judges the fault venial when the penitent truly avoids the occasions of temptation, namely familiarity with women, theaters, comedies, and other dangers of this kind. If, on the contrary, the penitent, compelled by no necessity but for his curiosity and empty entertainment, approaches the occasions and tricks of temptation, then, although he does not know that he expressly gave consent, indeed although he asserts that he did not consent, especially when that struggle is long and the attendance at occasions repeated, the confessor judges that he consented and will deny absolution unless he avoids the occasions of temptations. This is the common doctrine of the Fathers, theologians, and casuists. Therefore let all those practiced in the wrestling-ground of lust reflect that chastity is most delicate and often suffers wounds without their being felt. Finally, these men cannot deny that actors, female mimes, and dancing women sin mortally, as do very many spectators. Therefore, although they did not sin by delighting in a venereal thing, they nevertheless sin mortally because they consent to the sins of the actors and sit in the council of sinners, as I shall soon demonstrate.

Chapter XVII — On the Authority of the More Benign Theologians, the Excuse of Those Who Say That They Watch Obscene Comedies Innocently Is Rejected

CHAPTER XVII

On the Authority of the More Benign Theologians, the Excuse of Those Who Say That They Watch Obscene Comedies Innocently Is Rejected. These Men Sin Mortally, Say the Benign Casuists, on This Ground Alone: That They Approve and by Their Presence Consent to the Mortal Sins of the Actors.

I. Obscene comedies, as has been said elsewhere, are those represented by men and women who plead the causes of lovers and mistresses, as is commonly done today. These are wholly obscene, even though the dramas of the poets which the comedians recite should be modest. Moreover, although I have shown above, and indeed evidently, as it seems to me, that the spectators of base comedies sin mortally on this ground alone, that by their presence they consent to the crimes of the actors, nevertheless I wish to confirm this same truth by the authority of the more benign theologians.

II. Father Jerome Florentinus, in the place cited, discourse 8, page 182, establishes this conclusion: *Those who attend notably obscene comedies sin mortally precisely because they cooperate in the mortal sin of the actors.... For, as I said in the first edition of this my Comedy-Critique, conclusion 6, they sin by consent according to the doctrine of the Apostle in Romans, chapter 1: "Since those who do such things are worthy of death; and not only those who do them, but also those who consent to those doing them."*

His authority proves the point intended so fully that Diana, part 5, tract 13, resolution 81, after citing me together with Hurtado de Mendoza, and in part 11, tract 5, resolution 52, although he brought forward the contrary opinion of Fathers Nicolaus Baldelli, Turrianus, and Ferrantinus, nevertheless said nothing for it, as is his custom, by which he might declare that it seemed even probable to him. Indeed, in part 11, when asked by friends through letters to produce any authors he might have for that opinion, in order to oblige them he alleged, besides Ferrantinus, Father Bardi as well. But not only did he pass over in silence the probability of this opinion; rather, always more inclined to my opinion, he concludes that the opinion of Turrianus, Baldelli, and Ferrantinus is dangerous.

For the aforesaid authors say that the spectators who come first are therefore true cooperators in the sin by which the actors sin, because they are the determining cause that the actors perform the obscene comedy. But those who come second are not the cause why the comedy is performed, since it would still be performed even if they were not present. And thus, because they do not influence this effect, they cannot be called its cause and therefore do not cooperate in the actors' sin, and so forth.

But, notwithstanding this, I say that a distinction of this sort has no force or efficacy. For whatever may be the case as to the first arrivals being called cooperators insofar as they constitute that sufficient number of spectators with whom the actors will perform, without whom they would not perform, and as to those arriving second not being called cooperators because the actors would perform without them, this much is certain: if the second do not cooperate, it still cannot be denied that they consent to an action of this kind. Therefore, on the testimony of St. Paul, they truly sin. And it is proved by reason. For John to consent, for example, to the sin of others and not to act with respect to it is nothing other than for John's will to tend toward the same sinful object through an act of complacency or delight.... It is therefore established that even without cooperation the spectators consent to the obscenity of the

actors, and by this incur what St. Paul said in the place cited: "Worthy of death are not only those who do them, but also those who consent to those doing them."

Here St. Thomas in his commentary understands that the penalty of this death is due first to those who commit such sins, and not only to them but also to those who consent to those doing them; and this in two ways: in one way directly, either by praising the sin, or by giving counsel or favor; or indirectly, when they do not reprove or in any way impede it if they can, and especially if this is incumbent upon them by office. But the hearers of the second class also give favor to the actors: either they pay them a fee, as do the first, or they favor them by laughter, applause, and their very attendance. Therefore, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, they consent directly even if they do not cooperate.

Father Bardi, cited by Diana in resolution 52, considering the present difficulty not speculatively but practically, says that it is very dangerous. But Ferrantinus, wishing to establish some benign opinion for those who frequent the theater, says that Hurtado and I proceed too rigorously. In order to explain his opinion he imagines this agreement to be made between the actors and those who pay money: namely, on the supposition that you are going to perform this play, which you have already determined to perform with the consent of a sufficient audience, or on this condition that the play be performed, I give you money so that you may grant me a place in the hall. Ferrantinus judges this agreement lawful, just as it is lawful, for the sake of civility, to invite a friend to dinner on a fast day when the friend is already determined to dine elsewhere where dinner is prepared. Therefore, in like manner, it will be lawful to give money to actors already determined to perform a comedy at the request of those who arrived first.

But I reply that it is not lawful to argue from one case to the other when the reason in the two is very different. For when several dine together, the one who invites dines lawfully, since by hypothesis he is not bound to fast on that day, whereas the one invited dines unlawfully, since by hypothesis he is bound to fast. Therefore each eats his own dinner, and so they are not formally united in the same sinful action. But if the one inviting were himself bound to fast, Father Ferrantinus's argument would have no place. It is not so in the hearing of an unlawful comedy: for the spectator of the first class sins both because he gives cause to the actors and because he consents to grave obscenity and takes delight in it; and the spectator of the second class also, even though he does not give cause to the comedy, nevertheless takes delight in it and consents. Therefore he sins.

But it is false that this spectator of the second class does not cooperate. I prove it thus. Let us suppose, for example, that ten men, as movers sufficient for drawing, are required to move a great beam or stone. If, while the beam is being drawn, two other men are added and join those first ten, and the beam is drawn by all together or transferred to its place, no one will deny that the transfer is caused by twelve movers, although at first it had been determined that it should be done by only ten sufficient concurrent causes. The reason is that, for concurrent causes to produce this or that effect, it is not necessary that there be just so many and no more. But if there are more, provided that each and all exert an influence and, as in the example given, each for his part pushes and transfers the beam, they all cooperate. Many examples which occur daily in practice could be brought forward to prove this truth.

For example, if in a chapter or congregation of twenty electors eleven are present, they suffice for the election to be valid; and if twelve are present, it will still be valid, there will be more concurrent causes than suffice, and all cooperate. The example of Father Segneri given above, concerning those who are present at treason against a prince, explains the matter more clearly.

Actors of this kind are moved and determined to the action not only because spectators of the first class pay sufficient money, hear, laugh, applaud, and acclaim, but also because spectators of the second class do the same. A sign of this is that the actors do not begin the comedy as soon as the number of hearers of the first class is complete, but delay and

await hearers of the second class, by whose money, laughter, applause, and hearing they also are moved to perform the comedy. Therefore there is no distinction: thus all are cooperators and sin. But if some should be present secretly, so that they influenced it in no way, neither by money, nor laughter, nor applause, nor manifest presence, because they remain hidden, it is certain that even these nevertheless would sin mortally by consent and notable complacency in the obscenity.

III. Thus far Father Jerome Florentinus, who, in confirmation of his doctrine, adduces theologians of every religious order and copies out their testimonies. For he cites Azorius, Emmanuel Sa, Sanchez, Filliucius, Comitolo, Valerius Reginaldus, Baldellus, and Luis Turrianus in the *Summary of Moral Theology*, part 1, *On Virtues and Vices*, chapter 285, number 5, where he writes: *The actors of this time are in a state of mortal sin and cannot be absolved when they have the intention of persevering.* And at number 6: *Nor are they to be admitted to Communion; in the manner in which they are performed in Spain they are not lawful. I say precisely the same concerning the comedies which are performed in Italy, Germany, Gaul, England, and the other places of Europe.*

IV. Father Caesar Franciotti of the same Congregation of the Mother of God, in his work *On the Education of Christian Youth*, chapter 15, undertakes to demonstrate this thesis, written in Italian and rendered into Latin by me: *It is proved by reasons that the spectators of the comedies of our time sin mortally.* He speaks not of ancient comedies but of those of his own time. He testifies that he is moved by several reasons to confirm this truth. *First*, he says, *because I see that men are found so destitute of Christian light that they regard obscenities of this kind as a lawful and honorable recreation for young men, although it is established from the confession of the young men themselves that comedies are scarcely ever frequented without the will to hear lascivious speech, to see lustful things, and to take delight in a base action; nor do they depart from them without the soul being burdened with several mortal faults. Second, I am urged to this by the wishes of certain pious men who, when in common conversation they hear arguments thrust forward which seem to show that comedies are honorable and lawful, wish to have ready what must be answered to the patrons of the contrary opinion and what must be opposed in defense of the truth. Third, the advantage which I trust will be obtained from the progress of young men, very many of whom suffer the greatest loss from the tricks of comedies, compels me to undertake this labor*, and so forth.

He proves that the spectators of the comedies of his time sin mortally by three kinds of arguments, namely by reason of occasion, cooperation, and scandal. Since these arguments are common and have been repeated so often, I pass them over. He acknowledges that he drew all these things from a sermon of Father Pietro Cesani of the same Congregation, and he alleges the common consent of other theologians.

SINGLE SECTION
A Consequence to Be Seriously Considered

I. Many of the casuists whom Father Jerome Florentinus cites speak ambiguously and, in their customary manner, obscure and corrupt Christian doctrine with various little distinctions. Nevertheless, they commonly agree, or at least the very patrons of the more benign and laxer ethics agree, that the male and female comedians who represent the cause of love in the theater sin mortally. They declare the spectators to be sources of the same mortal guilt and divide them into two classes. In the first they place those who constitute a number sufficient to pay the fee to the comedians, without whom the comedy could not be performed. Therefore these, says Father Antonius Diana with certain other most benign authors, are the determining cause of the theatrical

action and cooperate in the actors' sin. He declares the spectators of the latter class free from guilt because they arrive after the former number and therefore do not give cause to the action.

II. In order to defeat the customary calumny that I impose things upon the casuists, I choose to recite Diana's own words from volume 7, tract 5, resolution 27, where he says: *Two kinds of spectators can be considered. The first is of those who come first to the theater; the other, of those who come last. All the first sin mortally even if they hear only one comedy, because they are the motive that the play is performed here and now; for a comedian will not perform a play without a sufficient audience. But the first constitute this sufficient audience. For when there are enough of them, the play will be performed on account of them alone, although no one else is present. Therefore all those who are the cause in itself of that action sin mortally.*

Finally, I prove that each one sins even if they come last: because the actor, seeing a full audience, is moved by it to perform the play here and now, which he wishes to perform on account of all those who paid money to hear it; because all of them, taken collectively, are the adequate object of that action, which is then performed on account of them all, and so forth.

Yet I shall not cease to note here that Nicolaus Baldellus in part teaches the negative opinion, where he says: "I think universally that those who, knowing the baseness and obscenity of the comedy, come to it first sin mortally, because it truly is owing to them that the comedy is given. But after a sufficient number has already gathered and a sufficient cause has been given to the external sin of the actors, another who comes does not seem condemnable on this ground, because he no longer fosters them in the sin."

This second opinion of Baldellus pleases Diana, and therefore he confirms it in resolution 28, saying: *But I was asked by many through letters, since the case occurs daily, to disclose it openly if I had authors who held the contrary. I therefore willingly assent to them. First, therefore, against the aforesaid I shall adduce two other members of the same Society of Jesus. Thus Father Bardi, Tamburini's teacher, asserts: "Spectators can conduct themselves in two ways in this matter. First, they can conduct themselves antecedently,"* and so forth. *"Second, spectators can conduct themselves concomitantly or subsequently.... And these can be excused from sin because they have no influence upon that performance. Nevertheless, this seems certain speculatively; practically, however, the matter is very dangerous,"* and so forth.

But Father Ferrantinus treats the difficulty more broadly and benignly, where he asserts: "Hurtado judges that all who give money to actors as the price for hearing a comedy sin by grave scandal.... But this opinion, although pious and safer, might nevertheless seem to someone sufficiently scrupulous and rigorous. And therefore, if it can be done, assistance should be given so that those who give such money to actors may be excused from mortal sin."

III. No one fails to see how vain and laughable that distinction is. Must those approaching the theaters make a count of the spectators? Who is the appointed judge to define that this number of spectators, and not another, suffices to pay a suitable fee to the actors or the managers of the theaters? These chimerical inventions provoke laughter and tears together: laughter because they are too frivolous; tears because they are too contrary to the Gospel. It is so clear and evident, even to the patrons of the laxer ethics, that the comedians - namely, the male and female actors of our age - sin mortally that they do not even dare to call it into dispute. Hence it follows necessarily, by their own admission, that the spectators sin mortally, because in their absence the actors can by no means represent a comedy. The invention they devised of dividing the spectators into two classes is vain and contrary to common sense. Therefore, according even to the laxer casuists themselves, and not merely according to the Fathers and the graver theologians, the spectators of all theaters in which

men and women plead the cause of love or hatred by voice, gestures, nods, movements of their bodies, and the modulation of song and sound, so as to move, soften, and entice human hearts, sin mortally.

IV. Since these things are so, who now will not marvel at that dreadful and fearsome darkness of ignorance by which worldly men are surrounded? They are so blinded that they defend a pestilential corruption as an innocent and unstained custom. They cry out that there is no evil in men of every state frequenting theaters, even men of upright conscience, indeed priests and men of higher dignity. What then? they say. Will you condemn the whole human race? These are the portents of blindness by which the Devil bewitches the world.

Augustine puts before himself this most crafty sophism, saying: *Do not all act thus? Who is there who does not? Will God condemn all?* What does he answer? *A great temptation.* But do you defend falsehood by a multitude? Does not Scripture cry out: *You shall not follow a multitude to sin? The laws consented to sins, and what is public began to be lawful.* This is the most dreadful scourge of blindness and lethargy with which effeminate men are beaten. Not the corruption of a transgressing multitude, but the spirit of the evangelical law and the sense of the baptismal profession are the rule and end of our morals. Turn over the sacred Gospels and the Epistles of the Apostles, according to whose rule you will be judged. Run through the volumes of the Fathers and eminent theologians. Consult common sense itself, free from prejudices, and from this you will gather clearly that the aforesaid spectacles fight in hostility against chastity, humility, and the other virtues of the Christian profession. That men turn it into no matter of conscience at all to frequent theaters is, as I have said, the final, immense, and most greatly to be feared punishment of blindness and hardening.

Chapter XVIII — The Holy Fathers Teach That the Spectators of Base Comedies and Theaters Sin Mortally, Especially Because by Their Presence They Approve the Crimes of the Actors and of the Others Present

CHAPTER XVIII

The Holy Fathers Teach That the Spectators of Base Comedies and Theaters Sin Mortally, Especially Because by Their Presence They Approve the Crimes of the Actors and of the Others Present.

I. In the preceding chapter it was shown, by the authority of the more benign casuists, that the spectators of comedies sin mortally because by their own presence they approve and confirm the crimes of the actors and of all the others which are committed there. I have heard several men, not merely unlearned but even learned and erudite, assert that the Holy Fathers by no means define the gravity of the crime which is committed in watching obscene theaters. They freely admit that both the comedians and, morally speaking, the greater or at least a great part of the spectators placed in such an occasion sin mortally. Therefore it necessarily follows that all sin: because the others, who do not sin by taking delight in the obscene things represented there and who are, as it were, bronze statues, placed above all the disordered movements of the human senses and of concupiscence, and who know how to distinguish with certainty delight in the representation alone from delight in the thing represented, sin gravely because by their presence they approve the mortal sins of the actors and of the others. This consequence is beyond controversy and inescapable. Do not those, as we said elsewhere, sin mortally who watch a duel between two or more men in which bodily death is at stake? And will those not sin mortally who joyfully and exultantly watch a duel and slaughter of souls, which they themselves admit takes place in the theater?

II. But, they say, the Fathers do not declare that the spectators of theaters sin mortally. Let those who persuade themselves of this hear St. John Chrysostom, who, in Homily 38 on chapter 11 of Matthew, first censures the sins of theaters and then teaches that these sins return upon the heads of all the spectators. *For fornicatory songs are far more abominable than dung. And what is more grievous to endure, those who hear such things not only suffer no headache, but even laugh and rejoice.... Tell me, then, when you hear men blaspheming, do you rejoice and exult, or rather shudder and stop your ears? Do not doubt that you shudder. Why? Because you yourself are never accustomed to blaspheme. Do the same, therefore, with base speech also, if you wish wholly to persuade us that you do not willingly utter most base words: then we shall believe you, when we have seen that you do not even bear to hear them. For how do you cultivate virtue, when you nourish yourself by hearing these things? How will you be able to endure the arduous labors of chastity, when you are dissolved in laughter and in fornicatory song?... You have heard Paul saying: "Rejoice in the Lord." He said in the Lord, not in the Devil.*

III. Let those meditate upon these words who say that they go to the theaters in order to soothe their ears with fornicatory song and meretricious music. They are not at all delighted by sacred music, in which the praises of God and the saints are celebrated and which today, certainly beyond due measure and not without scandal, resounds in some churches. They wish to hear the fornicatory music of male and female mimes, by which the amorous crimes of Cleopatras, Meropes, Semiramises, Sophonisbas, and other similar little women and prostitutes are extolled, because from it they receive the sweetest pleasure. Nor are they in the least ashamed to babble that this is innocent recreation. But Chrysostom continues in the same place.

IV. *For absolutely everything that is done there is most base: the words, dress, haircut, gait, voices, songs, melodies, the rolling and motions of the eyes, the pipe, the flutes, and the very plots of the plays; all things, I say, are full of base lasciviousness. Tell me, therefore, when will you recover yourself and come to your senses from so great an unclean desire for fornication, which the Devil instills in you? For we are not ignorant how many fornications are committed there, how many marriages are stained by adulteries; how many men submit to womanly things, how many young men are made effeminate; all things are full of the utmost wickedness, all things of monstrous deeds, all things of shamelessness.... For if I could call all by name, I would quickly show you. How many they have led away from there as though captives, how many they have drawn away from their wives.* How many I too could call by name who have been captivated by the enchantment of female singers and dancers! *For youth reared in evils of this kind is fiercer than every most savage beast.... What shall I say of the fact that many expend countless sums of money upon these diabolical associations? What of lust, what of the other evils?* At last Chrysostom penetrates the final refuge to which theatrical spectators try to retreat. Let them prick up their ears and turn their minds to what follows.

V. *But I shall show, you will say, that games of this kind have harmed no one. Hear the answer: Rather, this chiefly harms you, that you consume your time fruitlessly and in vain and offer scandal to others. For even if by a certain strength of lofty spirit you contracted no evil from it, nevertheless, because by your example you made others who are weaker devotees of spectacles, how have you not yourself contracted evil, when you furnished others the cause of committing evil? For those who are corrupted there, both men and women, transfer all the crimes of corruption and their cause upon your head. For just as, if there were no spectators, there would be no players either, so, because the spectators are present and are the cause of the sins which are committed, they too suffer the fire. Therefore, although the modesty of your soul caused you to suffer no harm from it - which I do not believe - nevertheless, because others sinned much on account of the games, you will suffer grave punishments for this.*

VI. Chrysostom repeats this same doctrine in Homily 6 on chapter 2 of Matthew and presses it more deeply, where he says: *The Devil built theaters in the cities and prepared those inciters of laughter and base pleasures, and through their plague raises up such a pestilence throughout the whole city.... For when those mimes and buffoons say something blasphemous and base, then especially the more foolish dissolve into laughter; applauding them for the very things for which they ought rather to have driven them away with stones, they kindle a furnace of horrible fire for themselves, upon their own heads, from pleasure of this kind. For those who praise the men who say these things themselves persuade them to practice them; and therefore they themselves rather deserve the punishment which has been decreed for these things.* All those who foster them by their presence praise and applaud them. *For if there were no spectator and patron of such things, neither would there be those who cared either to say or to do them. But when they see you abandon both your own arts and the places of your daily occupation and your profit from the things prepared there, and absolutely all things together, for love of that most vain spectacle, they are carried to these things with more eager attention and devote greater effort to them. And I say these things not that I may seem to clear them of guilt, but that you may learn that you are wholly the beginning and head of this wickedness.... For the one who simulates these things does not sin so much as you before him, who command this to be done* - certainly by paying the fee and attending. *And you not only command it, but also assist what is done by exultation, laughter, and applause, and in absolutely every way you foster this workshop of the Devil. Nor should you object to me that whatever is done there is simulation and that it is the plot of a play, not the truth of the events. For this simulation has made very many adulterers and has overthrown many houses; and I chiefly lament this, that so great an evil is not believed to be evil, but - what is much worse - favor, shouting, applause, and laughter are employed when adultery so base is committed for the common destruction. What then do you say? Is it a simulation, not a crime? And for this very reason they are worthy of a thousand deaths, because they*

are not ashamed to imitate those things which all the laws absolutely command men to flee. For if adultery is evil, without doubt its imitation is evil also. And I do not say how many adulterers those who represent adulteries of this kind by theatrical simulation make, or how shameless they also make the spectators of them. For nothing is more obscene than that eye, nothing more lascivious, which can patiently - not to say willingly - watch such things.

VII. Again Chrysostom, in the homily on David and Saul, refutes the utterly trifling excuses of those who contend that watching theaters is a light and venial crime. *And what great crime, they say, has been committed here, that they should be kept away from these sacred rails? Rather, what is more grave than these things that have been declared?... For if a woman met freely and by chance in the marketplace, and carelessly dressed, often captures by the very sight of her face one who looks at her rather curiously, with what face will those who have their eyes fixed on the faces of those noble women, not simply or fortuitously but deliberately, be able to say that they did not see them in order to lust?* Many do not care to watch the fictitious representations of the mimes who perform on the stage, because in the boxes they conduct the business of Venus with their little mistresses, by voice and glance insofar as the place permits, and devise and execute elsewhere what is to be done. *Where broken and lascivious words are also added, where there are meretricious songs, where voices vehemently inciting to pleasure, where eyes painted with stibium, where cheeks dyed with colors, where the condition of the whole body is full of the deceit of cosmetics and many enticements are prepared to deceive and ensnare the spectators; where there is the sloth of the spectators and much confusion, and an exhortation to lasciviousness arising from this, both from those who attended the spectacles and from those who afterward recount to others what they saw in the spectacles. To these are added incitements by pipes and flutes, and melody of this kind enticing toward fraud, softening the strength of the mind, and by its delight preparing the souls of those sitting there for the snares of harlots and causing them to be more easily captured.... For if here, where there are psalms, where there is an exposition of divine words, where there is fear of God and much reverence, concupiscence frequently creeps in secretly like some cunning thief, how can those who sit in the theater, who hear and see nothing sound and who suffer siege on every side through their ears and through their eyes, overcome that concupiscence?... Therefore I exhort and beg them first to purge themselves, by confession and penance and all other remedies, of the sin contracted from theatrical spectacles, and thus to hear the divine discourses.* The discipline of confessing venial sins did not then obtain. *For this is no slight offense committed by you. Anyone can see this clearly even from examples.... Do you not fear, do you not shudder... when with the same ears you hear both a prostitute speaking obscenely and a Prophet or Apostle introducing you into the mysteries of Scripture; when in the same heart you take both lethal poisons and this holy and tremendous host?... I thought these things must now be said for your charity, and I shall never cease to say them.*

VIII. Chrysostom assails the spectators of theaters under two heads. First, he proves that they sin gravely because they in fact delight in the things represented there, whether in fornicatory song and meretricious music, or in adultery, fornication, and the other amorous deeds vividly expressed by male and female mimes, or in the sight of noble women and of other women lasciviously adorned who flock there. Second, when they testify that they are endowed with a lofty spirit and unconquered strength and contract no stain - although he gives them no credence - so that no crack may lie open for escape, he assails them inescapably from the other side in this manner: theatrical art directs its efforts and tricks to this alone, that they may soothe, arm, and irritate the eyes, ears, and concupiscence of the spectators and make the hearers, so to speak, melt with love. This is so true that male and female mimes who do not move, entice, delight, and titillate the hearts and appetites of their hearers are rejected as inept; but the men and women who excel in the force and skill of arousing the affections are hired for an immense payment in gold. Hence it is that those male and

female mimes, singers, and dancers sin mortally, and all laws and all peoples execrate their art as infamous, base, obscene, and anti-Christian. Add that men are commonly prone to vices, weak, and raging with the heat of lust; and thus very many sin in the theater. Moreover, all these sins, both of the actors and of the spectators, return and fall upon the head of every person present, even though otherwise stained by no depraved affection, because each by his presence fosters, approves, and confirms an infamous profession which tends to entice and invite to sin, as has been said elsewhere and must be repeated more often.

Therefore, you say, all who attend promiscuous gatherings of men and women, games, and so forth, also sin gravely, since it is morally certain that many crimes are committed there. What if I conceded it all? Yet the difference is exceedingly broad. No law has thus far declared a gathering of that kind infamous. No one there, whether man or woman, represents an amorous affair; no one employs artifices to provoke concupiscence; there is no female mime there, no male mime. As I have said so often, all the tricks of theaters taken together constitute the theatrical enchantment. Yet far be it from me to approve the present-day promiscuous gatherings of men and women, which I regard as snares of souls and disturbers of civil government. I assert this alone: that there is the greatest difference between the gathering of men and women and the theaters of male and female mimes.

IX. The other Fathers teach the same doctrine as Chrysostom by unanimous consent. Tertullian says in chapter 15 of *On Spectacles*: *For even if one enjoys the spectacles modestly and uprightly, according to the condition of his dignity or age or even his nature, nevertheless he is not of unmoved mind without a tacit passion of the spirit. No one comes to pleasure without affection; no one undergoes affection without its incidents.... But if the affection ceases, the pleasure ceases; he is then already guilty of that vanity, coming to the place where he obtains nothing.... What of the fact that, being placed among them, he judges himself by the very act to be one of those whose like he is unwilling to be, and whose detester he therefore confesses himself? It is not enough for us that we ourselves do no such things, unless we also refrain from association with those who do them. If you saw a thief, he says, you ran with him. Would that we did not even dwell with them in the world. Yet we are separated from them in secular things, because the world is God's, but secular things are the Devil's.*

X. You see? Tertullian says that you sin although you expressly deny that you are delighted by the comedy; because no one except a fool goes there when he will receive no pleasure. You deny that you have pleasure, but when you actually attend the theater, you tacitly approve and by the deed confirm what you contend in speech to deny. Therefore wickedness lies to itself. But if under this head you refuse to be vanquished, you commit the gravest crime because by your presence you foster those whom you confess to be infamous and criminal. *If you saw a thief*, he says, *you ran with him.* Tell me: if by your presence you encouraged a thief to commit thefts, would you not sin mortally and be liable to restitution? Male and female mimes are thieves of chastity, honor, and souls. In order to spread the pestilence of Venus, they spare neither eloquence, nor gestures, nor the enchantments of the eyes. You foster them by your presence and applause, and feed and nourish them by payment of the fee. And will you not be a participant in these crimes and in those which follow from them? Only a fool can babble this. Hear Tertullian again in chapter 22, rebuking you as guilty of foolishness and perversity: *For the very authors and administrators of spectacles condemn the theatrical men... by ignominy and diminution of civil status, keeping them from the curia, the rostra, the Senate, the equestrian order, and all other honors and ornaments together. What great perversity! They love those whom they punish; they disparage those*

whom they approve. They magnify the art; they mark the artist. What sort of judgment is it that a man should be disgraced for the things by which he earns merit?

XI. I pass over Cyprian and the other Fathers, who, no less than Chrysostom, keep the faithful who are spectators of theaters away from the Sacraments. Let me now address briefly those who admit that the Fathers condemn the spectators of comedies and tragedies for sin, but add that the Fathers do not define whether the sin is mortal or venial. Therefore, by their own admission, the malice of that action is undefined. They consequently sin mortally for this reason alone, that they voluntarily drink poison while not knowing whether it is mortal or venial. But the Fathers do not define that the spectators of comedies commit a grave crime? Those who dream such things disclose that they have never read the works of the Fathers with attentive mind. Do the Fathers not say that those spectators drink lethal poisons? Do they not define that they must be kept from the altar and from hearing the word of God unless they first wash away by penance the crimes contracted and withdraw from so great a perversity? What? Do the Fathers not define the gravity of the crime? It is true, because the Fathers openly cry out that the malice of so great a corruption can scarcely be expressed, and that not one crime but very many are committed. They cry out that theaters are the sanctuary of Venus, the consistory of shamelessness, a Satanic assembly, the chair of pestilence, the sink of fornications and adulteries, the council of wickedness, the camp of demons, in which male and female mimes, leaders of infernal malice, threaten universal war upon the Gospel: they assail not one sense but infect them all with enchantment; they soften the soul, bewitch the mind, and bring every virtue and Christian sanctity into derision and contempt; almost every crime - fornications, adulteries, pandering, idleness, effeminacy, luxury, ostentation, worldly pomps, ambition, pride - what do they not extol in triumph and counsel and persuade men to embrace? Certainly the Fathers do not use the distinction between mortal and venial sin. But neither do they employ it when they condemn perjuries, blasphemies, adulteries, rapes, thefts, and homicides. Will these therefore not be deadly crimes? Do the Fathers execrate theatrical crimes more mildly than fornications, perjuries, blasphemies, and the other capital offenses just mentioned? Rather, they rise against theaters as the most evident sources of all vices and crimes, lift up the thunder of their voice, thunder, and inveigh more fiercely than against this or that particular crime. All these things are clear and evident. But the defenders of theaters are so maddened by such an enchantment and fascination of carnal pleasure that they can be healed by no remedy and vanquished by no argument, however most evident. For no vice so blinds the mind, hardens the human heart, and turns it away from God as carnal pleasure, because nothing is more opposed to the spirit than the flesh.

XII. What? Is it forbidden to go to theaters, lead dances, and associate promiscuously, men among women? What sort of man teaches such things? Shall Christians lead a solitary life with every recreation removed? Would that it had been granted to me to render these and other entertainments and joys of Christians harmless and to remove the punishments, hardships, and miseries of this very brief pilgrimage and exile. But no one has thus far learned to unite the allurements of the world with the Cross of Christ and evangelical morality. Hear Chrysostom, who in Homily 38 on chapter 12 of Matthew sets all these things before himself as objections and discloses what the recreations of Christians are. *When you wish to recreate your soul, you will be able to go to gardens, look upon flowing streams, contemplate immense lakes, behold pleasant places, hear cicadas singing, and converse in the temples of the martyrs.... You have a wife, you do not lack children, you abound in friends, all of which are accustomed to furnish honorable delight and sometimes profit. For what is sweeter than children? What is sweeter than a chaste wife to a*

moderate or temperate husband? The barbarians themselves, when they heard men speak of these theatrical games or the importunate delight of plays, are reported to have uttered words most worthy of all instruction in philosophy. For, they said, the Romans devise such pleasures for themselves as though they lacked children and wives. By these words they showed that nothing can be sweeter than a modest wife, nothing sweeter than children, to one who wishes to live honorably.

XIII. What the delights, pleasures, and recreations of Christians are I described above, in chapter 2, number 11, from Tertullian; you may see them without my repeating them here. I shall select a few words from St. Cyprian near the end of the book *On Spectacles*. *The Christian*, he says, *has better spectacles, if he wishes; he has true and profitable pleasures, if he recollects himself; and, to pass over those things which he cannot yet contemplate, he nevertheless has the beauty of the world, which he may see and admire. Let him behold the rising of the sun and again its setting, bringing back day and night in mutual succession; the globe of the moon, marking the courses of the seasons by its waxing and waning; the choirs of the glittering stars, shining from the height with supreme nobility; the members of the whole year divided in succession, and the very days with the nights arranged through the spaces of the hours; the mass of the earth balanced with its mountains, and the flowing rivers with their springs; the immense seas with their waves and shores, and so forth. These, I say, and the other works of God are spectacles for the Christian faithful. What theater constructed by human hands can be compared with these works, though it be built with great masses of stone? Though they be encrusted with marble and their paneled ceilings shine with gold, they will be surpassed by the splendor of the stars. He who knows himself to be a son of God will never marvel at human works. He casts himself down from the summit of his own nobility who can admire anything after God. Let the Christian faithful apply himself, I say, to the sacred Scriptures: there he will find spectacles worthy of faith.* These are the theaters, these the comedies, these the spectacles which all the Fathers propose for Christians to contemplate, so that from them they may receive recreation of soul. Christians who seek entertainment in the comedies of Plautus and Terence, or in the tragedies of Cleopatra, Sophonisba, Semiramis, Merope, and other similar women represented by male and female mimes, show themselves not disciples of Christ Crucified, but adherents of the world and venerators of the remnants of pagan superstition, from which theaters took their origin.

Chapter XIX — How Ineptly the Honesty of Theaters Is Inferred from the Permission of Princes

CHAPTER XIX

How Ineptly the Honesty of Theaters Is Inferred from the Permission of Princes.

I. Princes permit the theaters of the present day; therefore actors lawfully represent comedies, and those same comedies are honorably watched. This consequence is vain and utterly inept. Princes permit prostitutes; therefore it is lawful to prostitute oneself? Whether rightly or otherwise the comedies which male and female mimes perform today are permitted is not my concern to discuss. Far from me be such rashness that I should dare to define and circumscribe the limits of supreme power. The vast boundaries of supreme power transcend the reach of my intelligence and weakness. Princes are accustomed chiefly to punish those sins which directly disturb society and commerce, such as thefts, homicides, and so forth. Whether they ought also to prevent the other sins to the extent of their power, let those whose concern it is decide - namely, the theologians, counselors, and confessors of princes. For this is their office. Can the disturbances and disadvantages which follow the prohibition of theaters be thoroughly known to me, a private insignificant man? Suppressing my own judgment, therefore, I shall merely record historically what authors teach concerning this argument, so that from it the theologians and confessors of princes and kings may gather what is, or is not, lawfully to be permitted. For these men, scorning the fear of departure from court and trampling upon every human consideration, are bound to disclose to princes what must be prohibited and what may lawfully be permitted. Let them meditate upon what I have adduced above. The more benign theologians teach what follows.

II. Father Jerome Florentinus of Lucca, of the Congregation of the Mother of God, writes these words in his little work *The Theater against the Theater*, discourse 10, page 212, number 526: *Princes and magistrates who approve, or even publicly permit, very obscene comedies sin mortally.*

III. *Father Baldellus, at number 12 in the fourth place, says, namely, that a prince or magistrate can for some time permit base and obscene comedies in order to avoid a foreseen greater evil; and that the prince who so permits does not sin, because a comparative permission is given which, when compared with the greater evil to be avoided, although the permission itself concerns a sinful action, is not a sin.*

Against this permission of Father Baldellus, Father Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli of the Society of Jesus - if indeed he is the one who is called D. Domenigigus Lelonottus of Fanano in the work entitled On the Christian Moderation of the Theater, chapter 4, point 4, note 7, folio 255 - proposed by letters to Father Baldellus, formerly his teacher, certain reasons worthy of a theologian, which he himself calls a Gloss. Father Baldellus, after considering them and promising to withdraw from his opinion concerning permission, replies that, upon examining the reasons brought to him in the said letter, it truly appears uncertain to him whether princes have a greater evil in comparison with which they can permit comedies as a lesser evil; and therefore, he says, if I do not regret it, I shall add this motive in a new edition of the work.

These things Baldellus says concerning that permission of his. Against it, if perhaps he did not change his opinion - which I do not know - let me add to the things which D. Domenigigus adduced that a permission of this kind is very difficult in practice. To show this, I suppose that the greater evil for the avoidance of which such a permission is

chosen must be an evil of guilt. Otherwise an evil of punishment, however great, could never be called greater; for the evil of guilt exceeds every evil of punishment, as theologians commonly teach, and therefore it must be detested by a Christian man above every other evil, as, among others, the most eminent Cardinal de Lugo proves in On Penance*, disputation 5, section 2, even above the punishment of eternal damnation in hell, in the same place, section 3. This being posited:*

When I consider the matter attentively, there occurs to me that multitude and gravity of mortal sins which can with moral certainty be presupposed from the repeated representation of spectacles within the few days of Carnival which Baldellus, in the cited response, asserts to be the time of his proposed permission. For, especially in his own opinion, it is certain, first, that the actors sin mortally, as the same author proves at numbers 1 and 2. Next, each and every spectator who gives cause and procures, in the manner explained by him at numbers 5 and 6, that the actors perform also sins. Third, even those sin who, although they do not give cause to that action, nevertheless are not altogether so strong and endowed with such virtue that, when exposed to danger, they resist impure allurements; but, flattering themselves badly, they consent to baseness. Therefore, with so many and so great a number of grave sins considered together and compared with that impending evil of guilt which can occur among the people and which the prince intends to avoid, it is difficult to judge whether this or that evil is graver, especially because the sins which arise from the theatrical action are morally certain and exist together with the action itself; but that greater evil which is foreseen from afar is a future evil, preventable at least by God, to whose providence it is therefore prudently to be committed, or one which can perhaps be averted by the prince himself in another way, as Father Baldellus himself admits in the cited inquiry; and thus it is uncertain.

And finally, what will this evil be, and in what species of sin, which can be feared among a Christian people obedient to its prince and which, in the order of the evil of guilt, ought to outweigh so many sins of actors and spectators? Certainly it does not seem possible to designate it. And after examining these things thus with myself, I find Hurtado, in On the Three Theological Virtues*, disputation 173, section 8, subsection 11, agreeing with my opinion in these words: "I have never seen or heard, publicly or secretly or in confession heard by me or by others, that any common evil was avoided through comedies." Therefore this opinion concerning the permission of comedies for some time is difficult in practice.*

But Baldellus proves that princes and magistrates can neither approve absolutely nor permit comedies of this kind; and I shall confirm it below by particular conclusions, conclusion 9, number 799.

Father Albertus of the Society of Jesus, of Trent, an author most closely joined to me by esteem and benevolence, speaks thus concerning princes on this argument in his most learned book entitled Moral Paradoxes on the Adornment of Women, disputation 2, chapter 1, section 4, segment 1, number 50: "A prince who tolerates obscene spectacles sins mortally," and so forth. *And he proves it from St. Cyprian, cited above at number 92, in these words: "The evil of public authority pandering to vices." Weighing these words, Louis Cellot in oration 12 explains them excellently thus: "This pandering of public authority, as Cyprian calls it, would make those magistrates procurers who permit or command it,"* and so forth. *"O laws of Julia! O sanctity of magistrates, to whom the honor of matrons and the modesty of virgins have been entrusted by the voice of the commonwealth! O infamy of actors, which, when it has breathed upon the princes of the people, suddenly changes them into procurers!" Then he adds the decree of St. Charles from the First Provincial Council of Milan, cited by me above at number 199, by which princes are admonished to remove actors far from the city; and he adduces from Numbers, chapter 25, verse 4, the grave punishment by which God condemned the princes because they had not prevented the crimes of the people of Israel fornicating and committing idolatry with foreign women.*

Father Jerome Florentinus illustrates this same argument in the same place, page 300, from number 799, saying: *Princes and magistrates who approve or permit the aforesaid very obscene comedies to be performed sin mortally.... But first, as a foundation, I suppose that it belongs primarily to the secular prince to watch and prevent actors from contaminating and perverting the morals of the people with obscenities of this kind; and therefore they ought to restrain them even with temporal penalties and, if necessary, expel them from the city, because this is defined in the law* Congruit*, Digest,* On the Office of the Governor*. But it belongs to the ecclesiastical prelate to restrain the same men with spiritual penalties, and he ought to assist the secular prince, as I noted from Menochius at number 654.*

I suppose, second, that both princes, ecclesiastical and secular, are gravely and in conscience bound to attend to and provide that sins not be introduced, especially public sins and others which easily induce to sin. But that there is a greater obligation in the secular prince than in the ecclesiastical I shall declare in the following tenth conclusion. Meanwhile, to prove especially the ninth conclusion I employ the authority of the Apostle from the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13, saying: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them; for they watch as being about to render an account for your souls." And although in this place the Apostle directly prescribes to subjects the obligation they have of obeying superiors, nevertheless indirectly he inculcates the obligation which prelates, not only ecclesiastical but also secular princes and magistrates, have of watching over the salvation of their subjects: "For they watch as," that is, truly, "being about to render an account." Therefore St. John Chrysostom says upon this place: "Let those also hear who rule and exercise magistracies, not only those who are ruled by them," and so forth. *And a little afterward, considering this most grave obligation in princes, he says: "I wonder whether it is possible for any of the rulers to be saved,"* and so forth.

First, because actors representing notably obscene comedies for the most part feel and experience in themselves, and are pleased by, the lusts which they endeavor so to express that they may please the spectators. Therefore they themselves commit several mortal sins. Therefore princes and magistrates who either approve them or do not prevent them when they easily can, by denying permission, are bound to render an account for them to God.

Second, spectators who hear comedies of this kind in order to take delight in obscene things and gestures sin mortally, as I said in the fourth conclusion with the common opinion of Catholic Doctors. Therefore princes and magistrates are bound to render an account for them to God.

Third, because spectators, although they intend to take delight not in the obscene things and gestures but in the manner, sin mortally themselves because they cooperate with the actors in their mortal sin, as I said in discourse 8 and in the said fourth conclusion. Therefore they are also bound to render an account for them to God.

Fourth, because many are either so prone to venery or so weak and infirm in virtue that not only remote but even the slightest incitements suffice for them to sin mortally either in deed or in desire; because, as St. Cyprian admonishes at number 102, "when the mind of man is led to vices themselves, what will it do if it has examples of the slippery nature of the body? What falls of its own accord, what will it do when pushed?" And so forth.

Fifth, because there are many adolescents and young men who, although they have parents to whom it belongs by office to prevent them from attending obscene comedies, nevertheless either their parents will it, because they themselves also frequent the theater, or they cannot prevent it, because public authority justifies an otherwise unlawful theater, as St. Cyprian says, and so forth. *From these things it follows that those who had approached the theater modest and continent soon return home from it full of shamelessness and inflamed with lust. Hence proceed disobedience and contempt toward elders; the pillaging of household property; continuous and vicious familiarity with theatrical women; immoderate expenses, and thence domestic thefts and robberies; infirmities,*

incurable diseases, quarrels, disputes, and the disturbance of the whole household. But princes and magistrates are bound to render an account to God for all these most grave crimes also.

Sixth, because today real women appear on the stage, adorned, curled, lascivious, and for the most part fornicators - for honorable women scarcely ascend the stage. These women, with pandering words, make many captives, and so forth. *Let all those who judge the earth therefore hear and understand and be instructed; and let them consider diligently that Plato branded as insane the prince who permitted the acts of actors to be performed before they had been reviewed by appointed officials.*

V. Albertus de Albertis of the Society of Jesus, an eminent theologian praised by Father Jerome Florentinus, has these words in his *Moral Paradoxes*, disputation 2, chapter 1, section 5, segment 1, number 50: *For the same reason a prince who tolerates obscene spectacles sins mortally, as Adam Contzen expressly pronounces in book 2 of the Politics, chapter 13, section 6. A prince can remove so great and so pernicious an evil with one word, with one decree; and because he can resist so easily, he himself cannot be saved. For who will fear a tumult? Next, very many subjects are scandalized by these pleasures of princes and cities.... The same truth is confirmed from the grave punishment with which God punished princes who did not prevent the crimes of fornication and idolatry of the people of Israel and ordered them to be hanged, in Numbers 25, as Vatablus and others note.... It is further confirmed from the most universal and most certain doctrine concerning scandal, explained above in disputation 1, chapter 5, which absolutely all theologians and Doctors approve, and which St. John Chrysostom explains clearly in volume 5, the sermon Against Concubines, where it is evident that the discussion concerns scandal which is perceived to befall one's neighbor from an indifferent word and deed, not scandal which follows from a work or word intrinsically evil. For he who gives such scandal on account of no greater profit arising from it can be excused, as is clear; but not when the word or deed is indifferent, as I sufficiently considered in disputation 1, chapter 5. This most certain rule concerning scandal to be permitted or avoided, while it embraces all men, binds especially and above all every prince, who is gravely bound to restrain and abolish those corruptions, although otherwise indifferent in themselves, from which they well know that far more evil than good flows.*

VI. Thus the cited theologians. As I said at the beginning, so great a knowledge does not shine upon me that I am able to circumscribe the limits of supreme power. I observe only this with St. Augustine, Epistle 65, whose testimony I gave above in the Preface: the Church and princes tolerate many things which they cannot prevent. A permission which merely tolerates lesser evils so that graver ones may be avoided must also be distinguished from a permission which approves.

VII. Times, and the dispositions and inclinations of princes, must again be distinguished. Pope St. Gelasius argues admirably for our purpose against Andromachus: *But you say that these things also existed in Christian times.... For because they were not removed under the first prelates of the Christian religion, ought they therefore by no means to have been removed under their successors? There are many harmful or rejected things which have been removed by individual pontiffs at different times. For medicine does not cure all the diseases in a body at once; rather, it addresses what it sees to be more dangerously impending, lest either the matter of the body be insufficient for the medicine or, by reason of the mortal condition, it be unable to avert all things at once. Ask what the thing of which you treat is like. If it is good, if divine, if wholesome, it rightly ought never to have been removed at any time. If it is neither wholesome nor divine, you have greater cause to complain why that which is known to be superstitious and vain, and which manifestly does not befit Christian profession, is removed so late.*

Finally, so far as concerns me, let no baptized person, no Christian, celebrate these things, and let only the pagans, whose rite it is, execute them. It is fitting for me to pronounce that these things undoubtedly are pernicious and deadly for Christians. Why do you accuse me, if I pronounce that what is hostile to the name you profess must be

removed from the companions of Christian profession? I certainly shall discharge my conscience; let those who have neglected to obey just admonitions see to it. Nor do I doubt that my predecessors perhaps did this also, and attempted before the imperial ears to have these things removed. Because it is not evident that they were heard, while these evils continue even today, those very empires therefore failed; therefore also the name of the Romans, while even the Lupercalia were not removed, reached its utmost extremity. And therefore I now advise that those things be removed which, since I know them to have profited nothing, I pronounce to have been harmful rather, as contrary to true religion. Finally, if you think a prescription must be made from the persons of my predecessors, each one of us will be about to render an account of his own administration, just as you perceive is also done in public offices. I do not dare to accuse the negligence of my predecessors, since I believe rather that perhaps they attempted to have this depravity removed, and that certain causes and contrary wills existed which obstructed their intentions, just as you perceive that not even now do you yourselves wish to desist from your insane endeavors. See Baronius at the year 496, number 28.

VIII. I shall add the testimony of St. Charles Borromeo, who in the year 1560 decreed these things in the Provincial Council of Milan: *We have judged that princes and magistrates are to be admonished to cast actors, mimes, other itinerant performers, and ruined men of that kind out of their territories, and to proceed severely against innkeepers and any others who receive them,* and so forth. I wish you seriously to observe that in the time of St. Charles there were no female mimes or actresses, but only men who traveled here and there performed the plays.

IX. I submit one thing concerning princes to be meditated more deeply with a humble mind. Princes are in no way bound to render an account to God for the graver evils which subjects would commit if theaters were removed, since it does not belong to them to prevent the private offenses of their subjects. But if the permission of theaters is harmful, as the cited and other most grave theologians teach, the princes themselves become the sources of all the crimes which follow from it. It can be asked what these graver evils are on account of which theaters are to be permitted so that they may be avoided. Men and women, you say, will gather more familiarly in private houses, and then will commit more adulteries and fornications. Astonishing! Do they not meet together even before, and, after being excited by hearing the lesson in shamelessness in the theater and by the representation of fornications, and instructed by the artifices, enticements, and snares of male and female mimes, and burning with concupiscence, do they not strive to accomplish in deed what they learned in the theater? What, therefore, are these greater evils to be avoided by the permission of theaters? Seditions, tumults, plots? Is that truly so? Plato, Aristotle, Tacitus, and the other wise masters of political government teach that the strength of principalities is weakened by the allurements of comedies, and that subjects become languid and unfit for wars, for labors, and for enduring hardships. Those graver evils for the avoidance of which princes can lawfully permit theaters are therefore hidden from my weakness. This, on the contrary, is known to me: peoples are the more compliant and obedient to their princes, the more faithful they are to God and the more exact in preserving their most holy profession.

But, to prove by examples that some men exaggerate excessively those dreadful consequences of great evils which they fear will proceed from the abolition of theaters, I ask them: are theaters not prohibited, sometimes for entire years, whenever supreme princes, kings, or emperors die? While I write these things, I hear that the widowed empress of the most august Emperor Charles VI has departed this life; and immediately in this very year 1751, throughout the Austrian Empire, both in

Germany and in Italy, masks, dances, comedies, and all theaters were forbidden. What graver evils followed from this? But if theaters are removed for the worship and reverence of the divine and tremendous Majesty and for preventing the most certain multitude of crimes and the eternal damnation of souls; if actors are avoided; if shameless singers, most impudent dancers, most brazen female mimes, and infamous procurers are driven into exile, would seditions, tumults, and the lamentations of cities and provinces, and the disturbance and overthrow of the whole world, then follow? O times! O morals! O human prudence! O carnal prudence! How long at last will you dare to distort the discipline of the Christian religion to your own appetites?

X. But why do I commemorate foreign events? Here in Rome, where I write, a most splendid example of this matter is set before our eyes. The most wise Pontiff Benedict XIV, given to us by God for restoring ecclesiastical discipline, entirely forbade all theaters throughout the whole Jubilee year which has just passed in these days. What disturbance, what tumult, what graver evils followed from this? And yet for a century and more there was never so great an influx at Rome of peoples from the whole Catholic world, of every condition and state; never so great tranquillity, so great mutual peace and quiet; never so ardent a fervor of devotion and sanctity. Therefore the immortal Pontiff deservedly writes, exultant and full of joy, in his golden diploma entitled *Extension to the Entire Catholic World of the Universal Jubilee Celebrated in the City in the Year of the Lord 1750*: *We were filled with consolation; we overflowed with joy, while throughout the course of this whole year we beheld the faith, religion, and piety of our beloved in Christ and of the children of the Church. We saw countless Christian faithful from every tongue and people and nation, from every order, age, and sex, flowing to this our City, who by their very coming testified both to the fervor of their own faith and to the breadth of the Kingdom of God. We saw the same persons hastening in eager rivalry to the sacred churches of that City, taking care for the expiation of their souls in a contrite and humbled spirit, and, like young olive shoots around the table of the Lord, receiving the life-giving sacraments of Christian unity and peace.*

XI. Let me also indicate in passing a few of the things which I saw as this holy year came to its end. Entering this holy City in the month of November through the gate which they call the Angelica, I immediately contemplated with pious admiration the very spacious square of the most holy Prince of the Apostles, Peter, filled everywhere with a multitude of peoples and arranged for singing the divine praises. Going a little farther, I then beheld processions in which cardinals and prelates went on foot.

They presided over them on foot, holding rosaries in their hands and reciting them in a raised voice; elsewhere pious confraternities and parish congregations met me, likewise singing prayers and breathing forth modesty, piety, and devotion. While I revolved these things within myself with a pious mind, I admired the divine mercy which had deigned in this dregs of the times to pour forth so great an abundance of graces upon its people. I am not unaware that in earlier ages, when both peoples and priests shone more splendidly with evangelical humility, Christian prudence, and integrity of morals, Jubilees also were holier. Yet no lesser thanks are therefore to be rendered to God, because in so great a calamity of the times he gave us a Supreme Pontiff who, by voice, by examples of works, by sacred missions, by exhortations, and by incredible vigilance, both disposed and prepared all those things which rendered the celebration of that Holy Year, through the attendance of peoples flocking from every side and through the fervor of devotion, most solemn and worthy of admiration by all posterity.

XII. Finally, the most wise Pontiff, in order to take away every pretext of excuse from those who are not ashamed to infer from the permission of princes that the corruptions of Carnival and of the theaters are lawful, issued in the year 1748 an encyclical letter to the archbishops and bishops of the Ecclesiastical State, in which he declares how vain such a consequence is, in these words here rendered in Latin: *Let it suffice us to make plain that the dissolutions of Carnival are merely permitted and tolerated by the Church, although reluctantly and for the avoidance of greater evils, as the celebrated and pious theologian Thomas Stapleton concludes by a just and valid argument in his eighth oration against Carnival, volume 2 of his works, page 556. There is therefore a great distinction between those things which are commanded and those which are tolerated. One thing is what we teach, another what we suffer; one thing is what we are commanded to correct, and another what we are compelled to tolerate until we correct it.* These are the words of St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, book 20. Hence it follows that from things merely tolerated there is no ground for our being able lawfully to use them at will.

And after many things in detestation of Carnival, he adds these: *Public dissolutions rage in the weeks of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima, in which Holy Church represents to us the principal mysteries of the Redemption, in order most fittingly to prepare us for the penance of Lent, as we showed in our Notification XIV, volume 1, which with the others we made public when we governed the Church of Bologna. And these indeed are those Carnivals which the celebrated Bishop Graziani describes in his Synod of Amelia, held in 1595, page 150: "Hence it has happened - so greatly has an evil custom perverted us - that the days intervening between Septuagesima and Lent, which Holy Mother Church regards, with great mystery, as mournful and funereal, have been turned by the prevailing laughter of wantonness and love of merriment not merely into rejoicing and disorderly gladness, but have been dedicated almost to a certain common madness; and license has advanced so far that it has drawn the very laws and the magistrates themselves along with it, and what no well-regulated city would grant even to any private person is now attempted wholly by public authority, and peoples, as though forgetful of the name which they enjoy, have degenerated into the very rites and morals of profane nations."*

For this reason the celebrated Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, ambassador of Emperor Ferdinand I to Suleiman II about the middle of the sixteenth century, recorded that a certain Turkish ambassador, who had stayed among Christians during the season of Carnival, related upon returning to his country that at a certain time of the year - namely, Carnival - Christians went mad, and that after their heads had been sprinkled with the force of a certain ash they returned to a sound mind: "*Thus it is believed not without reason that a Turkish man, who at that time had come to us as an ambassador on public business, reported on returning home that Christians revel and rage on certain days, until, sprinkled in church with a certain kind of ash, they return to themselves and recover.*" *The Church has never ceased to oppose this public corruption so far as it could, and has always prayed to God with prayers and other works of piety that he would suspend his scourges over sinners and by his powerful aid provide a method and means of exterminating so great an evil,* and so forth. Let those who infer from the permission of princes that theaters and Carnivals are lawful read and meditate upon these things.

XIII. And since mention of the Turks has occurred, a suitable occasion presents itself to repel at least one of the many injuries which, contrary to justice and right, Father Francis Zech, primary professor and Doctor of Theology and Canon Law at the University of Ingolstadt, casts upon me in his third inaugural dissertation, in which, after the urbane manner of certain of his comrades-in-arms, he compares me with the Turks and with Mohammed. This inaugural dissertation - which, if I were to examine it according to its merits and overthrow it, I should certainly make very bad use of my

leisure, since it is no better, indeed is more unfortunate, than two others already demolished by me - compels me to a brief but very timely digression. Father Francis reproaches me because I bring forward the ethics of pagans and heretics in order, as he says, to confound Catholic moral theologians; I say, however, in order to overthrow the excessively lax opinions of certain casuists. For he writes these things in the cited dissertation, section 320: *Father Concina frequently adduces Mohammed and heretics to confound Catholic moral theologians, with that solidity of argument by which I would call Mohammed more devoted to temperance than Father Concina, since Mohammed forbids wine to his followers, whereas Father Concina permits it even on fast days outside the meal.* These are the exceedingly acute arguments drawn from the drinking of wine and worthy of so great a theologian, with which my adversaries are accustomed to assail me. Where, I ask, have I frequently cited Mohammed? Why do you not indicate the place, why not the page? So that you may falsely impute at will, is it not so? But let us proceed to more charming things. He adds these in the same place: *One could say in his ear what Our Most Holy Lord Benedict XIV wrote in Constitution 113 to an archbishop of that same sacred Order of Preachers: "Just as his diligence would be praiseworthy if he had attacked non-Catholic authors in those matters in which they oppose the Roman Church, so he makes himself liable to censure when he reads and transcribes their books in order to attack the opinions of the orthodox*."

XIV. I have read the pontifical constitution whose inscription is this: *To Our Venerable Brother, the Archbishop of Santo Domingo on the Island of Hispaniola,* and so forth. That archbishop was justly and deservedly rebuked by the most wise Pontiff because he had borrowed erroneous opinions from the Lutheran writer Boehmer against the common doctrine of the Church. I, on the contrary, when an opportunity offered, adduced the precepts and supporting judgments even of the pagans themselves in order to confirm more deeply the common precepts of the Church and of natural and divine law itself. You therefore inflict upon me, Father Francis, the greatest injury when you compare me with such an archbishop, rightly rebuked. But let us come to the most amusing interpretation of all. Who, I ask you, is that archbishop, and of what Order? He is of the Dominican Order, replies Father Zech, most skilled in the critical art as well as in theology and canon law. But the primary professor is astonishingly mistaken. That archbishop is Friar Ignacio de Padilla, of the Augustinian Order. But Father Zech cries out: Was not the pontifical constitution directed to the Archbishop of Santo Domingo on the Island of Hispaniola? Certainly. But this is the city of Santo Domingo, not the Order of St. Dominic. Father Francis reads of a city called Santo Domingo and at once creates the same archbishop whom the Pontiff reproved a Dominican, so that he may increase the false testimonies of his goodwill toward the Dominican Order.

In truth these things, Father Francis, ought to be said in the ear and not published in print, because they do not greatly illustrate either Father Zech's learning or that of his University. But that vehement zeal for applauding both me and the whole Order of Preachers very frequently thrusts both Father Francis and my other adversaries into similar and still greater lapses. I should fill many pages if I wished to refute the errors, and indeed the very grave errors, of that inaugural dissertation. What if I were to recount the insults with which, after his own manner and that of others, he most benignly adorns me everywhere as unskilled, ignorant, an impostor, and malignant? But, after my custom, I pass over all these things with a deaf ear because they assail my wretched person. Father Francis adds in section 339, page 224: *In vain does Venerable Concina attempt to SWEETEN his bitter irony against the Probabilists.* From the claw, the lion. If it were expedient for me to speak with the same liberty which the primary professor uses, I too would say in Father Francis's ear and with lowered

voice that henceforth he should abstain from writing books against me if he wishes to consult both his own interest and the splendor of his University. For he seems to all learned men less fit for carrying out this exercise, especially when a bad cause resists him. But it is by no means lawful for me to speak such things.

XV. At the end of your inaugural dissertation, Father Francis, you find prudence and knowledge wanting in me. You grieve, moreover, that the purer ethics have been badly defended by me and that the cause of usury, which you maintain, has suffered harm through my ignorance. If I have defended the Christian doctrine of morals too weakly, do you, with the theological and canonical knowledge and ecclesiastical learning in which you excel, defend it more strongly. I admit that I passed over several controversies concerning usury, especially the question whether religious men can act as bankers without injury to poverty and without the gravest scandal. But in order to comply with your desires, I shall examine this and other questions concerning the same argument - but in due time; and I shall take care to demolish according to its deserts the little book which in these days a masked Giovanni Battista Chiarelli has issued from the presses of Lucca, in which, after his own manner, namely with an envious heart, he defends the proscribed error concerning interest and advises Christians to follow it. I shall strip the mask from this Chiarelli so that the true author may be manifest to all, and I shall disclose his very gross errors clearly, so that, if after being punished formerly with a light penance he has refused thus far to repent, upon seeing his graver errors he may at last return to himself and submit the fasces to truth. As regards the prudence which, Father Francis, you find wanting in me, read, I beg you, with prejudices laid aside, the *Theologico-Moral Letters of Eusebius Eranistes*, and thence you will gather whether prudence is wanting in me or in my adversaries. I have touched upon these few things in passing and contrary to my design. Now I return to the path from which Father Zech dragged me even against my will and compelled me to defend myself.

XVI. I place an end to this chapter with the words not of any Father of the Church but of a pagan, namely Pliny the Younger, who in the *Panegyric* thus addresses his Caesar: *The life of a prince is a censorship, and a perpetual one; toward this we are directed, toward this we are turned, and we have need not so much of command as of example. Fear is indeed an unfaithful teacher of rectitude. Men are taught better by examples, which have above all this good in them, that they prove that what they command can be done. And what terror could have achieved what reverence for you achieved! Someone obtained that the Roman people endured the spectacle of pantomimes being taken away, but he did not obtain that they wished it. You were asked for what another compelled; and what had been necessity began to be a benefit. For it was demanded with no less contention from you that you remove the pantomimes than from your father that he restore them. Both things rightly: for those whom a bad prince had taken away ought to have been restored, and, once restored, ought then to have been removed.*

For in those things which are well done by bad men, this measure must be observed, so that it may appear that the author displeased, not the deed. That same people, therefore, once the spectator and applauder of a theatrical emperor, now opposes even pantomimes and condemns effeminate arts and pursuits unworthy of the age. From this it is manifest that even the common people receive the discipline of princes, since, if a thing is done by one man, all have made it most severe. Hail, Caesar, this glory of gravity which you have attained, that what formerly were called force and command are now called customs.

Chapter XX — A Frivolous Little Objection Is Exploded, Drawn from the Liberty Granted to Poets and Comedians to Censure Morals and to Correct the Lapses of Princes Themselves

CHAPTER XX

A Frivolous Little Objection Is Exploded, Drawn from the Liberty Granted to Poets and Comedians to Censure Morals and to Correct the Lapses of Princes Themselves.

I. Remove theaters from our midst, and immediately the liberty of lashing crimes, ridiculing vices, and reforming morals is taken away. If the satires of poets and the vivid representations of comedians are absent, who will rebuke, reform, and represent as objects of ridicule and detestation the sordid vices of the common people, the splendid corruptions of nobles, the disordered governments of princes, their cruelty or sluggishness, their omissions, idleness, dissolutions, and the other faults which can accompany sovereignty? Pious and simple friars and monks raise the sound of their voice against theaters and comedians; they are wholly ignorant of the secrets of political affairs and know not at all the method of reforming morals. If theaters were proscribed, all things would immediately rush to the extreme of evils. There would then be no bridle either for princes or for subjects, no barrier against transgression.

II. Who could bring his mind to believe that the masters of worldly wisdom adduce this above all as a reason why theaters ought to be permitted? What? Do theaters correct morals? Do comedies impose bridles upon princes and the people? Is this the evangelical chair of fraternal correction? O unhappy Apostles and most wise Fathers of all ages - not to say Christ himself - who were ignorant of this rule for repressing depravity! Even the wiser philosophers among the pagans - Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Plutarch, Seneca, and the rest, who urged that theaters be removed from our midst - were foolish. Their religion must necessarily be theatrical, since it places in the theater its chair for promoting virtue and restraining malice. Vices, frauds of every state, and crafty crimes are indeed ridiculed in the theater and rubbed with Plautine salt. But do these things tend to this end, that the auditors may become more moral and observant of the Gospel? And do the mimes direct their labors toward this end? What aims do they have? What are the causes? What reward is proposed to them? One can indeed pass from the sight and hearing even of a base comedy to anger and indignation against the crimes depicted there. But this is beyond the design and comes from chance. And yet men so stupid and blind derive a universal rule from some fortuitous event. *That wife returned better from hearing the comedy,* they say. Be it so. Someone is sometimes stung, at the sight of a brothel and by considering the unhappy life of prostitutes. Is such a thing the reform of morals conceived from a comedy? What? Women are forbidden by divine law to teach virtues and declaim against vices in the temple of God, lest men be inflamed by desire for them rather than by the love of God. And will it be permitted to them, together with the actors, to plead the cause of profane love on the public stage and to relate frauds, artifices, deceits, and the snares of lovers? There is no need of many words for anyone to understand that it is pure and simple delirium to transform the theaters of comedians into an evangelical chair. Crimes are taught and instilled into the minds of the spectators at that very time when they are lashed with satirical salt. Let those frivolous defenders of theaters be covered with shame when they hear the pagan Seneca speaking thus to Lucilius in Epistle 7: *Nothing is so damaging*

to good morals as to sit at some spectacle. For then vices creep in more easily through pleasure. What do you think I mean? I return more avaricious, more ambitious, more luxurious.

Chapter XXI — The Plan of Those Who Propose That Theaters and Comedies Should Be Corrected Is Brought under Examination

CHAPTER XXI

The Plan of Those Who Propose That Theaters and Comedies Should Be Corrected Is Brought under Examination. How Vain and Chimerical That Wish Is. The Inventions of the Celebrated Muratori and of the Author of the *Italian Theater* Are Refuted.

I. The most celebrated and learned Lodovico Muratori, the especial splendor and ornament of Italy and the glory of the universal republic of letters, in his little work entitled *On Public Happiness*, condemns present-day theaters and proposes that they be corrected. First, in chapter 14, page 213, he says: *The theater is not unlawful in itself. The obscenities of the comedians and comedies of bad morals make it so. This is altogether unbecoming to a well-regulated government, and much more to the purity of Christianity. To see wickedness taught there, virtue discredited or made ridiculous, and vice placed upon the throne and confined within happy bounds - no Cato is needed to recognize the deformity of such an abuse, all the more pernicious the greater the crowd of spectators.* The theater, he says, is not unlawful by its nature. It becomes such through the obscenity of the comedians and the depraved quality of the comedies. This certainly disgraces an excellent government and above all the purity of Christianity. While wickedness is taught there, virtue is ridiculed, and vices at last are seen to triumph, no Cato is needed in order to recognize the deformity of so great a corruption, the more pernicious the greater the influx of spectators.

II. Here the author puts forward two things. One is that the theater is not unlawful by its nature. If the discourse concerns the theater which can be conceived in the mind by metaphysical abstraction, the proposition is true; for this world is a most beautiful theater, and, as Tertullian says, the final judgment of God is a great spectacle. But if the dispute concerns the theater which actually always existed among both Greeks and Romans and exists at present, the proposition is not only false but also directly hostile to the Gospel. A theater, or a comedy or tragedy, is a composition of several parts. If a single part is vicious, the whole comedy or tragedy must be depraved. I judge that the author is speaking of the theater which is actually performed by actors. But male and female mimes exercise this theatrical art. Those practitioners have always been held infamous by the consent of all nations, and are so held at present. If the practitioners are infamous, cries Tertullian, will the profession and the art be lawful and honorable? Therefore the celebrated author adds that through the depravity of comedians and poets, comedies and theaters become pernicious to morals, and that in the theaters which flourish today virtue is depressed and vices exalted. Therefore, by the patronage of the most learned Muratori himself, present-day theaters are in themselves schools of crimes and are above all hostile to the sanctity of the Christian law, on account, certainly, of the wickedness of the actors and poets, which has always, and again always, adhered to theaters.

III. Hence it is that the author greatly desires theaters to be corrected, saying: *It would be desirable that there were able and honorable poets, rich in invention, who either for love of glory or through an inclination to promote the public good composed moral comedies, that is, comedies of good morals.... Comedies, therefore, in prose or in verse, which knew how to make men laugh, corrected the ridiculous features of customs, badly ordered usages, and the foolish opinions of the common people, and skillfully provided good instruction, or at least could do no harm, would render the theater a secret school of good conduct and therefore useful to the commonwealth.*

IV. He repeats this same thing in chapter 26, page 372, in these words: *I repeat that a better course would be for the generous prince to have comedies at once pleasant and moral composed by those who have suitable ability; or at least to choose among those already composed by Italians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Englishmen those which are believed most suited to correcting the pernicious and ridiculous passions of the people.... Well-made tragedies and comedies could also become most useful sermons for the people, and the latter all the more effective because ridicule is a sword sharper and more penetrating than the others.*

V. I have always held, and shall hold, the intellect, learning, and knowledge of the most learned Muratori in the highest esteem. Nevertheless, in certain precepts of Christian morality I departed from him even while he was alive, although we maintained a mutual exchange of letters. I therefore approve the plan proposed by him for correcting theaters, tragedies, and comedies insofar as it tends to make less obscenity and baseness appear in them. But I reject it as a sweet dream if it is contended that the use of theaters can be reconciled with Christian profession unless an entirely different kind of comedies and tragedies, hitherto unheard of in public theaters, is devised. Other plots, other actors, another form of dress, other songs, other dances - with fables excluded - and finally all other things must be substituted if there is to be a Christian comedy. Let those comedies, he says, be selected from among the Italian, French, Spanish, and English which are judged more suited to correcting the morals of peoples. The best tragedies and comedies can become most useful sermons for the people, and all the more effective because ridiculous things move and penetrate more effectively. He who reasons thus gathers water in a sieve and whitens the Ethiopian. What? Amid laughter, witticisms, and jokes, amid the majesty of scenes and the luxury and pomp of display, will integrity of morals bloom again? Will male and female mimes, while acting upon the stage the fables and amorous intrigues of poets, recall their auditors to better fruit? St. Augustine most acutely lashes these sweet dreams with this exclamation: *Has even the Devil become a Christian?* Certainly we do not need Cato in order to recognize how charming and ridiculous these inventions are. Let the best tragedies and comedies be selected from those indicated. Do they not all conspire to excite, stimulate, and inflame the indomitable affections of the human heart - or, as they are called, the passions - whether of lust, ambition, vainglory, revenge, or despair? Suppose that the poetic dramas are composed of the most honorable words. Is not the plot which lies beneath the words nevertheless amorous, soft, and effeminate? Add that not every part of a poison is harmful, but all its parts mixed together bring death, as was shown above. Poetic dramas, even if they were most honorable, are infected by the gestures, movements, jokes, and other tricks of male and female mimes which have so often been indicated, and by the sight of little matrons lasciviously adorned and sitting with their little lovers in the boxes of the theaters.

VI. All cry out that comedies and tragedies must be moderated and that the abuses of theaters must be corrected. But no one thus far has provided the rule for this moderation and reform.

No one has deigned to prescribe rules. For this reform, first of all the male and female mimes would have to be driven into exile as infamous persons; women's dress would have to be proscribed, together with all other things which display luxury, lasciviousness, and vanity; matrons would have to approach the theater modestly and chastely adorned and sit in the boxes entirely separated from men. It is scarcely permissible to desire such things, much less to hope for them. This reform of theaters, therefore, which all wise men deride, is a mere chimera; and theaters can more easily be abolished than reformed, as is stated in law 2, *On the Maiuma,* of the Theodosian Code, where it is

said: *But such is the proneness of the human race toward worse things that it is easier to abstain entirely from pleasure than, once it has been granted, to contain it within honorable limits.* Against obscenities of this kind breaking forth again, John Chrysostom had to declaim again and again. For this reason he at last brought it about that they were finally prohibited altogether, when a rescript of this kind was issued against them by Emperor Arcadius. But because the emperor did not abolish all spectacles, as Chrysostom had requested, but only the spectacle of the Maiuma in the year 399, the most holy Patriarch did not cease to declaim against comedies in the years 400 and 401, as he himself testifies in Homily 44 on the Acts of the Apostles.

VII. Two celebrated Jesuits confirm this truth. Father Pedro de Guzman, sermon 6, section 8, writes these things in Spanish, here rendered by me in Latin: *The experience of so many ages establishes that it is by no means possible for comedies to be reformed and moderated according to the rules of honesty by removing dishonest jokes, witticisms, and mockery. For they have been, and are at present, like a hydra: if you cut off one of its heads, another grows again; or like an arm infected with gangrene, which it is more wholesome to amputate entirely than to cut away the ulcerous part. Comedies, therefore, can more easily be exterminated from the Christian commonwealth than reformed, as the Catholic King Philip II of immortal memory wisely accomplished.*

VIII. Father Juan de Mariana says in book 3, chapter 16, of *On the King and the Education of the King*: *I judge with many that it would benefit the commonwealth if actors who sell themselves for a price were entirely removed. For the sake of money they undertake every baseness and instill it into others; by their mercenary art they drain away money and, while the senses are as though lulled by pleasure, secretly extort it, and then spend it with no less baseness. They make citizens grow torpid in idleness and sloth, which is the root of all vices; they prepare the way for all vices and frauds, especially lust, which is drawn in through the ears and eyes.... But if we do not obtain the complete removal of theatrical games, and it nevertheless pleases men to give that entertainment to the people, as justice and equity seem to demand, we certainly desire to obtain some selection, so that an indiscriminate license to do anything whatsoever may not be granted to actors, but that they be circumscribed by fixed laws and limits which no one may transgress with impunity. Yet I thought that this madness could not be sufficiently restrained by any laws. A certain man prudently says: "O master, a thing which has neither measure nor counsel does not wish to be treated by reason and moderation."*

IX. But Muratori replies on page 375: *One cannot expect in the people the holy life and perfection of cloistered religious.* Again, on page 369: *Let that be done which Augustus did in his times in order to charm the Roman people and win them to his side. That prince understood the art of navigation exceedingly well.* In truth, the maxims which the celebrated author writes there may somehow be suitable for the subjects of Augustus, but otherwise for the disciples of Christ. For Augustus understood exceedingly well the art, as our author says, of navigation - that is, the art of steering the Roman people and the whole commonwealth into tyranny. The most perspicacious emperor understood that the road to this end was none other than the love of the peoples; but in order to conciliate this love to himself, he most liberally bestowed entertainments, dances, spectacles, and all other things suited to corrupting morals and blinding minds, so that, after the people had been captured in the snares of pleasure and carnal allurements, he might usurp tyranny. Is this the way to promote public happiness? It is astonishing that Augustus, a prince of the most scandalous life, who knew not how to restrain his own household within the limits of honesty, whose wife was a woman of abandoned modesty and whose very daughters were exposed to public disgrace and ignominy, should be proposed as an example of Christian government.

Come now: did those most excellent and unconquered heroes who laid the foundations and bases of the Roman Empire and enlarged it through three whole and almost four centuries erect theaters? Did they effeminate the people with the entertainments of male and female mimes? Let the new masters of political affairs and public happiness hear Titus Livy at the beginning of his history: *To these matters I would have each man direct his mind keenly: what life and morals there were; through what men and by what arts, at home and in war, the empire was both acquired and increased. Then, as discipline gradually declined, let him follow in his mind first the morals as though they were sinking, then how they slipped more and more and afterward began to rush headlong, until the present times were reached, in which we can endure neither our vices nor their remedies*. He immediately sets forth the arts by which the empire was acquired and the vices by which it was dissipated: *No commonwealth was ever greater or holier or richer in good examples, nor was there any into which avarice and luxury migrated so late, nor where poverty and frugality were held in so great and so long-lasting honor.... Recently riches brought in avarice, and abundant pleasures brought the desire to perish and to destroy all things through luxury and lust. But complaints will not be welcome even then when perhaps they will be necessary.*

What if I wished to relate the things taught by Plutarch, Seneca, and Pliny? Let the masters of politics review all empires, civil as well as sacred, and they will understand that they were acquired by labor, want, poverty, and frugality. But when they had been enlarged and increased by riches, they were then dissipated by theatrical pleasure, luxury, pomp, and extravagance. But let us proceed to other things.

Fasts, solitude, poverty, and other things of this kind suitable for afflicting the flesh are certainly not to be demanded of the people. But the advocates of worldly happiness ought to know that the profession of cloistered religious and of all ecclesiastics is nothing other than a way which leads more easily and safely to that end toward which all Christians ought to tend. Cloistered religious, armed with the weapons of vows and enclosed within the fortress of solitude, fight there; Christians fight in the midst of the open field, stripped of the aforesaid arms and beset on every side by the weapons of enemies. If a Christian man or woman in a theater or in mixed company freely enjoys a simple internal venereal delight, he or she is equally condemned, unless there is repentance, as a cloistered man or a nun. A lustful gaze is equally deadly in a layman and in a priest, apart from the circumstance of sacrilege; as regards eternal damnation, it is the same, though the priest who has abused a greater abundance of graces will be punished more gravely. Let the defenders of theaters understand at last that religious men vow the evangelical counsels so that they may keep more exactly and more easily the divine commands common to all Christians. All Christians are bound to preserve undefiled chastity, either virginal or matrimonial. And because it is most difficult amid so many dangers of a corrupt age to defend either virginal or marital purity unharmed, religious men fortify themselves with so many weapons in which cloisters abound.

But it is true that in many the idea and image of Christianity has been abolished. Was Paul addressing cloistered religious when he said in 1 Corinthians 7: *This, therefore, I say to you, brethren: the time is short. It remains that those who have wives be as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they possessed not; and those who use this world, as though they used it not. For the figure of this world passes away?* Was Christ addressing cloistered religious when he said: *Strive to enter through the narrow gate. If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me?* Do theatrical men carry the Cross of Christ and tread in his footsteps? If I did not fear wandering too far from the road, I would transcribe

Chrysostom's declamation against this prejudiced opinion of Christians and cloistered religious. But it is enough to have touched upon these things in passing.

X. The author of the *Italian Theater* likewise contends that theaters are to be corrected and reduced to an honorable form, not abolished. In order to prove this, he published, without interest, marvelous and most amusing paradoxes borrowed from a French writer. For in the preface to volume 1, page xxii and following, he teaches these things:

XI. *I know well that this effort to improve what they would wish to abolish will not please some pious and religious men. They have conceived too great a horror of theaters from reading the Holy Fathers and also certain sacred canons; nor is it enough to answer them that the Fathers took their motive from the sordidness and cruelty of some ancient spectacles, since these zealots base themselves upon many passages which seem to condemn the stage and the other public spectacles generally and absolutely, not as dishonest or cruel. These passages truly do exist, to conceal nothing; but their reason and force must be understood. It must be known that in antiquity both scenic performances and the other more solemn entertainments were acts of religion which necessarily included idolatry. This truth is more manifest and certain to antiquarians than to others, that is, to those who investigate the more precise and certain information of the earliest ages.*

And a little earlier, namely on page 18, he writes that only a few initiated into the mysteries of pagan superstition understand the force of the word *theatrical*: *It has never been seen with these works that a people was set murmuring, that frenzies of applause were aroused from time to time, and that every person of good sense was dissolved into affections* - but into what affections? And does this not conflict with evangelical holiness? - *as has been seen with some Italian tragedy, for example the modern Merope. And how could so much ever be achieved by theatrical works in which, for the most part, there is now nothing theatrical? THE FORCE OF THIS TERM IS UNDERSTOOD BY ONLY A FEW INITIATED INTO THESE MYSTERIES AND IN ONLY A FEW PLACES.*

XII. These mysteries had been completely disclosed to the French almost a whole century before, and from them our author drew them. To make this evident, I must repeat what I indicated above: namely, that the Most Serene Prince de Conti published in the year 1669 a little work entitled *Treatise on Comedy and Spectacles according to the Tradition of the Church*. Immediately an anonymous *Dissertation* appeared in defense of the theaters against that treatise. The Reverend de Voisin, priest and Doctor of Theology and royal counselor, published a quarto volume bearing this title: *Defense of the Treatise of His Highness the Prince de Conti concerning Comedy and Spectacles; or, Refutation of a Book Entitled Dissertation on the Condemnation of Theaters.*

XIII. The Reverend de Voisin, in the preface itself, touches briefly upon a specimen of the dissertation in favor of the theater in these words: "*This illustrious prince has shown clearly by the perpetual tradition of the Church that comedies have always been condemned and that their actors have been excommunicated and branded with infamy. The author of the Dissertation claims precisely the contrary, and all his proofs are founded only upon visibly false suppositions. The first is that the Holy Fathers condemned the comedies of their time only because of the idolatry with which they were defiled; from which he draws the consequence that the comedies of our time, being exempt from idolatry, cannot be condemned.*" *This supposition, I say, is visibly false....*

It is therefore useless for the author of the Dissertation to say in the first chapter that the spectacles of the ancients formed part of pagan religion; in the second, that the representation of comedies and tragedies was an act of religion; and in the third, that the ancient Fathers of the Church forbade Christians to attend the games of the theater because

that was to participate in idolatry. From this he concludes in the fourth chapter that the representation of dramatic poems cannot be forbidden by the reasoning of the ancient Fathers of the Church, and so forth.

XIV. The author of the *Italian Theater* adds on page 26 and following: *But another host of authorities, sacred and profane, is hurled against us on this matter, from which it seems to be inferred that in ancient times the stage was always held in such dishonor among honorable persons that it not only was execrated by the Holy Fathers but also remained generally branded with infamy by the civil laws. To this, nevertheless, I reply that all this clamor has no other foundation than another equivocation. The ancients had two kinds of representations in the theater. With one they spoke to the hearing, with the other to the eyes. According to the former, comedies, tragedies, and Atellan plays were recited, the latter being a playful but honorable addition, like farces or interludes. According to the latter, things were expressed wholly or in part by gestures, postures, and movements of the body, and by imitative dances accompanied by music and songs; to this was given the name of mimes, pantomimes, playful arts, scenic arts, and actors. Now the infamy and reproaches fell upon the second kind and not upon the first.*

But because there are few who, through acuteness of intellect and intimate knowledge of things, are suited to distinguish well the meaning of words in different times and different places, hearing actors, theater, stage, and spectacles condemned so severely caused theatrical recitations to be believed absolutely proscribed.... As for the laws, it is enough to observe that among all those in which mention is made of infamy imposed upon those who work in theaters, whether in the Digest, the Code of Theodosius, or that of Justinian, not even one is found in which tragedians, comedians, or actors in Atellan plays are seen to be named. From this it is clear that they were not included there; for, since they were particular and different professions, they could not, in so odious a matter, be understood without being named. For the most part the laws speak of professors of the playful art; but the legislators were so far from reckoning the art of dramatic recitation among this that, in the law concerning athletes, the jurisconsults decided that even the thymelic performers were not to be reckoned among them.

XV. As regards this matter, our author displays no other acuteness of intellect and no more select learning than that which consists in warming over again vain inventions published almost a century before. Let us hear the Reverend de Voisin, who continues thus in the preface, page xlix: "*Secondly, the author of the Dissertation supposes that the ancient Romans never included the actors of comedies and tragedies under the name of actors and scenic performers. From this he infers in the ninth chapter that the actors of dramatic poems were not infamous among the Romans, but only the actors and buffoons. And the censures, he says, with which the Church struck actors and scenic performers, and the infamy with which the civil laws branded them, do not fall upon actors in comedies and tragedies. But this supposition is only a pure illusion; for it is established by the testimony of the most celebrated authors of antiquity that the Romans included actors in comedies and tragedies under the name of actors and scenic performers. Consequently, by excommunicating actors and scenic performers generally and without any exception, the Church also excommunicated comedians and actors in tragedies; and the civil laws, by branding actors and scenic performers generally and without any exception with infamy, also declared actors in comedies and tragedies infamous, since they were included under the name of actors and scenic performers.*"

"*And it is in vain that the author of the Dissertation gives so long a discourse on the shamelessness of the scenic games in chapter 5; on dramatic poems represented at scenic games in chapter 6; on the distinction between actors in dramatic poems and the actors and buffoons of the scenic games in chapter 7; on the errors of the moderns concerning this subject in chapter 8; and on the extreme shamelessness of scenic games and actors in chapter 10; for this rhapsody serves no purpose and does not deserve that one pause over it,*" and so forth.

"*In the third place, the author of the Dissertation supposes that ars ludicra signifies nothing other than the art of buffoonery. From this he infers that the civil laws, in branding with infamy those who ascend the theater to exercise*

artem ludicram, impose this penalty only upon buffoons and not upon comedians. But it is gross ignorance not to know that ars ludicra signifies the art of representing every kind of game, and particularly comedies, as one can learn from the mere reading of Valerius Maximus and from the interpretation of all the jurisconsults," and so forth.

XVI. The Reverend de Voisin merely touches briefly upon a specimen of the whole dissertation. But in an entire volume he repels the indicated inventions, or rather deliriums, with a very abundant store of both profane and sacred learning, and reduces them to smoke. From this he infers that the dissertation writer is a mere fabulist, a madman, profoundly ignorant of all antiquity, both pagan and Christian, and a most empty corrupter of the Holy Fathers, councils, sacred canons, and civil laws. Whether the celebrated author of the *Italian Theater* read this French dissertation or not is irrelevant to the matter in hand. It is ascertained and established that the doctrine of the preface to the *Italian Theater* and that of the dissertation are absolutely identical, as will be plain to anyone who reads both. Perhaps the same light shines upon all those who are initiated into the profound mysteries of antiquity. But these matters do not concern me. I cannot sufficiently marvel that the celebrated and most learned author of the *Italian Theater* sells to Italians as a secret doctrine and most select interpretation an erroneous invention not only explained in ten chapters by the aforesaid dissertation writer, but known even to Fathers Caffaro and Segneri, not to mention certain of the laxer casuists.

XVII. Above, in chapter 3, after adducing the testimonies of the Fathers, I made it openly and most clearly evident that it is a manifest chimera to say that theaters were condemned by the Fathers because of idolatry but not because of shamelessness. No less inept and fabulous is the invention that the laws condemned one kind of theater, but not the other, to infamy. The Reverend de Voisin dispels this dream in an extensive discourse in the cited place. I shall bring forward one or two testimonies in passing. The author of the *Italian Theater* writes on page 29: *Cicero, a man full of honor and decorum, would not have openly professed familiarity and friendship with Roscius the comedian and Aesopus the tragedian if they had practiced a shameful art*. Let Cicero's oration be read, and it will be found true what St. Augustine writes in book 1, chapter 33, of *On the Harmony of the Evangelists*: *When Cicero praised a certain actor Roscius, he said that he was so skilled that he alone was worthy to enter the stage, and so good a man that he alone was worthy not to approach it*.

The author of the *Italian Theater* continues on page xxx: *Among the Greeks, moreover, the stage not only brought no infamy upon professionals, but not even shame upon anyone whatsoever, as is particularly evident from the preface of Cornelius Nepos*. Cornelius Nepos says these things in his preface: *No widow at Lacedaemon is so noble that she does not go upon the stage when hired for pay. To be proclaimed victor at Olympia was held in great praise throughout all Greece; but to go upon the stage and be a spectacle to the people was a disgrace to no one among those same nations. ALL these things among us are regarded partly as infamous, partly as lowly and removed from honor.* In note 36 these things are added: "*Among us,*" *namely, among the Romans. Among them EVERY kind of actor was infamous and excluded from civil honors. See Augustine, City of God, book 2, chapter 13, with the notes of Vives, Coquille, and laws 1 and 2, On Those Branded with Infamy.* But why do we waste time on a matter most evident?

XVIII. The French author in the cited dissertation also most ignorantly thrusts forward the honor granted by the Greeks to actors, and the Reverend de Voisin in chapter 9 sharply lashes his ignorance of the same antiquity, adducing ancient documents, some of which I shall indicate in passing. Plutarch writes these things in *On the Institutions of the Spartans*: *The Lacedaemonians admitted neither comedies nor tragedies, so that they might not hear, either seriously or in jest, those who contradicted the laws.* But

as morals degenerated, as happens, the games were admitted, women being forbidden access to them; this was finally granted to them, as Cornelius Nepos relates. But it is permissible to oppose the other Greeks to one city. For the dispute is not about what time, in which all excellent institutions are corrupted, introduced, but about what wise men established. Plutarch, in *On the Glory of the Athenians*, relates these things: *But concerning dramas the Athenians judged that they were an indecorous and intolerable thing, so that it was provided by law that no member of the Areopagus should compose a comedy.*

Again, the same Plutarch, in the *Sayings of the Spartans*, relates that the Lacedaemonians regarded the mimes themselves, the actors, and all comedians as infamous: *When on a certain occasion Callipides, a celebrated tragic actor, first met Agesilaus and greeted him, then insolently thrust himself into his company and displayed himself, hoping to be addressed affably by Agesilaus, he finally said: "Do you not recognize me, King, and have you not heard who I am?" Looking at him, Agesilaus said: "Are you not Callipides the mime?"* That some mime was at times elevated to dignities does not remove the fact that legislators and wise men rejected the art of all actors, as well as of all mimes, as infamous. If you desire more, read the cited de Voisin.

XIX. I would have wrapped all these things in deep silence if they did not assail the first foundations of Christian holiness. There are two principal and most pernicious crimes, namely lust and avarice, on account of which the greatest part of the human race is in danger of eternal ruin. The author fosters both these monsters, while here he strives by every contrivance to kindle and increase the business of pleasure through the defense of theaters and elsewhere the flame of avaricious desire through the defense of usury. And what is worst of all, in each argument he corrupts and overturns the doctrine of the Holy Fathers and the tradition of the Church. He also strives to take away the innate efficacy of divine grace

in an unhappy attempt. And, what surpasses all belief, while writing such things he most pleasantly flatters himself that he is fighting the battle of the Lord and conducting the cause of the Catholic religion against the innovators.

XX. And since mention of divine grace has occurred, the reader will pardon me if, an occasion having been given or seized, I detain him here with a very brief digression in order to disclose and explain the truth of the matter. On the first day of August in the past year 1750 I wrote a letter to this illustrious author, in which I signified that I was not the author of the book entitled *Defense of the Animadversions*, and so forth. Concerning this letter, which I wrote privately and which, despite my complete opposition, was published in print, I pass over many things in silence out of deference to the editor. It is enough for me that there is no word in that letter of which I repent. I confirm again the singular esteem, veneration, and profound deference which I professed to him there; and I add that I have always admired the most perspicacious intellect of that celebrated man, his elegance in writing, and his learning in the interpretation of numismatics and inscriptions, which I myself lack.

Why, then, do I mention the published letter? Because perhaps he, and certainly several others, thought that some advantage for the doctrine of the aforesaid *Theological History* could be drawn from the following passage written there: *The other month I published volume 6 of the Christian Theology, in which I explain the system of Luther, Calvin, and Jansen concerning liberty and grace, where I defend doctrines as contrary to those of the Animadversions and of the aforesaid last book entitled Defense, and so forth, as light is contrary to darkness and Hell to Paradise.* What follows from this? Do I therefore favor even in the smallest degree the *Theological History*, which, by the force of a just theological argument - unless I myself am

mistaken - I constantly judge to be tinged with the soot of Semipelagianism? Because I judge one opinion false, do I therefore judge another to be true? *Since their opinions are so various and so discordant among themselves,* says Cicero in book 1 of *On the Nature of the Gods*, *one of two things can indeed happen: that none of them is true; but the other assuredly cannot happen, that more than one is true*.

Therefore, in order wholly to disperse the prejudged opinions concerning my aforesaid letter, I repeat again that I indeed taught a doctrine no less opposed to certain opinions in the work *Animadversions* than light to darkness and Paradise to Hell. But with the same sincerity I confess that this doctrine of mine conflicts far more intensely with the system of the *Theological History*. Out of deference I abstain from producing the censure which I formed in my mind concerning such a history. I candidly assert only this: that the learned author of the *Animadversions*, truly very well versed in sacred theology, vigorously and most effectively undermines the system of the *Theological History*. With that learned theologian I defend divine grace as efficacious by its nature, which is the head of the celebrated controversy, although in certain other matters I dissent greatly from him, as I indicated in the cited letter.

I have chosen to declare these things in passing in favor of truth, just as for the sake of that same truth I made mention of the *Italian Theater*. If the question had concerned mere learning, I would have passed it by untouched. But because theatrical corruption is, as we saw from Father Segneri, the most pernicious enchantment of all, one which maddens the minds of men and infects souls everywhere, I therefore sharpened my pen, cutting off every human consideration, so that, so far as I could, I might turn souls redeemed by the Blood of Christ away from so monstrous a fascination. Therefore I entreat all the faithful of Christ again and again not to allow themselves to be dragged into error and eternal ruin by certain petty scholars who, claiming for themselves a more sublime comprehension of sacred Scripture and ecclesiastical learning, are as ignorant of the spirit of the evangelical law as they are of themselves.

The extreme disaster which the Church suffered in the sixteenth century flowed chiefly from this: grammarians, poets, and cultivators of more polished humane letters, swollen with vanity, wished both to be and to seem theologians. From this it happened that they dared even to insult and disparage true theologians, and, mixing themselves into everything, fell into the most shameful errors. The human intellect, surrounded by the darkness of original sin, is confined within narrow limits. Let each man run in his own field and be content to reach his proper goal; otherwise, whoever strives to leap beyond the appointed limits of his station will lose the whole matter. Would that these men at last came to their senses and abstained from fostering theatrical pleasure and the alleged innocence of interest-taking, from denying the magic art and the efficacy of divine grace against the most luminous testimonies of Scripture and the most certain and perpetual tradition of the Church. But if they do not restrain themselves from attacking evangelical doctrine, of which they have no knowledge, I would have them understand that there will be no lack of men of God who, scorning the world, calumnies, and defamatory libels, will sustain the cause of Christ with an unconquered heart and manfully overthrow their errors. I return from the bypath to the road.

XXI. The author of the *Italian Theater* insists on page 34: *No one, however, who labors to abolish the theatrical entertainments which among the more cultivated nations have existed and will always exist will ever be as useful as one who labors to correct them. Add that an imperceptible but nevertheless effective school can be introduced upon the stage, sowing good sentiment in many things, spreading various kinds of knowledge, and*

instilling THE BEST OF MORALITY into those who would neither wish nor know how to learn so much from books.

XXII. To begin from the final words: is the more purified juice of morality therefore instilled more happily amid stages, male and female mimes, into the minds of those who would not wish or would not know how to learn it from the reading of Bibles and similar books? Beautifully,

and charmingly! But of what kind is this better theatrical moral juice? Hear: *It has never been seen with these works that a people was set murmuring, that FRENZIES of applause were aroused from time to time, and that every person of good sense was dissolved into affections, as has been seen in some Italian tragedy* - the modern *Merope*.

XXIII. Have you heard? The purer moral juice is then obtained when the people, seeing and hearing Cleopatra, Sophonisba, Merope, and the fables of the poets represented, burst forth into uproar and a frenzy of applause, and every man, even the more prudent, melts away in the liveliness of the affections. These are the sayings and theorems of the recent theologians who wage vigorous war against the Calvinists, Baianists, and Jansenists, but otherwise against their own affections. No less amusing and charming is what the same author proposes in the first place: the man who advises that theaters be corrected and watched will profit more than one who advises their abolition. For the way of eternal perdition has always been, and will always be, broader; and the world and the Devil have always had, and will have, a more numerous multitude of disciples than the school of Christ.

And yet, even as regards this matter, the antiquarian is egregiously mistaken. We have seen many theaters destroyed, but not even one corrected up to the present day. For Emperor Arcadius, at Chrysostom's urging, removed theaters from our midst, if not entirely, at least in part. St. Louis, King of France, drove comedians into exile; the Catholic kings Philip II and Philip IV proscribed comedians. Actors were forbidden to present spectacles at Paris in the years 1584 and 1588. The Venerable Father Posadas, the most celebrated worker of miracles, demolished the theaters at Cordoba. In these days the most excellent Archbishop of Valencia, the most fervent emulator and advocate of Pope St. Gelasius and of the holier ancient discipline, converted theaters into pious hospitals - to pass over other examples. What is more, fire itself, the avenger of pagan superstition, has sometimes burned theaters.

XXIV. I now ask the most learned antiquarian to bring forth even one example, in so long a succession of ages, of the reform of theaters which, as he himself says, always have existed and always will exist. From so many tragedies which he arranged in three volumes, let him select even one which, when recited upon the stage by male and female actors with its farces or intermediate acts, is worthy of a Christian man. But let the author of the *Italian Theater* read the praised Reverend de Voisin, who wrote solidly against this chimera of reform, long before devised by the anonymous author of the cited *Dissertation* and proposed to us anew in Italy as a new, foreign, and unheard-of invention, in the cited volume, chapter 12, refutation 5, whose title is: *The Illusion of the Author of the Dissertation concerning the Reform of Comedies and Tragedies*. Beginning on page 287, after adducing many arguments and documents, he dispels this illusion of mimetic reform.

He alleges the authority even of Father Antonio Escobar himself, who writes these things in treatise 5, examination 5, chapter 4, number 137: *Do magistrates who permit comedies sin? Mendoza affirms that they do, section 29, paragraph 377, because by the permission of this evil no greater evil is avoided, but all vices are*

fostered. How piously Philip IV, a truly Catholic king, banished comedies from the kingdoms of Spain by royal edict in this year 1646, as a common plague. The Reverend de Voisin then continues thus on page 290: "*The sentiments of these great kings and of their magistrates were very different from those of the author of the Dissertation, who wishes comedies to be reformed and an art capable of pleasing to be preserved. Those princes, on the contrary, being persuaded that it is impossible to reform comedies, believed themselves obliged to abolish an art which cannot please without displeasing God and without corrupting good morals....*"

"*This would suffice to make the author of the Dissertation understand how chimerical the idea of reforming comedies is; but he has so filled his mind with it that he imagined he had found an excellent model of it in what Emperor Augustus did concerning the spectacles of athletes.*"

XXV. I would be too long if I wished to transcribe the documents which the Reverend de Voisin brings forward there against the dream of theatrical reform. Nor are more needed to prove it, since the evident experience of so many ages makes plain that this reform is nothing other than a cunning stratagem devised by the defenders of theaters, by which they deceive the unskilled and seek protection for the obscenity of theaters. They themselves, however most resolute, do not dare to deny that theaters as they are, and always have been, fight in hostility against the Christian religion. Let the theaters be reformed, they say. But a comedy reformed according to the law of Christ would certainly not be a comedy, since the vices, the infamy of the actors, and the other things which occur in every comedy and tragedy cannot be reconciled with the Gospel. Meanwhile, they force this illusion of reform upon the unskilled so that theatrical corruption may rage more freely.

XXVI. Finally, let the defenders of theaters know that, while we counsel the extermination of theaters and strive to withdraw Christians from watching them, we shall always attain a great fruit, namely the salvation of our souls, because we have discharged our office, as God testifies to us through Ezekiel, chapter 33. On the contrary, if we were mute dogs, he would require from our hand the blood of the souls which perish. But those who, both in writing and by voice, do not cease urging that theaters, which are remnants of pagan superstition, be frequented will indeed gather a great harvest of souls to be burned in eternal fire; but unless they repent, they themselves will pay eternal and indeed most dreadful penalties.

XXVII. I wish, in confirmation of what I have said, to add a few things which show that the reform of theaters according to the rule of the Christian law is entirely vain and fictitious, the adversaries themselves confessing it. For the celebrated Muratori writes concerning tragedy in his work entitled *On Perfect Italian Poetry*, volume 2, book 3, chapter 6, page 60: *In tragedy more than elsewhere the great art of awakening the affections must be put into operation, in which Euripides seems to me superior to the other ancient tragedians. To wish in tragedy merely to speak to the intellect or understanding with fine sentiments and with ingenious and redoubled plots wearies the auditor and sometimes makes him sleep. His heart must be assailed, HIS PASSIONS MOVED, and then the scenes will be able to promise themselves constant attention and common applause.*

XXVIII. This doctrine, which all poets teach, most clearly proves that the correction and reform of theaters according to the prescription of the evangelical law is the chimera of chimeras. The art of exciting the affections ought chiefly to exercise its powers in tragedy, says the celebrated author. And in this matter Euripides surpassed the ancient tragedians. It is necessary that the tragic poet assail the heart and move its passions; then the spectators will be constantly attentive and will burst forth into common applause. But these things conflict with the holiness of the Christian law no less than

light with darkness and Hell with Paradise. If you take away from tragedy this softening of the heart and excitation of the affections, you have destroyed the nature of tragedy. But if the aforesaid things cannot be absent from tragedy, how much less can they be absent from comedy? Therefore, by the confession of our adversaries, the reform of theatrical pleasure is a manifest dream.

XXIX. The author continues in the same place, page 66: *Yet when I condemn love affairs in tragedies, I do not mean that I wish them banished altogether. I am not so severe, nor so opposed to THE GENIUS OF THE TIMES; and, if one wishes, I shall even say that the custom of tempering the excessive severity of tragedies with the pleasantness of love affairs is not to be blamed altogether. But I would indeed wish their use moderated, or I would at least desire that tragedy did not always have to turn upon tender or base love affairs, as happens today. And why cannot heroes and noble persons be represented acting in other ways than through those of Cupid? Are there not so many other loves - that of virtue, glory, reigning, and the like - which have been and will always be a fruitful mine of tragic subjects? Why confine oneself so often to sensual love alone? But Monsieur Boileau says to me in canto 3 of his Poetic Art: "The vivid depiction of this passion is the surest way to touch the hearts of men."*

XXX. To begin from the final words: why, says the celebrated author, do tragedians frequently turn upon lascivious love? Because, replies Monsieur Boileau, the vivid depiction of this desire more surely softens the hearts of men. Does our author condemn the excess of this desire, which frequently declines into frenzy? Yet he is not so severe that he wishes to remove altogether these delights of love from tragedies; indeed, he accommodates himself to the genius of the times and teaches that the excessive severity of tragedies must be tempered by the pleasantness of love affairs. What? Will rigorism itself dare to enter the theaters? He commands only the moderate use of this most pleasant love and would desire that tragedy should not always turn upon these tender love affairs, as happens today. Apart from the path of desire, do not other ways lie open by which noble and heroic men can enter upon the stage? Do there not occur other loves - of virtue, glory, reigning, ambition, and the like - which have been and will always be splendid subjects of tragedies? Not to multiply words: tragedies must not always cling in the mud of Venus, but should sometimes rise higher and run along the more sublime ways of indignation, revenge, ambition, and glory. These are the vast boundaries within which tragedies may wander. Comedies, however, may more frequently pursue the business of desire and Venus. These are the axioms concerning tragedies; there is no one who does not recognize how hostile they are to the evangelical law.

XXXI. I shall transcribe a few of the things which the celebrated author teaches concerning theatrical music in the same place, page 38: *It cannot be denied that the theatrical music of our times has been brought to an immoderate effeminacy, whereby it is better suited to corrupt the minds of its hearers than to purify and improve them, as was done by ancient music.... Everyone knows and feels what movements are caused within him by hearing accomplished musicians in the theater. Their song always inspires a certain softness and sweetness which secretly makes the people ever more base and devoted to low loves, as they drink in the affected languor of the voices and taste the basest affections seasoned by an unhealthy melody. What would the divine Plato ever say if today he could hear the music of our theaters? In the books of the Republic he so greatly blamed that music which in his own times breathed a certain degree of softness, regarding it as infinitely pernicious to the good morals of the citizens. And yet all the music of the ancients, although soft, could never be compared with that of the moderns, which, perhaps because it is fashioned, as I believe, with greater counterpoint than the ancient music, breathes effeminacy on every side and infects the theaters. Spectators never depart from these full of gravity and noble affections, but only of a feminine tenderness unworthy of manly souls and of wise and valiant persons.*

XXXII. Many pagan writers - Plato, Cicero, Plutarch, Quintilian, and others - inveighed sharply against the theatrical music of the ancients as a corrupter of morals. Cicero says in book 2 of *On the Laws*: *I agree with Plato that nothing flows so easily into tender and soft minds as the varied sounds of singing; and it can scarcely be said how great their power is in either direction. For they excite the languid and make the excited languid; they both relax and constrict minds. It was important to many cities in Greece to preserve the ancient mode of voices; and when their morals fell into softness, they were changed together with their songs, or were depraved by this sweetness and corruption.... Therefore that man, the wisest and by far the most learned of Greece, greatly fears this corruption.... Ancient Greece once punished these things gravely, foreseeing from afar how destruction, gradually slipping into the minds of citizens through evil pursuits and EVIL DOCTRINES, would suddenly overthrow whole cities.* Evil doctrines have always fostered and defended evil morals.

Quintilian adds in book 1, chapter 10: *I think it must be professed that I do not prescribe that music which now upon the stages, effeminate and broken by shameless modes, has cut away no small part of whatever manly strength remained in us.* Plutarch writes graver things, which I pass over for the sake of brevity. Chrysostom calls the theatrical music of his time meretricious and its song fornicatory.

XXXIII. The celebrated Muratori admits - and the matter is so - that the present-day music of the theaters is softer and more effeminate than the ancient. And indeed, when have most wanton little women come forth upon the stage more lasciviously adorned, more shamelessly tuneful, or with baser movements for flattering and seducing? What if to this meretricious music you add the dances, rounds, and leaping in which actors, joined hand in hand with female mimes, turn and whirl them about with the most shameless bendings and deviations of the body? When have male and female mimes hired out their fornicatory song for so immense a sum of gold? At one time for six hundred, at another for eight hundred gold pieces, emasculated comedians and the vilest women - not a few of whom, although prostitutes, are commonly called *virtuose* - are hired to sing for three or four weeks. If pagan writers call ancient music a corruption, stain, and destruction of souls, what must be said of present-day music, softer, baser, and more lascivious by the testimony of all the learned; and what of those Christians who defend this theatrical music as lawful and honorable?

XXXIV. To contract many things into a few: let those who have proposed that theaters be reformed and corrected explain to us by what way and by what method this reform can be accomplished. The nature or matter of tragedies and comedies must be changed, and all those things which excite loves, human glory, indignation, pride, the fire of ambition, and the tenderness of softness must be suppressed. Actors, mimes, shameless female mimes, dancers, and female singers would have to be expelled entirely. Finally, another kind of theater must be introduced, since those which prevail today admit no reform at all. Let the reformers of theaters hear what Georg Grabow, a Lutheran theologian, writes concerning this chimerical reform in his *Judgment on Present-Day Comedies*, where, after describing the vices and crimes of theaters, he raises this objection to himself on page 23: *Further, someone might say: all these things ought to be absent from comedies. They certainly ought, according to the precepts of theologians; but, so far as I know, they have not yet been absent, nor in the future, so far as can be foreseen, will they be absent while the state of comedies remains intact. For in a certain manner they are essential, indeed the soul of comedies. They are adjuncts which are abstracted by a separation of the mind, but in reality remain inseparably joined. They are of that class of things, some of which can be absent very easily, others with difficulty, others rarely, and others never without the destruction of the comedies. For if those allurements are removed, the spectators will fail; when the spectators fail, the profits will fail; and when the profits fail, the authors together with the actors will*

fail. When this has happened, the accidents together with the substance, the abuses together with the use, and the adjuncts together with their subjects - a wretched thing - will perish.

XXXV. From the things said thus far in this chapter you will gather that the celebrated Muratori and the most celebrated author of the *Italian Theater* teach contradictory things and destroy themselves by manifest contradictions. They admit, especially Muratori, that present-day theaters are base and are schools of shamelessness, that they corrupt the minds of spectators and are pernicious to the public good. They recognize and teach that their reform is necessary. Therefore, by their testimony, authority, and confession, present-day theaters are unlawful and forbidden for Christians. Therefore, until they are corrected, Christians who frequent those theaters sin, by the confession of Muratori himself and of the author of the *Italian Theater*.

XXXVI. Perhaps there will be some who will blame me because I have undertaken to refute two most excellent writers of our Italy and have disclosed their errors and contradictions. But let critics of this kind hear and meditate upon the things which the celebrated Muratori writes in the cited work, volume 1, chapter 2, pages 6 and 7: *No one should accuse me of presumption because I summon to my tribunal and sometimes condemn men already consecrated to immortality by universal consent. For these famous pens perhaps did not unite with the felicity of their talents also the distinction of being incapable of error. Besides, I shall say with Cardinal Sforza Pallavicino: teachers of the arts ought not to mention imperfections except in distinguished craftsmen, as imperfections more worthy to be known and more dangerous to be imitated through their authority*

of that name, amid whose light even those little blemishes still shine almost like rays. That authority has such great power to gild defects that it could draw from the mouth of a great philosopher the statement that he would rather call drunkenness virtuous than Cato vicious. For the rest, no more desirable praise can be given to a man than to blame him in little and praise him in much.

I have therefore always adhered to this wise counsel. I have praised most highly writers even of the lower bench, not to mention the higher, whose blemishes and deviations I have exposed. Yet I have not on that account escaped the blows of envy. Nevertheless, I have not regarded, nor shall I hereafter regard, the unjust curses of men.

XXXVII. Another most splendid document against the aforesaid criticism, and in defense of myself, is furnished by the celebrated author of the *Italian Theater* in a work recently published under this title: *Confirmation of the Replies Given to the Anonymous Assailant of the Theological History*, where in the preface, pages 1 and 2, he writes these things: *Men conspicuous for piety, learning, and even dignity have gravely rebuked me and have made me scruple over having replied to the two books, and so forth, with complete brevity, with so little study, and almost at a running pace of the pen. They have repeated to me with great force that the matter here is not some literary question, nor is it my private interest: it concerns points of religion, essential Catholic dogmas.... Persuaded and overcome by such authoritative remonstrances ... I have set myself to examine the matter seriously,* and so forth.

XXXVIII. Persuaded and overcome by the weight of these arguments, I too undertook with an intrepid spirit to defend the principal heads of our religion which concern morals against the defenders of spectacles, comedies, and tragedies. They lay snares for the virtues of chastity, humility, modesty, and shamefastness and threaten them with utter ruin; they promote lust, ostentation, luxury, ambition, and pride, lead them in triumph, and declare a general war upon evangelical integrity of morals. Had the controversy concerned antiquarian matters and profane learning, I

should have passed it over in silence. But when I saw men of great name, yet not sufficiently skilled in Christian theology, regarding theatrical pleasure and the infamous art of actors as honorable, fighting on behalf of vices opposed to our religion and arming their pens against those who opposed them, I resolved to write against them deliberately and not merely in passing.

XXXIX. For from the aforesaid vices, as from pestilential springs, poisonous streams of impiety and contempt for religion and the divine Scriptures flow. Indeed, in the cited work entitled *Confirmation*, published in defense of the *Theological History*, a rule is established for interpreting the oracles of God which overturns what has been settled, transacted, and proclaimed concerning the divine Scriptures. On page 8 the author reports the following divine oracle, which had been opposed to him by an anonymous adversary: *There is no one who can resist your will*, uttered by Mordecai in Esther, chapter 13, and by the patriarch Joseph in Genesis, chapter 50. He interprets it in this manner: *But the patriarch Joseph and Mordecai are authors whose WORKS we do not have*. I render this thus in Latin: *But the patriarch Joseph and Mordecai are authors whose WORKS we by no means possess.*

Words of this kind yield the following meaning. Why, Anonymous, do you object such a text to us? What advantage do you flatter yourself that you can gather from it? If the works of Joseph and Mordecai were available to us, we could draw out the genuine sense; but since we lack them, nothing certain can be inferred from the aforesaid oracle. Away, therefore, Anonymous, with your text, and do not dare to thrust it upon us hereafter until you provide us with the autographs of Joseph and Mordecai, from which we may be able to derive the true and sincere sense. These are the legitimate and necessary consequences which flow spontaneously from the reply given. But who does not see that, if this principle is admitted, innumerable oracles of Scripture vanish into smoke, indeed the whole Testament of both covenants totters? Is the aforesaid oracle received not as dictated by the Holy Spirit, but as written by men? If the most learned antiquarian had had to expound some ancient paper manuscript, he might somehow have employed this reply of his. But to abuse a similar rule of criticism in the interpretation of the divine Scriptures is a most grave error of all, which inflicts the utmost injury upon Holy Scripture.

To overturn this error, the most learned critic of Italian writers has spurred me on even against my inclination; for in his volume 3 of *Literary History*, page 76, he copies word for word this charming invention, hitherto unheard of, and offers it to his readers to drink. He will perhaps excuse himself on the ground that his task is to provide excerpts from books, not to refute errors or even to omit them. Whether this is true or false will appear in due time. Nor will the critic be entitled to complain if others, into whose writings he himself severely inquires and over whom he wields the censorial rod, make use of the right of defense. For it must not be supposed that this critic wishes to claim for himself the supreme right of summoning all the writers of Italy to his tribunal, exalting some to the stars and casting others down to the depths, gnawing and biting them, while at the same time objecting when those injured by an injustice undertake to defend the rights of truth, and especially of Christianity, and to repel accusations laid against them beyond the truth. But let us now return to the path.

Chapter XXII — Jacob Pignatelli, Doctor of Sacred Theology and of Both Laws, in volume 8, consultation 153, demonstrates by every kind of argument that present-day theaters are base and foul, and that both actors and spectators sin mortally

CHAPTER XXII

JACOB PIGNATELLI, Doctor of Sacred Theology and of Both Laws, in volume 8, consultation 153, demonstrates by every kind of argument that present-day theaters are base and foul, and that both actors and spectators sin mortally. A synopsis of that consultation.

I. This is the title of the praised consultation: *On the Foulness of the Comedies of Our Time, on Their Actors and Spectators, and on Remedies for This Evil*, and so forth.

II. First, in number 1 and the following numbers, he proves by the authority of the divine word that theaters are forbidden to Christians, saying: *This is proved first by the authority of the Holy Scriptures.* Having adduced many divine testimonies, he adds:

III. *Secondly, by authority drawn from the sacred enactments of the Supreme Pontiffs, the councils, and the civil laws.* He brings forward canons of St. Clement and of the Councils of Carthage III, Nantes, Aachen, Agde, Carthage, Arles, and Milan, and laws of the emperors Justinian, Theodosius, and others.

IV. In number 23: *Thirdly, by authority drawn from the sacred doctors and the most ancient Fathers of the Church, who defended the Christian religion and piety most vigorously.* The Fathers whose testimonies he alleges are the following: Tertullian, St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, Lactantius, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Basil, St. Augustine, Minucius Felix, Theophilus to Autolycus, Isaac the Presbyter, Salvian, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. John Chrysostom, Bede, St. Bernard, and St. Lawrence Justinian. After the testimonies of the Fathers, he records the authorities both of theologians and of the more lenient casuists.

V. In number 43 he says: *Fourthly, by the authority of leading theologians, who teach that both those who present comedies and games and those who watch them are liable to mortal sin.* He cites St. Thomas, Cajetan, St. Antoninus, Paludanus, Durandus, Sylvester, Armilla, Viguier, and Tabiena, and concludes in number 52: *Thus far, all are from the most illustrious Order of Preachers.*

VI. In number 53 he cites Alexander of Hales, Angelo of Chivasso, and Gabriel Biel. *And these are from the sacred Order of Minors.*

VII. In number 56 he alleges Thomas Sanchez, Reginald, and Paul Comitolus. *Thus far,* he says, *the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.* He adds Megalius and Laelius Lechius. He then adds:

VIII. In number 61: *Fifthly, by the authority of pontifical and imperial jurisconsults.* He alleges Panormitanus, Covarruvias, Alexander, and the Archdeacon. He then summons the patronage of the pagans.

IX. In number 66: *Sixthly, by the authority of pagans and those alien to the faith, who before Christ abhorred the lasciviousness of theaters by the natural light.* He cites Plato, Aristotle, Varro, Cicero, Seneca, Julian, Aelian, Valerius Maximus, Fortunatus, Statius, Suetonius, Cornelius Tacitus, and Demetrius of

Phalerum. He records the very clear testimonies of all these, both theologians and pagans, many of which I myself have presented above.

X. In number 83 he says: *Seventhly, from prodigies and divine punishments by which we ought deservedly to be deterred from spectacles*. He then produces the dreadful punishments inflicted by God upon spectators of theaters from Tertullian, St. Gregory the Great, the *Tripartite History*, Vincent of Beauvais, Hartemius the Carthusian, Thomas of Cantimpre, Henry Gran the German, and Menochius. Finally, he proceeds to the weight of reasons.

XI. In number 96: *Eighthly, from the weight of the principal reasons by which it is shown that the actors and spectators of the comedies OF OUR TIME are guilty of MORTAL CRIME.* In order to close off every escape in advance, he warns that no one may call into controversy the lawfulness of attending honorable representations and amusements. He then establishes the following.

XII. In number 97: *Only three things must be weighed by reason, lest anything seem lacking in this admonitory consultation of ours. First: which comedies ought to be called honorable, which base, and whether the comedies of our time, which are presented by these venal actors, are to be called honorable. Second: whether the actors in base comedies sin mortally. Third: whether the spectators do also.*

XIII. Could the question have been proposed and divided with greater clarity and distinction? Hear now the lucid replies which he gives to each point.

XIV. In number 98: *First. Base comedies are those which display before the eyes the foulest actions of men or women, such as kisses, embraces, those dances, and the lascivious songs by which Venus is either danced, sung, or represented. Base comedies are those in which the clandestine intrigues of lovers, the adulteries of spouses, and the secret arts, sorceries, and loves of prostitutes, pimps, girls, and young men are treated. To speak more distinctly, base and foul comedies are those in which men and women jest, act, and converse about love. Since, therefore, in the comedies of our time which are presented by these venal little prostitutes and actors both men and women come forth upon the stage, treat loves of this kind, converse obscenely, dance,*

and jest, it also remains most certain and evident that ALL the comedies of our time are obscene, dishonorable, and base.

XV. In number 99 he raises against himself the things which the most ignorant patrons of theaters are accustomed to mutter and babble: *You will say: they are therefore not base and not dishonorable because they are fictitious. But are images not called base if they represent women coupled with males? Who would not call them base? What sane person - I speak to a Christian - would not immediately turn away his eyes? And yet those images are also fictitious, indeed, being painted, they are farther removed from life than a comedy. Again, whoever you are, you deceive yourself when you call honorable those things which treat of base matters. You deceive yourself when you call good and in no way reprehensible those things which make way for innumerable evils; or by what reasoning are things good or honorable which, as he says, instruct men for true crimes by feigned ones, and entice, indeed impel, them toward worse things by fictions? If obscene things proceed from stages, if the most immodest things from comedies, who would call them honorable? Most impure streams can only point to a most filthy source, which is the more pernicious the more accessible it is to many, the more common, and the more harmful; and will you dare to say that adulteries are therefore honorable because they are fictitious and in a theater?*

Plainly happy little prostitute, who finds in theaters the honor which you lost in private chambers! Most holy stage, which makes buffoons and actors honorable and holy! Whence comes to you, O stage, this holiness, by which you

make the most disgraceful acts honorable in public, though they are committed in corners? I dare to say: it is worse to feign this than to sin. For it is far more criminal to teach evils than to commit them. Would that you who wear out the stages were a fornicator, would that you were an adulterer! As an adulterer you would flee the sun; as an actor you defile the day. As an adulterer you would seek darkness; as an actor you make whole peoples adulterers. You would be deceived alone with one woman; you would not deceive thousands. Be a pimp, actor. Prostitute yourself, girl; do not pretend. Be the very brothel which you imitate, O theater: matrons will flee you, boys will fear you, old men will shudder at you, and none will learn the things which they will soon do.

XVI. In number 100 Pignatelli summarizes his discourse in this way and covers theatrical men, or defenders of theaters, with shame: *I conclude this disputation thus. I have heard no one call the comedies of our time honorable except AUTHORS OF BASE THINGS or their SUPPORTERS. Only those who, in order to commit and repeat most foul crimes with greater immunity, cover them with a feigned veil of honor, involve them under the name of a depraved license or under the custom of ages, and say that the thing is lawful and not dishonorable because it has been done for so many ages, received by peoples, and permitted by magistrates. But brothels, and access to them, are permitted. Are they therefore honorable? Adulteries and perjuries are evil, and yet most numerous beneath the sun. Review myriads of ages, and you will find both perjurers and adulterers,* and so forth.

XVII. Having set forth with the greatest clarity the foulness and baseness of the theaters and comedies which flourish in our time, whether situated in deeds or in words, gestures, and nods, he proceeds to prove what he proposed in the second place. The foulness and baseness of the comedies and tragedies which are represented today cannot be denied except by a fool. For although base words are not spoken, as I have said elsewhere and often, base deeds are nevertheless narrated and expressed by gestures and nods, such as adulteries, reciprocal loves, and the embraces of men and women. Are these honorable? But let us hear Jacob Pignatelli.

XVIII. In number 102: *The second question is whether the actors of our time who present games of lasciviousness and love SIN MORTALLY. I have indeed found no one among the almost innumerable authors whom I have read who denied it or held the contrary opinion; and they say that the actors of base comedies, indeed the authors who compose them, are guilty of mortal sin. Receive the collection and synopsis of the principal reasons. First, because under the pretext of entertainment they employ, as we have shown above, base words or deeds; because they bring women into the theater, namely, tinder for lusts; because they treat of loves, rapes, and adulteries, all of which are lascivious and unworthy of the Christian name,* and so forth.

Again, actors sin mortally because by base words or deeds they deprive themselves and others of Christian purity of heart, without which no one will ever see God, as is stated in Matthew 5. Thus Paul Comitolus, whom we have just cited, and rightly so. For what purity of heart belongs to those whose ears are impure, whose breasts are filled with fables, arts, sorceries, proverbs, and scurrilities, or whose heads teem with lascivious songs? They spend whole days and whole nights upon this, whether they prepare themselves, whether at home, or whether upon the proscenium. Is this cleanness and purity suited to the kingdom of heaven, into which nothing defiled enters? They will perhaps say: You are too rigorous, who teach these things. For such exact cleanness is not to be demanded of secular persons. But I do not demand it of secular persons, but of the faithful who strive toward heaven and are commanded to seize heaven by violence; and all are so commanded, and so forth.

Thirdly, actors act wickedly because they overthrow good morals in cities and commonwealths and exterminate Christian charity toward God; because they strip boys of virtues, entice and instruct them toward dishonorable morals, to devote themselves to love affairs, to love women, not to obey parents, to mock and show no reverence for old men, and to despise everyone. They therefore sin mortally, because they are the most suitable instruments of

demons; because they are outstanding craftsmen of vices; because they are tinder for murders, quarrels, and base deeds; because they are the origins and bellows of all the perverse thoughts of matrons, virgins, and youths; and

for them are the applause, shouts, and laughter at lascivious things; upon them, finally, fall as many crimes as are committed there by the spectators. For through their work there is in the theater no modesty, no temperance, no chastity, an utter dissolution of morals, no traces of a Christian man, but those of the wanton, the frenzied, beasts, and wild animals. Consider the voices of the spectators, look upon their faces, observe their eyes, weigh their words, understand their sighs, inspect their nods, and you will confess with me how many crimes there are. These actors remain for two or three months in each city; meanwhile, how great is the disturbance in the cities! How many quarrels commonly arise from those gatherings? How many wounds, how many killings, what great dangers at the very least? How great is the neglect of household affairs, if you consider fathers? There is an avidity for the games even among artisans and countrymen, who run there after leaving their daily work; servants rush together; matrons leave home and bring their daughters and girls just reaching puberty, so that they may learn things which they had never heard and so that the flame of lust may seize them sooner than their age would permit.

Finally, that sin is mortal which contains either notable contempt of God, grave harm to another, or a great stain or corruption of oneself.... But all three of these conditions occur together in the actors of our time, as the doctors of our age rightly consider. We have already shown the harm to themselves and to their neighbors. Now behold their contempt of God. For because actors do all things for gain and measure all things by gain, they pass over nothing from fear of God, provided that profit follows. Hence they seek out the more beautiful women; hence those women are adorned with garments; hence they are painted with antimony and rouge; their words are arranged for softness, their gestures for lasciviousness, their nods for impudence, their dances and rounds for mutual lust - and this because they know that by these things they attract the unwary multitude. For they know all the ways to money and omit none, in order to entice youths, allure men, delight matrons, make young men effeminate, and render old men insane, and thus steal and extort money from each. But those who seek gain in this way and amass money by these arts - do they not act with immense contempt of God?

XIX. In number 106 he produces the penalties laid upon actors: Cyprian bars them from the Eucharist; the Council of Carthage numbers them among apostates; the laws brand them with infamy; and several Supreme Pontiffs punish them with excommunication. *And will you call those scenic performers honorable?* he says. *Will you pronounce them innocent? Will you absolve them of every crime? Will you not acknowledge them as despisers of God and men, who are barred from the Church unless they abandon their art? Who are separated from the communion of Christ's body? Who are called infamous and lost men? Who are numbered among apostates? No one is subject to excommunication unless first entangled in mortal sin. It binds no one unless he is bound by mortal crime. But comedians are punished with excommunication by the Pontiffs; plainly, therefore, they judged actors to sin mortally. They say that those whom the Pontiffs excommunicate are not actors. But let them themselves say who they are. I know that actors are condemned. I know that the canons except none. I know that comedians and scenic performers are expelled from the Church - those, I say, as the Gloss says under the word Actors, who perform base and unlawful games. I know that they now perform base and unlawful games.* Finally, he passes to the third head which he proposed, namely, to explain the sin which spectators commit, in the following words.

XX. In number 108: *This is the plain and absolute proposition: that spectators of comedies which are performed by these venal actors, in which both men and women come forth upon the stage and converse about loves and lascivious matters, and so forth, do not sin mortally, is a proposition UNWORTHY OF A CHRISTIAN MAN, MUCH MORE OF A THEOLOGIAN, most pernicious to the commonwealth, directly opposed to the doctrine of the*

Fathers, and in no way consonant with the opinions of all theologians and scholastics. But, on the contrary, this proposition - that spectators of the comedies of our time ARE BOUND BY MORTAL SIN, both by reason of scandal, by reason of danger, and by the force of cooperation - is a most safe proposition, excellently consonant with the responses of the Supreme Pontiffs and the oracles of councils and canons, wholly in agreement with the opinions of the Fathers and the doctrines of the scholastics, AND TRUE.

In number 109: The spectators of the comedies of our time therefore sin by the force of cooperation, because they voluntarily and without necessity assist actors who are sinning mortally; they smile upon them, applaud them, favor them, and for the most part support them by their authority, money, or at least their presence. This is to cooperate with them. But to cooperate with those who sin mortally and to exert influence upon their crime in any way is mortal. That they assist the actors, favor them, smile upon them, cooperate with them, and exert influence upon their crime is manifest. For nothing cooperates more with a speaker than a listener. And one who performs before the people is assisted by no one more, and in a certain manner receives strength in speaking from no one more, than from his hearers, especially if they applaud, smile, favor him with nods, or at least fix their eyes upon him. He who speaks receives from his hearers, in a certain manner, words, witticisms, thoughts, and - what is more marvelous - even strength and lungs and, so to speak, talent from the gaze alone of those who assist. But actors in the theater have not only receivers of words but also givers of money, and therefore they receive their strength not only from the favor of their hearers but also from their gold while they speak, for without gold they would not even come forth.

This is confirmed by a parallel. The Supreme Pontiffs threaten not only duelists and single combatants

with excommunication ipso facto, but also those who deliberately watch them for that purpose; because, if these men did not look on, the duelists would scarcely continue. It is thus manifest that spectators of duels, merely because they are spectators, sin mortally against charity; otherwise excommunication would not be hurled against them. Actors, however, would neither begin nor come forth upon the stage if no spectator went to them. You are therefore convicted by the same reasoning whether you are a spectator of a duel or of actors. For although the act of watching is not intrinsically evil in either case, nevertheless, because both the single combatants and the actors perform an intrinsically evil thing - the latter especially because of excess in the entertainment, contempt of God, base gestures, and words inciting to lust, which can be rendered honorable in them by no end, since they give others an evident cause of ruin - you therefore cooperate in a certain way with both by watching, and in both cases you sin mortally.

You will say: They would still perform upon the stage even if I as an individual did not attend; therefore they do not come forth upon the stage because I attend, since they would come forth even in my absence. But every individual spectator of duels could make precisely this reply. Yet the individuals sin. Besides, why do actors extort money even from each individual, if they are not supported by each? Why do they permit no one to enter unless he pays, if they are not maintained by each person?.... Finally, we are all admonished so that all may detest this. Not all will do so unless you too execrate it. You sin even though you attend as a single individual. For this is to run with the thief as the Psalmist says, and to place your portion with adulterers; and, as I said, you cooperate when you support the masters of adulteries, when you feed little prostitutes, when you are present and act as an inseparable companion of their sins and crimes. You run with the thief when with your silver you nourish comedians - indeed, eaters and devourers of souls - feed them with blood, prop them up with ruin, and sustain them with peril, and so forth.

They sin mortally, moreover, by reason of scandal. For scandal is a word or deed less than right which furnishes an occasion of ruin, and it is a mortal sin even if it is only accidentally the cause of another's grave ruin: namely, when someone despises the salvation of his neighbor and, in order to preserve it, does not omit what has pleased him. Thus St. Thomas teaches entirely and in express words, II-II, question 43, article 4, and so forth.

You ask who are chiefly those who give scandal to others? I shall answer briefly: all. Yet the crime admits a distinction. Every person who by his attendance summons others also sins gravely. Eminent men, old men, fathers of families, and those who possess authority in the commonwealth sin more gravely; for if they did not attend, many would blush at those comedies and would think them less becoming, whereas the contrary occurs because of the sole example of noble men and those who surpass others. But religious and clerics would sin most gravely of all. Thus especially Cajetan on II-II, question 167, article 2, and Menochius, book 1, century 1.... Hence I marvel that a certain modern writer, otherwise learned, taught the opposite when he said that this was neither shameful for clerics nor a scandal to secular persons. But how little truth there is in this, ask not the Supreme Pontiffs, not the decrees of councils, not the opinions of the Fathers, not the doctrines of the scholastics, but the very multitude raging at the spectacles, whether it is lawful for clerics and honorable for religious men. They will immediately cry out that it displeases them in clerics. Those who belong to the world will rise as judges; they will pronounce sentence against clerics and religious men, from whom they learned modesty, shamefastness, and honorable conduct, and so forth.

Thirdly, spectators sin by reason of the danger and the proximate occasion to which they expose themselves. The spectacle, stage, and orchestra, where love affairs and dances are celebrated, are altogether a proximate occasion.

But if you ask: For whom must the stage and these venal comedies be judged a proximate occasion, and by whom must they be avoided under pain of mortal sin because of the danger? I reply: by everyone. This occasion must be avoided by all. The principal reason is that an occasion in which many persons, and persons for the most part, fall is to be asserted as proximate for each person, because the greater part of the multitude frequently offends there. It does not matter that this person does not offend. Everyone therefore sins mortally who so mingles himself with that multitude which sins for the most part, even if he sometimes does not fall into that same crime; and the occasion is called proximate for him when many of those with whom he thus mingles himself fall, and fall for the most part. For no one will ever stand so secure that he ought not to fear at all when many persons and the greater part fall altogether. The Psalmist excellently intimates this when at the very beginning he pronounces blessed the man who has not gone in the counsel of the impious, has not stood in the way of sinners, and has not sat in the chair of pestilence; as though, on the contrary, he said: altogether unhappy and wretched is he who has gone into any counsel of the impious and has sat in any chair of pestilence - I shall say more plainly with Tertullian, who has frequented theaters. But he is wretched and unhappy, that is, bound by mortal crime, solely because of the company of the impious; for fellowship in sin is a proximate occasion of sinning.

XXI. The doctrine just reviewed is so lucid and unshaken that no true theologian can call it even into controversy. For it is accidental, as they say, that someone is not inwardly delighted and does not suffer the goads of concupiscence. It can also happen that someone sleeps in the same bed with a woman without sinning either with her or inwardly. Is, for that reason, the man who voluntarily enters this danger free of mortal sin? Pignatelli himself also observes in number 119 that certain casuists who teach that betrothed persons can be delighted by their future union with their betrothed introduced most ridiculous little distinctions into this matter also. For this false and lax opinion Pignatelli alleges Sanchez, book 8, disputation 49, number 41; Emmanuel Sa under the word *Games*; Reginald, book 22, number 8; and Bonacina.

Those authors teem with lax and proscribed opinions. They concede that the comedies are base and obscene, and then, by the force of a metaphysical precision, they teach that a Christian can attend them. But Pignatelli himself replies: *Certainly these men depart greatly from the manner of speaking of the holy Fathers and the ancient scholastics.* A little later he adds: *But let each man consult his own conscience as to how rather harsh and difficult these precisions are, and how near to sin in practice.* Pignatelli does not dare to

rebuke these authors, nor do I myself scold them; but I condemn and detest their lax, false doctrine, opposed to the Fathers, the theologians, and common sense itself. Pignatelli rejects it with these words of Tertullian: *How wise an arguer human ignorance is, especially when it fears to lose some such thing from the enjoyments and fruits of this world.*

XXII. In numbers 121 and 123 Pignatelli raises against himself certain objections which have already been overturned several times by the Fathers, whose replies I reported above. In number 125 he opposes to himself the common sophism in these words: *They object, thirdly: If comedies may be read and we are not bound by mortal sin, even if they are base and men and women converse about love affairs; again, if the inquisitors of the faith acknowledge that they are in no way contrary to good morals so as to permit them to be published, why is it forbidden to hear them on the stage?* and so forth.

Many make much of this argument. I have heard otherwise learned men assert that it is even insoluble. But undeservedly. Do you desire to know what more the stage possesses, so that things which are scarcely evil outside the stage immediately become very bad upon it? I shall say at once: gestures, faces, voices. But you yourself see how strong these things are and how powerful in human affections. Have you seen the corpse of a man?.... But what would he be like if he lived?.... The same thing plainly applies if you compare reading and writing with the stage. Upon the stage there are also voices poured forth for pleasure, cheerful for joy, lowered for sorrow, halting for fear, tearful and softly inflected for pity, heightened and frequently broken for anger. Upon the stage the mouth and countenance burn in anger, are cheerful in joy, constrained in adversity, insolent amid reproaches, composed in serious matters, relaxed in playful ones, and keen in difficult matters. Upon the stage, finally, the hands are companions of words - or, to speak better, often interpreters equal to the words: how expressive, how wise, filling out the words and their impetus and force, so that someone has rightly called them the dart of speech.... What if you add to these the contortion of all the limbs, even to lasciviousness, the movement of the feet and the other parts? Finally, what if you add the pomp and apparatus of the stage itself, the garments, masks, dances, modulations of strings, and rounds? And will you say that the danger and the distinction of pleasure are the same in both cases, whether comedies are read or heard? and so forth.

XXIII. In number 130: *Finally they object: Granted that entering theaters, watching comedies, and attending these games is a mortal crime, nevertheless, since everyone does it in good faith, it is not mortal for them. Therefore, rather, he who admonishes them will be guilty of all their sins, since, once admonished, they will still do it.*

The reply is: that ignorance excuses from guilt which, as theologians say, is wholly invincible, inculpable, probable, just, and entirely involuntary, and through which the whole malice of the act is unknown.... But who enters comedies who does not know at least some malice in that act? Who does not at least think it venial? Therefore all sin mortally, if it is a mortal sin to attend them, although they are ignorant that they sin mortally.... Besides, the matter is now treated everywhere; there is no one who does not dispute it, no one who does not judge it. CONFESSORS fight with opinions. If they concede, they are praised; if they deny, they are condemned. The title of wisdom is purchased from them by this one thing: if someone appears not at all scrupulous. This ignorance, therefore, under which spectators of comedies labor will not be just, innocent, or probable, but truly, as the scholastics say, affected.... The spectators of the comedies of our time therefore sin most gravely, although they pretend that they are ignorant. From this it also remains clear that it is most conducive to the glory of God and the salvation of souls to admonish each person, and that there is no crime in one who admonishes them, even if, once admonished, they still act and sin more gravely. St. Ambrose says excellently in sermon 83: Sometimes, sparing you, I would wish to be silent; but I prefer to render causes for contumely rather than to sustain judgment for negligence.

In number 138: *You will perhaps say that lascivious comedies are forbidden, not grave ones, not tragedies. But tragedy too expresses ancient crimes, as Tertullian says, so that it may be known that what has been done can be done,* and so forth.

In number 139: *First, neither the commonwealth nor the prince is permitted to introduce such spectacles; he cannot permit them. The actor is infamous and is not admitted to the communion of the Church. There is an example in Cyprian,* and so forth.

In number 140: *By the example of the Roman Empire they say that they can permit, indeed seek, pleasures. But among the Romans there was at first a moderation of scenic performers; afterward stages and theaters were often abolished and actors driven into exile. For they grew accustomed to idleness and vices when, as Varro reproaches in book 2 of On Agriculture, they preferred to move their hands in the theater and circus rather than among crops and vineyards. By experience they said that virtue cannot subsist in a kingdom of pleasure and that innocence cannot remain amid so many incitements to vices; and therefore they often condemned them. What they had rightly renounced they most wickedly resumed. That affair passed into such madness that players received the pay of generals and armies; at so great a price were the tinder of disgrace and the stains of morals purchased. So great was the reward for corrupters of morals.*

A prince can remove so great and so pernicious an evil with one word, with one written decree; if he does not, he himself cannot be saved. For what Christian will stir up a tumult? Besides, very many subjects of princes and cities, and even soldiers, are corrupted by these pleasures. Now in the garrisons and camps defenders of the fatherland are needed, while those who perform a work of no value, a pernicious work, live in gold and purple and insult those who pursue honorable things. But how can a commonwealth subsist in which actors are equated with generals? We read with amazement of the wealth of Roscius and others, and from these things we learn the madness of public vanity.

The Spartans did better in removing actors altogether than those who determined to restrain them by laws. For although they were sometimes compelled by the commands of princes to abstain in public, many seditious and foul things were nevertheless attempted by them in private houses to the injury of the public. Augustus indeed was just and severe toward Stephanio, lenient toward Pylades, but at length resolutely vigorous; yet in the rest of his life he was indulgent and a corrupter of morals. For he himself lived most shamefully, and his wife and daughter were a disgrace. Therefore scenic performers and players must be removed altogether from our midst. Much more must foreign ones be removed, such as wander everywhere throughout Italy. For they are infamous because of their dramatic art and introduce great corruptions.

Single Section — An Admonition to Readers, and Especially to Confessors

SINGLE SECTION

An Admonition to Readers, and Especially to Confessors

I. I have no doubt that not a few advocates and defenders of the theaters of our time ought to be covered with deep shame at this doctrine of Jacob Pignatelli. He is a writer of the Curia, not a rigorist, not an ancient Father of the Church declaiming against theaters stained with the taint of idolatry, not a morose and severe antiprobabilist, nor a man from beyond the Alps who, as Father Francolini says, comes *from a distant region with modest brow, downcast eyes, and lowered countenance*; rather, he is an author who wrote at Rome, who at Rome was counselor to men clothed in the purple, and who served the Curia. Moreover, this author, not in passing but deliberately, with a most abundant supply of learning and the inescapable efficacy of arguments, proves that all spectators of theaters sin mortally, both by reason of cooperation, by reason of scandal, and finally by reason of the proximate occasion to which they expose themselves. He adds that this is the doctrine of the holy Fathers, of the councils of every age, and of theologians, indeed of almost all casuists. For the sake of brevity I have omitted very many things from the praised consultation, but I have adduced enough and more than enough to close the mouths of those who are not ashamed to assert that the theaters of our age are honorable. They will be able to gather still more evidently from this that both the first principles of Christian morality and the precepts of pagan civil ethics itself, so far as this matter is concerned, are opposed to the erroneous opinion which they have hitherto defended. Let them therefore come to their senses and detest their errors; let them cease to impose upon the unskilled multitude with the paints of empty knowledge; let them take care that hereafter they be an example of virtue to those before whom they formerly placed stumbling blocks.

II. What arguments for grief and tears ought those confessors not to draw from the aforesaid consultation, whose penitents are seen today in the theater and tomorrow at the altar, today among clerics and tomorrow among female and male actors? What force of eloquence can express that most deadly and, beyond what can be said, most dreadful scandal which this alliance produces in the Church of Christ - namely, the frequenting of theaters and of the sacraments? The curial men themselves and others read in Jacob Pignatelli the doctrine of divine Scripture, the holy Fathers, the Pontiffs, the theologians, and indeed of the Church herself, which declares male actors, female actors, and spectators of theaters to be sources of most grave crimes and unworthy of the divine sacraments. On the other side they see confessors who distribute the most holy sacraments most liberally both to actors, dancers, and spectators of comedies.

Placed between these two extremes, they converse with one another in this way: The Fathers and doctors, not only of the ancient age but of every century, the councils and all theologians, and generally even the more lenient casuists, with one or two exceptions, condemn the spectators of theaters; the Church of Paris bars them from the sacraments. On the other side, all confessors - or at least very many, and those surrounded by a more abundant concourse of people - not only absolve these theatrical penitents and refresh them with the sacred food of the Eucharist, but also confirm them more deeply in the same corruption. They mock and censure confessors and theologians who teach the opposite, and assail them with the most odious censures of rigorism and Jansenism. Surely

those who seriously meditate upon these opposed extremes, which otherwise are obvious and strike the eyes, suffer the greatest scandal, and those weaker in religion waver. And if I were to say that this is one of the sources from which the impiety that daily unfurls its banner more widely flows, perhaps I would not wander from the truth. *Confessors,* says Pignatelli in number 131, *fight with opinions. If they concede, they are praised. If they deny, they are condemned.*

I ask and entreat the sacred ministers of God to be willing to weigh this controversy more seriously. Let them say which grave theologian, who has adorned this task according to its dignity, they have read teaching that male and female mimes, actors, and spectators of the comedies of our time are to be absolved. They cannot allege even one. Therefore, those who impart the sacraments of Christ to theatrical Christians show themselves to be betrayers of the divine ministry and killers of the sheep of Christ.

Nor let them object that a certain few casuists teach that base and lascivious comedies can be seen and heard without grave guilt, although the actors sin mortally, because the spectators can abstract from the lasciviousness and rejoice and take pleasure in the jokes, witticisms, song, and other things which are not lascivious. How contrary this doctrine is even to the moral philosophy of the pagans and to common sense itself is plain. Besides, even if those spectators were free from venereal delight, they cannot escape the sin of cooperation. Again, can that tiny handful of casuists add even the least degree of probability to a depraved corruption against the common doctrine of the Fathers and theologians? Is the condemned little branch of Probabilism in this proposition - *Generally, when we act with probability, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, although slight, provided that we do not go beyond the bounds of probability, we act confidently and always prudently* - and in the other, *If it is the book of some younger author,* and so forth, to be reduced to practice? Finally, the reasoning of those casuists, situated in a metaphysical precision, is vain, ridiculous, the root of all laxities, and unworthy of a Christian theologian. But in order to rout the deplorable invention more securely and forcefully, I shall bring forward the words of Jacob Pignatelli himself, who writes these things in the cited place, number 120.

IV. *Therefore I would consider this one thing in this place: let confessors, and those who have the care of souls, neither intimate abstractions or precisions of this kind to penitents nor in this way open a road to lasciviousness and obscenities.... To the Christian people the name of confessor stands in place of a divinity. His task is to build a hedge and rampart, not to undermine it. And you will be called a builder of hedges, Isaiah 49. But in what way does he build a hedge who says that it is no crime to frequent theaters, to see rapes, to learn adulteries, and to be entertained by lascivious things? In what way does he build a hedge who teaches that it is not dishonorable to attend them, provided only that scandal and danger are avoided? Who teaches that it is not even shameful for clerics? Let confessors therefore beware of teaching this and of pronouncing that opinion which, for the most part and in most persons, deceives, whereas the contrary occurs rarely and scarcely. For it is certain that the multitude is seized and the people carried away toward these trifles, that lusts are excited, and that the tinder of passion grows hot amid the lascivious conversations of actors, lovers, and little prostitutes, arranged for luxury. On one side they have the words of the women who perform; on the other, the gazes of the matrons and noble young women who watch. What will the adolescents do, what the crowd of young men, to pass over adult men and old men?*

O ministers of God, when pronouncing opinions, when we teach something to everyone, the nature of one or another man is not to be regarded, but that of many and the common condition of men. But for the human condition the matter is full of danger: to hear obscene things and be moved in no way by obscenities; to behold base things and not

be defiled; to hear lascivious things and contain oneself; to laugh at dishonorable things and preserve honor; to look upon the faces of women and not desire them - especially at that time when the ears are full of love affairs, the hearts of allurements, and the eyes of images of noble girls or women, or at least of the little prostitutes who act their parts upon the stage. With so many dangers in theaters, shall we pronounce absolutely that there is nothing mortal in attending spectacles? Shall we dare to open those lying precisions to women and men who scarcely know good from evil? This must be said neither to all nor to one, neither privately nor publicly. The license of one becomes an example to many. Let him who can attend without sin, if indeed he can, abstain from theaters, so that the man who cannot attend without sin may abstain. Nothing is lawful for anyone in public which harms many.

V. Thus not only the Fathers and theologians, but all who are free from prejudiced opinions, detest the most monstrous corruption of the present day. By what reasoning, therefore, do many confessors administer the sacraments to those who frequent the theater and base and obscene comedies? Will they deny that present-day theatrical representations are obscene and base? Will they deny that in present-day theaters men and women, adorned with the most refined art of luxury and display, come forth to jest about mutual love, dance, and sing? Can these things be joined with the Christian profession? Are they modest, chaste, and restrained? On what authority, then, on what foundation, do they admit the actors and spectators of theaters to the sacraments? Do they rely upon the very slender probability repeated from Sanchez, Sa, and Bonacina? But these authors possess absolutely no authority in this controversy when compared with the Fathers, the councils, and the theologians who condemn those things by common consent. Add that the aforesaid casuists speak under the hypothesis that spectators of base comedies neither suffer danger nor cause scandal to others. But this hypothesis is commonly chimerical or, at least, even in their opinion, very rarely has any place in reality.

VI. From this it is evidently inferred that those confessors who absolve the actors and spectators of the comedies of our age are destitute of every reason and authority and therefore inflict the utmost injury upon ecclesiastical discipline, betray the ministry of God, and foster liberty of sinning. Thus St. Thomas of Villanova, the Venerable Cardinal Bellarmine, and all the more celebrated bishops and theologians of the most recent age cry out and proclaim. But the extremity of all evils is that at this time one is not permitted to condemn the things which, half a century ago, Father Segneri, Father Camargo, Father Gonzalez - what need to say more? - and Jacob Pignatelli condemned with raised voice and a free pen. For those who absolve, says Pignatelli, are praised both by the crowd and by the great; those who bind are condemned.

Chapter XXIII — By the Authority of the Reigning Pontiff Benedict XIV, of the Venerable Cardinal Bellarmine, and of Cardinal Lanfredini, It Is Demonstrated That Those Who Frequent Present-Day Theaters Sin Gravely

CHAPTER XXIII

By the Authority of the Reigning Pontiff Benedict XIV, of the Venerable Cardinal Bellarmine, and of Cardinal Lanfredini, It Is Demonstrated That Those Who Frequent Present-Day Theaters Sin Gravely

I. Never too much, because never enough. The things which I have thus far brought forward against the spectators of base comedies ought to suffice. But because, as Tertullian says, *human ignorance is never a wiser arguer than when it fears that it will lose something of this kind from the joys and fruits of the world*, I have therefore reserved for this last place, as though for the final battle line, the decisive judgment which I must now bring forth. The most wise Pontiff Benedict XIV, happily reigning, was given to us by Divine Providence not only for the splendor and ornament of the Catholic Church but also of the republic of letters. He has left almost no subject, whether of the theological or the canonical faculty, especially one concerning the reform of morals and discipline, which he has not illuminated with the highest learning and doctrine. Moreover, in various works of his, and not merely in one, he has attacked obscene comedies. In his volume *On the Synod*, book 7, chapter 61, number 12, page 328 of the first edition, he teaches as follows:

Too lax, not to say openly erroneous and scandalous, is the doctrine handed down by Lucius Ferraris ... where, although he admits that clerics must not be permitted to act as comedians or to be authors of comedies, he nevertheless absolves from grave guilt those same clerics who watch comedies, however base and obscene, provided that they foresee no probable danger of falling to threaten them from hearing those comedies, etc. ... For which reason even the followers of a MORE LENIENT ethics condemn comedies of this kind, and teach that not merely clerics, BUT ALSO LAYMEN WHO WATCH THEM SCARCELY EVER ESCAPE GRAVE GUILT, with St. Thomas in IV, distinction 16, question 4, article 2, little question 2, reply 2.

We consider it superfluous, moreover, to pursue with more words this otherwise MOST GRAVE ARGUMENT, because we have already treated it copiously in our Notifications 57 and 56, where we accumulated many excerpts from approved authors in detestation of comedies and dances, etc.

II. It has been demonstrated with the greatest evidence that present-day comedies are base and obscene, nor can this be called back into controversy. The most learned Pontiff, however, teaches that the spectators of these comedies SCARCELY EVER ESCAPE GRAVE GUILT. He adds that even the followers of a more lenient ethics acknowledge this by common agreement. The Supreme Pontiff considers it superfluous to pursue with more words this otherwise most grave argument, because he treated it copiously in his Notifications 57 and 56. I excerpted more from the cited Notifications in volume 4 of my *Decalogue*, book 8, dissertation 2, chapter 3, in order, with the support of so great a Pontiff, to exterminate the depravity of dances. Therefore I now pass over many other testimonies of that same Pontiff, so that I may attend to brevity as far as I can, and because the things which I have adduced are decisive and are subject to no evasion or circumlocution. After the most luminous judgment of the most learned Pontiff Benedict XIV, other documents are superfluous. Nevertheless, so that the truth may shine more brightly, I wish to add a few others.

III. The Venerable Cardinal Bellarmine, in sermon 19 for Lent, has the following concerning dances: *Concerning dances I shall say only one word, and chiefly for this reason: because I understand that some do not regard this as a true evil, and I know that at Louvain there are public schools where the art of dancing is taught. But I indeed, if ADULTERY, if FORNICATION is an evil, cannot see how it is not an evil for men to dance with women, since it most powerfully provokes to that. Hear St. Job: I made a covenant, etc. And will you go and dance with a virgin, and by dancing rouse yourself to lust, and will no danger threaten? Why, then, does the Wise Man warn: With a dancing woman, etc.? What! Holy men, blessed Antony, blessed Hilarion, blessed Jerome, lived in solitude and scarcely defended themselves from the spirit of fornication, from desires, and from depraved thoughts. And you ... will go and return, will sing, will dance with girls, and shall I suspect no evil? But I do not wish you to believe me. Let us hear what the ancient writers, etc.*

He gathers there the testimonies of the holy Fathers. If the most learned Bellarmine regards the dances of young men with girls as so evidently evil, just as he judges adultery and fornication to be evil, what, I ask, would he say concerning the comedies and theaters of our age, in which not only are the dances of young men performed with the most wanton dancing women, but the softest music, the sweetest song, the magnificence of the scenes, and innumerable other delights and deceptions conspire together to inflame lust? Would he not, kindled with zeal for God, cry out? If adultery is evil, as it truly is, then theaters and obscene comedies of this kind, which most powerfully provoke to fornication and adultery and wage a most savage war against humility, modesty, penitence, and the other virtues, must also be criminal.

IV. Cardinal Lanfredini, Bishop of Osimo, most distinguished for learning, integrity of morals, apostolic zeal, and episcopal fortitude, when he had learned that a comedy was to be presented in a nearby city, feared that the plague of theatrical pleasure might spread more widely and invade his own flock. He therefore stirred that flock with a most fervent discourse against so great a danger and exhorted it to beware for itself, in a pastoral letter which holds the second place in the *Collection of Synodal Orations, etc.*, printed in the year 1740, and which was written in the Italian language. I shall transcribe a few passages from it rendered into Latin.

With extreme affliction, he says on page 35, *we heard a report of a war stirred up against souls dyed with the sacred laver, not by Mohammedan power but by the fury of the demon. That war is the more formidable, the less appearance of terror it presents; the more dangerous, the safer the aspect which it displays. Hear, therefore, most beloved, the voice of your father and pastor, or rather the tears with which he admonishes you, prays you, and adjures you to be watchful. The danger is not distant* (the comedy was being performed at Pesaro). *The danger is great and can be exceedingly pernicious. Let your safety be in flight.*

On pages 37 and 38: *Most beloved sons, whence do you hope for victory over so many enemies? From your own strength? By no means. For Paul cries out in 1 Corinthians 10: Let him who thinks himself to stand take heed lest he fall. From God? But when the danger can be avoided by flight, if you cast yourselves into it voluntarily, according to Saints Augustine and Thomas you tempt God. But to tempt God is a sin opposed to religion. Perhaps someone will say that these are honorable amusements. O God! Would that it were so. Hear. St. Paul forbids women to teach in church because of that danger which threatens the hearers, as Anselm interprets it. But if a Christian woman cannot preach divine love from the public pulpit in church, will it be permitted to her to portray from the theatrical stage the allurements of profane love; to sing and dance amid harmonious and most sweet concerts, amid the apparatus of vanity, luxury, and ostentation, in the sight of young men who direct their minds more toward the allurements of these infernal Sirens than perhaps toward the exposition of the Gospels in church? Are these honorable amusements?*

The Fathers, theologians, and sacred writers do not judge them to be such. This is the doctrine of all the bishops whom God has appointed to rule His Church; these are their exhortations to the Christian people.

Chapter XXIV — Before the Very Tribunal of Human Reason, What the Pseudo-Politicians Thrust upon Us Is False: Namely, That Theaters Promote the Public Good and Draw the Arrival of Foreigners and Riches into Cities

CHAPTER XXIV

Before the Very Tribunal of Human Reason, What the Pseudo-Politicians Thrust upon Us Is False: Namely, That Theaters Promote the Public Good and Draw the Arrival of Foreigners and Riches into Cities

I. What, say the pseudo-politicians, does a monk wholly ignorant of civil government declaim against theaters? Why does he disturb public happiness and torment the consciences of citizens, and attempt by this writing of his to impede the influx of foreigners into our city and the accumulation of money? Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of scudi circulate because of comedies and theaters, and men of every condition make a profit. No one fails to see how hostile such dissertations are to the tranquility, peace, and innocent gladness of the citizens.

II. In this chapter let the Fathers be silent, let the theologians be silent, let the Gospel itself be silent, though its commandments and the baptismal profession not only do not hinder civil government, common tranquility, and joy, but wonderfully promote them all. Nevertheless, let these things be silent; I call my cause back to the one tribunal of political science, and from this tribunal alone I prove that the theaters of our age are hostile to the public good, corrupt morals, and are wholly opposed to political science.

III. Among the many things of which public happiness consists are, first of all, an abundance of riches and a plenty of money, gold, and silver. The wishes, studies, and vigils of the rulers of a city ought therefore to look first to this: that they find and open ways by which gold and silver may enter cities and treasuries. Then they ought to devise a method and plan by which these metals, sterile by their own nature, may become fruitful and profitable. Rightly and well. But what is the force and method by which money is to be made fruitful and increased? Agriculture, commerce, the industry of citizens and of all their inferiors, strength and fortitude patient of labors and hardships, and the assiduous cultivation both of mechanical and of liberal arts, as Lampridius noted concerning Alexander Severus: *He established very many mechanical works at Rome; and he granted the greatest immunity to merchants, so that those wishing to come to Rome might flock there.*

IV. Let us now come to grips with our pseudo-political opponents. The allurements and delights of comedies and theaters make men effeminate and render them over-refined, soft, delicate, sluggish, and dissolved in idleness; they make them utterly unfit for the military art, civil offices, commerce, and labor. Marcus Varro, in book 2 of *On Agriculture*, strongly reproaches the Roman people, softened by the delights of theaters, for this injury: *They preferred to move their hands in the theater and circus rather than among crops and vineyards*. These delights either impede, diminish, or utterly extinguish the cultivation of the arts and letters, which demands vigils by day and night. They disturb both private and public offices. Those who attend comedies and devote themselves to matrons - these two things are accustomed to be joined - if they exercise dignities or offices upon whose right administration public happiness especially depends, neglect the study of causes, the examination of business, and

remedies for evils; they leave books to be devoured by bookworms and moths, most wretchedly squander the time appointed for deciding the gravest controversies, and strive to ascend to ranks and dignities through the favor of little women.

V. Male and female mimes are hired for golden salaries, plunder the purses of the citizens, and carry the money of the city elsewhere. Singing women and dancing women, like the most treacherous and cunning Sirens, often so bewitch and drive senseless young men of free birth and noble rank that, captured by love of them, they overturn their families and consume their parents with extreme grief. Examples are placed before our eyes daily. But money circulates because of the comedies, our pseudo-politicians insist. It circulates indeed, but toward ruin, the utmost poverty of the citizens, and injury to the principality. Gold and silver, which could become profitable and yield the richest fruits in commerce, in cultivating fields, and in promoting the arts - I do not speak of relieving the poor or providing husbands for girls - are squandered in enriching emasculated eunuchs, dancing women, actors, and female musicians who, traveling around cities, hire out their services, gnaw away their money, and carry it elsewhere with them. That circulation of money is useful and profitable to cities and the principality which grows by industry and produces fruits and advantages, not that which either goes elsewhere or withers and rots fruitlessly in the base traffic of crimes. These pseudo-politicians and false economists consider the tiny inflow of money collected by theater contractors and tavern keepers, but they are ignorant of the outflow and of those immense injuries which the most pernicious theatrical corruptions inflict upon the commonwealth.

VI. Money applied to commerce, trade, agriculture, and the arts produces its fruits and pays tributes and taxes to the principality. Do the immense sums of gold which male and female mimes, dancing women, and female musicians collect from their hired performances pay a tribute to the principality? What do actors send into the public treasury? Rather, what do male and female actors and the spectators of comedies not steal? Let us briefly enumerate these thefts. First, all male and female mimes are utterly sterile plants in the vineyard of the principality, because they produce no profit; they are poisonous plants, because they draw other men away from labor and from practicing their arts. Thus not only do those men and women contribute nothing, but they diminish the taxes to be paid by others. How many citizens omit to pay both private and public debts in order to give their money to actors or theater contractors for watching comedies? What more? Never do luxury, ostentation, and pomp triumph more boldly than during the season of theaters. Each person endeavors to surpass the others and stand out in this field of display. They eagerly seek silk cloths from foreign nations; they receive foreign fashions of dress from those beyond the Alps; and garments of every kind come here in great part from foreign nations. Those very pseudo-politicians who babble that theaters are useful to the common good are clothed, adorned, and painted with foreign merchandise. Hence our arts languish, whose products our pseudo-politicians disdain, and innumerable craftsmen and laborers perish from hunger. What do the defenders of theaters say to these things? Do they dare deny that theaters are exceedingly pernicious and injurious both to private and to public good, and contrary to the ordinances of political government?

VII. The arrival of foreign merchants is to be desired and, as Alexander Severus says, to be enticed by a diminution of taxes, but for the purchase of merchandise, the cultivation of the arts, and the increase of commerce. If more skilled masters of the arts, whether mechanical or liberal, were hired

with the same immense salary for which male and female mimes are hired, cities would immediately flourish and public treasuries would overflow with gold.

VIII. Thus far I have routed their ridiculous fabrications by the innermost force of reasons. Now I summon the adversaries themselves to authority. Are the civil laws which declare actors infamous ruinous to the principality? Was the Emperor Theodosius, who enacted the law *On the Lord's Day*, injurious to the principality when he prescribed: *With every pleasure of theaters and circuses denied to their peoples throughout all their cities, let the minds of all Christians and faithful persons be occupied with the worship of God.* But Theodosius was a Christian. Let our pseudo-politicians, therefore, name from among all the pagan philosophers, the most skillful masters of political science, one who taught that theaters ought to be established, male and female actors hired, and games conducted in order to increase either private or public good. Let them read Plato, Aristotle, Solon, Cicero, Tacitus, Seneca, and Plutarch. Are the volumes of those men, which are worn by the hands of all and in which theaters and actors are condemned, hostile to the public good? Let it therefore remain firm and established that present-day theaters are condemned not merely by the laws of Christian prudence, but also by those of civil and political science.

Chapter XXV — How Gravely Serious Men and Ecclesiastics Who Attend Present-Day Theaters Sin

CHAPTER XXV

How Gravely Serious Men and Ecclesiastics Who Attend Present-Day Theaters Sin

I. Serious men, although laymen, sin more gravely than others by frequenting theaters, because they give the greatest scandal to inferiors and young people. For when these hear that many mature Christians, even men outwardly well conducted, say that they attend theaters without being shaken by any temptations, they take courage to frequent theaters. I am willing freely to concede that claim. But those men do not notice that their own example places the greatest stumbling block before young men and girls.

For those young people argue: Serious men adorned with the best morals attend theaters and rejoice in their amusement; therefore, with still greater right, attendance at theaters will be lawful for us young people, to whom recreations and amusements are owed by a certain peculiar right. But who, unless entirely foolish, would say that the chastity of young men and girls rests safe in present-day theaters? Young people are led by their own parents to the training ground of love affairs and Venus. Who can represent so great a crime as it ought to be represented? Those serious men and those very parents, whose duty it is to teach the young thoroughly the evangelical integrity of morals, preach iniquity to them; and leprous parents beget leprous children, and together weave their own damnation.

II. To turn the discourse to ecclesiastics: in the following dissertation I shall condemn the theaters of cloistered religious. For the present let it suffice to touch upon a few matters against clerics, priests, and prelates who sit in theaters; and, leaving aside the penalties of so many sacred canons imposed upon priests of this kind, I shall only briefly touch upon the prerogatives of the priestly dignity. If all Christians, in their baptismal profession, renounce the pomps of the world and the devil, priests bind themselves to God by a peculiar bond when they are initiated into the priesthood. Priests are, as it were, the stars of the Catholic world, which ought to dispel the darkness of laymen. They live from the offerings of the faithful so that by their prayers and sacrifices they may be intercessors with God. Priests are compelled to abstain even from those amusements, jokes, and joys which do not disgrace worldly men. St. Paul describes in a few words the morals of priests and bishops in the opening words to the Romans: *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God.*

First, therefore, all ecclesiastics are by a peculiar right servants of Jesus Christ and wholly devoted to the service of Jesus Christ, so that, stripped of every care and solicitude for earthly things, they may serve God alone in winning souls. Each one, according to the diversity of his talents, must toil not only for himself but also for the salvation of the Christian people: some by teaching, some by going before them with an example of good works, others by correcting and rebuking. He who is properly a servant belongs wholly to his master; and whatever he has and can do, he has and can do for his master. Such were the Apostles: *Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee*, Matthew 19. And St. Paul thunders in 2 Timothy 2: *Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No man, being a soldier of God, entangles himself with secular affairs, that he may please Him to whom he has approved himself.* The priests of the Lord are the chosen soldiery of Christ, appointed to wage the Lord's war. Simple priests are, as it

were, the infantry; archpriests are tribunes; bishops and cardinals are the leaders and commanders of the spiritual army under the one invisible head, Christ, and the visible Roman Pontiff. If those men are fearful and timid, if they fear the assaults and specters of the flesh, the world, and the demon, it is all over with the army.

What if those leaders, standard-bearers, and commanders of the Christian soldiery were to desert from Christ by a perfidious rebellion and, after entering into a treaty with the world, the flesh, and the devil, were to go before the people by their example into the camps of the world and the devil - such as theatrical spectacles have been shown above to be from Father Segneri, and not merely from the Fathers? What if those leaders themselves were to sit upon theater seats among matrons and little matrons and display themselves to be seen by the whole people? Certainly those men would serve the devil, not God, and should be said to be sources of execrable perfidy, slaughtering the people committed to them with the most savage butchery of depraved example. What if they were to squander the patrimony of Christ, or ecclesiastical revenues, upon actors and female musicians, upon luxury and pomp? What if they had fallen into such deadly blindness that they were not ashamed to maintain that they may sit in theaters, watch comedies, read poetic dramas in place of the Gospel, and neglect the duties of their own ministry without committing any grave crime?

III. Indeed, Holy Scripture, the Fathers, the councils, and the very voice of nature prove that all ecclesiastics, priests, prelates, and bishops who, as described above, watch comedies commit not one but several most grave crimes. They sin because, bound by the vow of chastity, they expose themselves to the dangers of violating it, since this most delicate virtue cannot remain unsullied without a special grace of God. Will God pour His grace into those who voluntarily undergo dangers; who place stumbling blocks before their own people; who betray the rank of the priesthood and its sacred dignity? When they say that amid theatrical deceptions they experience no rebellion of the flesh, then, ulcerated and wounded on every side, they do not feel their scars. They sin most gravely because they give Christians an incredible scandal, because they defame the Church of Christ, and because they confirm heretics in their obstinacy. What reproaches do the transalpine heterodox not vomit against the Catholic Church when they see priests tonight giving their labor to the pomps of the devil in the theater and tomorrow sacrificing the Son of God at the altar? What delays their return to their Mother except those leaders and rulers of the churches who testify by their works that they care nothing for the religion which they profess?

IV. These most grave scandals proceed chiefly from this: that those men entered the sacred soldiery of Christ when God did not call them. For the first foundation of the ecclesiastical state is the divine vocation, as St. Paul adds: *Called to be an Apostle*, that is, called by God to the apostolate. Those who thrust themselves into this state when God does not call them lack the grace of vocation; and thus they bear sacred insignia, but are destitute of the holiness of the state. Therefore St. Bernard rightly cries out in sermon 35 on the *Song of Songs*:

They are ministers of Christ, and they serve Antichrist. They walk honored from the goods of the Lord, though they render no honor to the Lord. Hence that harlot's splendor which you see daily, the actor's dress, the royal equipment.... Hence the cithara, the lyre, and the flute; hence overflowing winepresses and full storehouses disgorging from one into another; hence casks of pigments; hence purses filled.... It was foretold long ago, and now the time of fulfillment has arrived: Behold, in peace is my bitterness most bitter. Bitter first in the slaughter of the martyrs, more bitter in the conflict with heretics, most bitter now in the morals of those within the household.

V. This scandal appears more clearly if we attend to the common voice of Christians. Christians cry out: Is it a sin to watch comedies? Do not the priests themselves, both the greater and the lesser, flock there, and openly too? If the very ministers of God do not regard it as contrary to their religion to watch comedies, why do preachers inveigh against theaters? Why do theologians disturb our consciences? Priests perform the sacred rites daily, and nevertheless frequent theaters. Therefore one of two things follows: either they pollute themselves with daily sacrileges, or they abstain from the sacrifices so that they may attend the theaters. These are the reasonings of Christians; and these are the causes why neither theologians nor preachers are able to reform the morals of Christians.

VI. What shall I say of the waste of time, pernicious to all but most pernicious to priests? Not a few of these men read the dramas of poets, but time is lacking for reading the Holy Scriptures, the works of the Fathers, and the canons of the councils. Yet the third office of those who are called to the priesthood is, Paul says, the preaching of the Gospel: *Separated unto the Gospel of God.* Bishops are in the state of perfection. Do those shine with this perfection who spend four hours watching comedies? What shall I say of those who neglect the administration of their offices; who neglect the study necessary for deciding lawsuits and for acquiring that knowledge which befits the perfection of their own state; who are not only unfit to preach the Gospel to others, but are wholly ignorant of the spirit of the Gospel by which they should compose and regulate their own morals? Indeed, if they had tasted the Gospel of Christ even with the tips of their lips, they would either abstain from theaters or at least confess that they sin when they frequent them. But not a few have fallen into such blindness that they obstinately deny that they do anything contrary to their own state when they devote their efforts to spectacles of this kind. And, what is monstrous beyond what can be said, they pronounce judgment without having examined the cause in a serious and mature discussion.

Amid the laws offense is committed, says St. Cyprian in his *Letter to Donatus*; *amid rights sin is committed, and those who sit to avenge crimes sell crimes and wicked deeds as virtue and honor.* These men are to be mourned, not convinced. To worldly men, as I have learned by experience, the truth is very easily commended, although, entangled in human appetites, they wander from it. Every ecclesiastic is a theologian; and however ignorant they may be, they contend most fiercely that the things which they passionately love are honorable and holy. Let us hear Cardinal Cajetan on this matter in II-II, question 167, article 2, reply 2, where he teaches as follows:

Because those who attend spectacles of this kind are commonly present for the sake of pleasure, if the things represented are indecent, the spectators are therefore not excused from sin, even granted that in truth the representation alone delighted them. And the reason is that at least by their exterior act they devote themselves to an unlawful thing, namely, pleasurable attendance at indecent things. For that exterior presence by its own nature commonly tends to delight the mind, not in the representation alone, but in the things represented, as is plain. Moreover, serious men sin more gravely in this because of scandal and bad example. But clerics, religious, priests, or pontiffs would sin most gravely in this.

VII. Most learned Cajetan acutely and soundly distinguishes the representation from the matter represented. Many babble that they are delighted by the representation alone, or by that vivid gesticulation. *Granted,* says Cajetan, *that in truth the representation alone delighted them, the spectators are not excused from sin.* Why? *Because at least by their exterior act they devote themselves to an unlawful thing.* Male and female mimes direct their crafts and efforts to this end: that they may instill into the minds of the spectators delight in the matter which they represent. *For that exterior presence by its own nature*

commonly tends to delight the mind, not in the representation alone, but in the things represented. But the things represented by actors are always either indecent and base by their own nature or mingled with obscene matters, namely, amorous intrigues. Actors conspire toward this one end: to soothe, move, entice, and stimulate the appetites of the human heart toward the objects represented. Can those men be excused from grave guilt? Moreover, Cajetan says, the spectators by their exterior presence lend assistance to this grave guilt, as we have plainly disclosed above.

VIII. All these things are so manifest that they cannot even be called into controversy. And yet at this very time we have seen a pastoral letter, to be lamented with the most bitter tears, by which ecclesiastics of a certain territory are granted permission to go to and watch theatrical representations. Since Christianity was founded, so monstrous a writing has not appeared. A public retraction alone can abolish so great an evil. These are the phenomena of our most corrupt age.

IX. Finally, so that they may be suffused with some shame, I wish to transcribe here the rules which the impious Emperor Julian the Apostate prescribed for the pagan priests. In order to enlarge pagan superstition, he commanded the pagan priests to emulate, or at least to feign deceitfully, the modesty, gravity of morals, and unsullied integrity of life of the priests of the Christian religion. By this way, the most cunning Apostate said, they will more successfully propagate the worship of false divinities. For among other things he writes the following, as Sozomen relates in *Ecclesiastical History*, book 5, chapter 16, to Arsacius, supreme priest of the gods:

As many priests as there are throughout Galatia, either by frightening or by persuading, make them diligent and honorable, or remove them from the priestly ministry if they do not honor the gods together with their wives, children, and servants, etc. Then exhort the priests that they NEITHER GO TO THE THEATER, nor drink in taverns, nor preside over any craft or work that is base and disgraceful; and bestow honor upon those who comply in these matters, but expel those who resist.

Let priests, prelates, bishops, and abbots impress these things more deeply upon their minds. These words uttered by the impious Apostate penetrate more deeply into their own consciences than if they were amplified by me. From this it is established how alien the Christians of the ancient age, and especially the priests, were from watching theaters. If these documents do not move them, what can we allege more efficaciously?

Chapter XXVI — Can Any Events Occur in Which It Is Sometimes Lawful for This or That Christian to Go to the Theaters?

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Can Any Events Occur in Which It Is Sometimes Lawful for This or That Christian to Go to the Theaters?

I. Husbands frequent the theaters lest they disturb their wives, and wives frequent them so that they may obey their husbands. A public minister attends the theater so that he may accompany the prince. Will you pronounce that these people sin? For an interval of twenty years and more I have revolved this little question deeply in my mind. On one side the obvious argument was this: it is lawful to remain in a proximate occasion when necessity presses, as is plain in children of a household. Why, then, should it not also be lawful to watch theaters? On the other side, the falsity of that reasoning disclosed itself spontaneously to my mind. If the discussion concerned only the danger of falling into some personal pleasure, the parallel adduced might deceive someone. But in our case the dispute concerns not so much one's own sin, into which anyone may fall, as scandal and the rendering of assistance to the unlawful deed of the actors. The theatrical art of today, practiced by male and female mimes, all things considered, is by its own nature infamous and ruinous in the class of morals. To support the professors of an art of this kind with payments and to foster them by one's own presence is a crime no less grave than that of the actors. The theater is a council of vanity in which no one will deny that many crimes are committed. But it is never lawful to attend a council of sinners. For just as both divine and ecclesiastical law forbid watching a duel in which bodies are slain and confirming it by one's own presence, with still greater right it is forbidden to attend a duel in which souls are slaughtered.

Add that a necessity so grave as to compel one to go to the theaters scarcely occurs. For if husbands and wives are truly Christians, they will easily persuade one another that watching comedies is not expedient; if, on the contrary, they merely bear the name of Christian, all disputation ceases. The same must be said of a public minister. You insist that several consequences would follow - murmurs, amazement, and absurdities - if this or that man refused to go to the theaters. I reply that the entire Gospel cries out that you cannot be a servant of Christ if you desire to please men and the world. The four Gospels cry out from beginning to end that you can by no means enter Paradise unless you conform your morals to Christ your master and leader, mocked, struck with blows, smeared with spittle, held in hatred, assailed with insults, despised, and crucified, and unless you are prepared to suffer similar things. He who strives to serve two masters and to associate the Gospel with the world constructs a chimera of chimeras. These are the weights of reasons which prove the aforesaid viewing of comedies unlawful.

Whether a very rare case can truly occur in which, for the sake of avoiding dissensions, quarrels, greater scandals, or schisms, someone may go to a comedy and sit there like another Alypius with eyes and ears closed, I am wholly ignorant, and I suspend my judgment. Let those who wish carp at my weakness and lack of wisdom. With me as author and sponsor, no one will frequent theaters. But lest anyone fasten upon me the customary chimera of rigorism, let them hear the continuator of

Tournely, who writes the following in his *Treatise on the Decalogue*, chapter 5, on the sixth precept, page 524 of the Venice edition:

CONCLUSION IV. Frequenting spectacles and comedies is dangerous to chastity and harmful to the soul in many ways. Hence a Christian can scarcely attend spectacles and comedies without sin. Thus Natalis Alexander, whose resolution regarding the second part seems almost too lax.

After he had condemned by every kind of argument the frequenting of comedies and tragedies, against the second part of the proposition cited from Natalis Alexander he says on page 124: *But could not a learned man attend the first representation in order to judge the play, when he is certain that he will not be badly affected by it? Would it have been unlawful for an honorable woman sometimes to hear a holy tragedy? ... Leaving the matter to the judgment of wiser men, I do not believe that those who willingly attend a comedy EVEN ONCE are free from harm. First, because none of them, whatever they may say or think, is immovable in mind, as Tertullian said above; they can therefore be moved, and sufficiently proximately, and that in a place where they cannot confidently expect the grace of God. Second, because they undoubtedly cooperate in the action of the actors, WHICH IS A GRAVE SIN; for remove the spectators and you will have removed the actors. Third, because those who frequent a comedy confirm themselves by the example of respectable men whom they see attending it, and*

they are accustomed to object this either to those by whom they are urged to desist from the practice, or to those whom they wish to draw into it almost unwilling. Therefore I judge that absolution must be denied: first, to actors who present scenic games; second, to authors who compose plays to be recited in the theater; third, to craftsmen who fashion things directly pertaining to the theater, unless all these, sufficiently admonished, wish to come to their senses and renounce the aforesaid things forever. The same must be said with still greater reason of musical stages, called OPERA in French. Thus six doctors of the Sorbonne resolved in the year 1694.

Those who wished Tournely's work on versatile grace to be reprinted, so that the system opposed to the doctrine of St. Augustine might spread more widely, ought to have taken care that the moral precepts published by Tournely's continuator were also reprinted. For thus, corrupt ethics having been driven out, sounder doctrine would flourish again.

Chapter XXVII — The Doctrine of the Lutherans against Present-Day Theaters Is Set Forth, So That Those Catholics, If Any There Are, Who Do Not Blush to Purge the Comedies and Tragedies of Our Age of Wickedness May Read and Be Confounded

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The Doctrine of the Lutherans against Present-Day Theaters Is Set Forth, So That Those Catholics, If Any There Are, Who Do Not Blush to Purge the Comedies and Tragedies of Our Age of Wickedness May Read and Be Confounded

I. The day before yesterday I went to the very extensive library of His Eminence Cardinal Passionei. Whether you consider the abundance of volumes, the choicer and multiple editions, or the more excellent and rarer authors, you would seek in vain among any other private cultivator of letters throughout all Europe, not merely in our Italy, for its equal. While I was there searching out authors who treat of theaters, the most learned wearer of the purple came to meet me, adorned with incredible learning and truly prodigious memory even at the age of seventy. Standing upon one foot, he enumerated all writers of that kind, took them from the shelves with his own hand, and gave them to me; and, what surpasses all belief, he drew out and handed to me even the smallest pamphlets hidden among his very numerous miscellanies, consulting no index and undertaking no prior search. What contributes still more to the splendor and ornament of his library and of his vast learning is that he most courteously and liberally shares his books with all learned men, not merely to be read there, but even to be carried home. I have mentioned this incidentally both to pay a sacrifice to truth and to offer to others for imitation the example of so great a man. Moreover, among other volumes on this subject which he showed me, he lent me the following pamphlet, inserted in octavo in volume 22 of the *Miscellanies*.

II. George Grabow, Rector of the Frankfurt Gymnasium, *A Judgment concerning Present-Day Comedies and Other Theatrical Spectacles, Composed from the Prior Judgments of the Most Holy Fathers and Also of the Most Approved Theologians of Our Church, and Approved by the Most Distinguished Theological Faculty of Leipzig*. Frankfurt, 1689.

III. This Lutheran doctor presents not his own peculiar doctrine, but that of the entire Protestant sect against present-day comedies. For on page 3 he speaks in this manner: *It is falsely believed that our Church approves the vanities of comedies, and the fault either of doctors or of authors is wrongly imputed to its doctrine. For to one who asks what it determines concerning comedies, the answer is ready: it so far does not approve present-day and common comedies that it rather condemns by its own right the authors together with the actors for error and, what is graver, for prevarication. For both sin most gravely.*

IV. Having premised this brief beginning, he alleges the more celebrated theologians of his sect and transcribes their testimonies. I present one of the many which he adduces. The most celebrated Brochmandus, Grabow says on page 4, teaches:

First, it is known that the purpose of these scenic games is to display virtues and vices to the life. But I am certain that no one among Christians can or ought to name without detestation those vices which are depicted in scenic games; much less may anyone put on a character in which the living image of crimes shines forth. Let these sayings of

Scripture be pressed: Ephesians 5, Let impurity not even be named among you; 1 Thessalonians 5:22, Abstain from every appearance of evil.

Second, it is known that comedies cannot be presented with the applause of the people unless the foul, vain, and ridiculous speeches of worthless men are represented to the life before the whole theater. The Spirit of God does not permit a Christian man to do this. For these apostolic admonitions are known: Ephesians 5:4, Let obscenity, foolish talk, and scurrility, which are not fitting, not even be named among you, but rather thanksgiving; Colossians 3:8, Put away shameful speech from your mouth.

Third, it is known that these scenic games require men to put on women's clothing. But the Lord severely forbids this to be done in these words, Deuteronomy 22:5: A man shall not put on women's clothing, for whoever does this is an abomination to JEHOVAH.

Fourth, it is known that more persons who are vicious than persons whom zeal for what is right inflames flock to these games. Hence there is great danger that more will be corrupted by the scenic representation of vices than will be amended. For hostile things cling more tenaciously. And here that saying of the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 15, can rightly be pressed: Evil communications corrupt good morals.

Fifth, nowhere does the Spirit of God prescribe this pagan method of amending vicious morals; rather, the declarations of the Holy Scriptures are: Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet. They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

for instruction in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, perfectly furnished for every good work. Thus far Brochmandus, volume 2 of the *Institutes of Theology*, article on law, chapter 13, question 6.

V. I wish you to notice a few things. First, this excellently learned Lutheran teaches that Holy Scripture itself condemns present-day comedies, which are not free from foul speech and scurrility. Second, among the Lutherans the most putrid corruption of women coming forth upon the stage does not spread; and thus they condemn the other corruption, that of actors who put on women's clothing. Third, he rejects the dream, or rather the delirium, of those who contend that morals are amended by the teaching of comedies, since Holy Scripture does not point out this pagan method of recalling men from their vices. With this irony he lashes the defenders of theaters.

VI. Grabow proceeds on page 7 to refute in his own words the correctors of comedies: *For who, I ask, has ever diligently and accurately arranged comedies according to their prescription? Who has anywhere seen many free from all the disadvantages recounted above? Who has heard any without an idle word, for which an account must nevertheless be rendered on the last day, or, what is greater, without scurrility, which ought to be as far removed from comedians as from Christians? Who does not find in them many absurd things, many things most alien from that truth, simplicity, holiness, and gravity which once ruled Christians and still rule them in the spiritual kingdom of Christ? Who has not very often seen the male sex sustain, now the character of a wife, now of a virgin, in female clothing contrary to the express prohibition of God? ... For these reasons all Christians should be so far from delighting in scenic spectacles that, on the contrary, they should detest them and neither attend them nor, much less, preside over them, lest they make themselves participants in the sins of others, after the example both of the ancient Christians and of the pious theologians of our Church. For Doctor Meisner writes: We ourselves seriously disapprove and detest comedies constituted unlawfully and by abuse.*

On page 10: *Therefore no sane person will accuse them of excessive rigor on the part of the Fathers; rather, all good men will wish that posterity had perpetually retained their spirit in this age. For with this accomplished we certainly*

inveigh against theaters no less vehemently than did Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, and others of both the Greek and the Latin Church in their times. For present-day scenic spectacles, especially the British, differ in nothing from pagan spectacles, in the judgment of the most grave Dannhauer. For they are full of stumbling blocks, full of idle words, full of foolish questions, frivolous games, and depraved conversations, full of the foolish gesticulations of mimes and of rustic shoutings, full of illiberal, wanton, and obscene kinds of jesting, full of dishonorable and wicked pleasures, full of voluntary

vices and sins, of which the devil is the persuader, author, and helper. Indeed, they are much fuller of them than those of the pagans. For seasonings of pleasures are interspersed in them which among the pagans were unseen and unheard, and whose very name was unknown to the Roman Forum. I mean the interludes, commonly called intermedia, of such vanity, scurrility, and futility that I doubt whether anything greater can be devised. For these reasons there is no doubt that GOD is the more averse to them, the greater the labor, zeal, and desire with which they are presented, watched, approved, praised, commended, and frequented.

VII. In order to confirm the things which he has said, the Lutheran writer brings forward the testimonies of Salvian, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Tertullian, which I pass over for the sake of brevity. Then, on page 19, he resumes his discourse in this way.

VIII. *Nor here is the authority of those who stubbornly defend comedies accommodated to popular favor of any value. For the multitude of those who err gives no protection to error. No one of even moderate learning fails to notice that they err partly through the depravity of pleasure; no one of the enlightened fails to see it. They praise in comedies the things which our Church censures, and they love the things which the Holy Spirit detests in the sacred code. But take care not to say that all our theologians, to a man, do this. Many excellent men indeed tolerate what they can in no way remove. Many disapprove in words that raging impiety which is in question, when they are not permitted to prohibit it in deed. Some have written copiously concerning that shameless audacity; others still speak freely; very many complain with pious and just grief, but for fear of most biting dogs - note well - they are silent and wish for an end rather than bring it about. Not a few are blinded by false persuasion, others by the lying information of others, or by the great force of long custom; to these the light of truth afterward becomes the more pleasant, the more clearly it is spread before their minds.*

But let it be so! Let the greater part persist in its error; nevertheless, the truth remains unshaken. For this depends neither upon the judgment of men nor upon the authority of those theologians who indeed live in the Church - if only they live - but are not of the Church.

IX. But let the correctors of comedies and tragedies prick up their ears, those who contend that theaters are not unlawful by their own nature but indifferent, and that through abuse and the depravity of actors they become dishonorable and evil. Hence they infer that the abuse of comedies must be removed, but the use of theaters preserved. Let these men hear a Lutheran man and direct their minds seriously to the things which I shall transcribe, and at last come to their senses. Grabow continues his discourse in this way on page 21.

X. *I know -*

I know indeed that most men distinguish between use and abuse. But who can assert that the use of comedies is praised anywhere in Sacred Scripture? Who would not rather affirm that it is numbered by the Fathers of the Christian Church among the works of the devil? What of the fact that the Catholic Church by ancient custom prohibited scenic actors from the Sacred Supper? Who, after weighing all things, cannot but confess that comedies have always harmed public and private affairs more than they have benefited them, and that men cry out without

cause: Let the abuse be removed? For this abuse is so implanted and inveterate that it cannot be wholly eradicated in the present state of affairs.

For if to abuse something is - as it is - to use it either badly or not rightly for its own end, it is without doubt an abuse to turn Sacred Scripture into playful comedies. It is an abuse to spend time upon the trifles of poets, the fables of pagans, or other histories which are indeed true but useless and most unworthy of the Christian name. It is an abuse to contaminate truth with lies, to defile sacred things with profane things, and to stain honorable matter with scurrility, jests, and other most shameful things. It is an abuse to prepare irreligious games at great expense and, when they have been prepared, to perform them with unrestrained malice in sacred places, not to say in religious temples. It is an abuse to devote all one's talent and study, not to the glory of God, but to acquiring or increasing one's own praise - note well. Finally, it is an abuse, whether from sordid poverty or from an insatiable greed for money, to make one's office a source of profit, that is, most eagerly to seek the basest gain under I know not what title.

Perhaps someone will say: all these things ought to be absent from comedies. They certainly ought to be absent according to the precepts of the theologians; but, so far as I know, they have never yet been absent, nor, so far as can be foreseen, will they hereafter be absent while the present state of comedies remains intact. For in a certain way they are essential, indeed the soul of comedies. They are adjuncts which can indeed be separated by an operation of the mind, but which in reality remain inseparably joined. They belong to that class of things of which some can be absent very easily, some with difficulty, some rarely, and some never without the destruction of the comedies. For when those allurements have been removed, the spectators will fail; when the spectators fail, the profits will fail; and when the profits fail, the authors together with the actors will fail. When this has happened, the accidents will perish with the substance, abuse with use, and the adjuncts with their subjects - a pitiable thing.

Some of the most perspicacious pagans foresaw this. Therefore they extolled comedies with the greatest, though unworthy, praises. For Cicero writes in book 4 of the Tusculan Disputations: O excellent reformer of life, poetry, which thinks that the author of lust and levity should be placed in the council of the gods. I speak of comedy. If we did not approve these crimes, it would not exist at all. Certain men in our age, Christians indeed, look upon the same thing as though from a watchtower. Hence they fight after the manner of the Andabatae and proclaim the majesty of the temple of Ephesus, with Demetrius and his companions crying out: Great is Diana of the Ephesians! They would certainly not do this if they looked upon comedies, I do not say with enlightened eyes, but merely with learned and simple ones.

For if comedies are not displeasing to God or unworthy of the Christian people, let profane actors be absent from them; let the irreligious plot be absent; let all lawlessness in words and deeds be absent; let vain and empty display be absent; let the feigned and simulated countenance be absent; let the pursuit of one's own praise be absent; let every vain delight be absent; let the cause of present-day comedies, and likewise their primary end - the emptying of purses - be absent. On the contrary, let the authors be Christian, not in name but in reality; let the actors be Christian, the matter Christian, the manner Christian, the end Christian, the adjuncts Christian, and finally the FRUIT Christian. For the goodness of an action is not to be judged from the end alone, but also from the principle, the subject, the object, and the other requisites, all of which, as the philosophers testify, must be rightly ordered.

Whether it is truly to be hoped and expected, especially in these times, when all things rush toward the worse either through irrevocable error or irremediable malice, that one day, according to the opinion of our theologians, every vanity will be removed and comedies performed, is committed to your judgment, Christian reader. So far as I am permitted to discern, that saying of the Christian poet remains true:

So great will be the labor of producing Christian plays That no one will be able entirely to remove it.

Nor will very great deliberation and consultation be needed. For dramas are not necessary to Christ, since all His kingdoms can be governed without any actor of comedies. Nor are they necessary to the most holy Church of Christ, since she flourished most greatly in those ages in which there was no place in her for theatrical spectacles.

XI. Let rectors of colleges and teachers of pupils meditate seriously upon what follows. Grabow therefore proceeds on page 28: *What is asserted concerning the end of comedies is openly contrary to common experience. For it is agreed among all that the purpose of comedies is not the glory of God or the correction and amendment of morals, much less those advantages which are so boastfully proclaimed concerning them. For the understanding of pupils can be formed, their will conformed, and their memory strengthened in a far better manner than by scenic actions. Studious youth can be brought without any danger to a knowledge of histories and of other most ancient matters by a much shorter path, with a more agreeable pleasure, and with greater fruit. Correction of the voice, dignity of action, and freedom of speech can be most successfully acquired through frequent declamations or oratorical exercises, than which nothing is more suitable for gymnasia, without the burdensome, costly, and dangerous apparatus of comedies.*

Relaxation of the mind can, and also ought, to be provided more safely, more frequently, and better. Wretched indeed are the teachers who know how to recreate their pupils by nothing other than the emptiness of comedies. Wretched are the pupils whose spirit is refreshed only by annual spectacles. Wretched also is the correction of morals which scenic games of this kind procure. For they contain more vanity and futility than truth and utility. Most are corrupted rather than corrected, while they become more indulgent, more immodest, more insolent, and more wicked. Daily experience is witness to this, as is that most approved theologian who, according to Doctor Harrmann, discoursed concerning comedies in this way, etc.

XII. After copying a lengthy declamation by another Lutheran theologian, written in the German language, Grabow rises again in this manner on page 35: *It is unworthy of Christians to bring the unregenerate upon the stage so that they may teach the regenerate and may be a spectacle and a mockery to the unregenerate. It is unworthy, under the vain appearance of utility, to turn Sacred Scripture into games and jests. It is unworthy to represent the comedies of blind pagans in Christian schools. It is unworthy to propose pagan virtues to regenerate pupils for imitation. It is unworthy to seek applause and provoke laughter. It is unworthy to institute annual games for the sake of sordid gain. It is unworthy, as men are accustomed to do, to procure one's own advantage from the disadvantages of others. For if this matter were not, to use the common expression, about earning bread, certainly none of them would undergo so many troubles solely for the glory of God, and no one would spend so great a sum of money for the salvation of his neighbor.*

It is unworthy to profane the name of God and to turn the deeds of the saints into playful actions. It is unworthy to bring forward and present, for the vain delight of the spectators, the words and deeds of gods and goddesses whose names it is unlawful to utter without detestation. It is unworthy to open eyes and ears to Satan, since it is certainly evil enough for him to enter through one window and take possession of souls. It is unworthy publicly to set forth things most shamefully perpetrated by the most wicked men, such as thefts, adulteries, fornications, and other things of that kind, etc.

It is of no help to plead a common and long-standing custom. For from the very beginning of the Reformation many things existed in the Church and have reached our own memory which are by no means compatible with our faith. Therefore one must not look at what was formerly done or is still done, but at what ought rightly and deservedly to be done.

But you say: they are Christians who preside over comedies, Christians who attend them, Christians who are present among those sitting and standing around. Would that you spoke truly! But if you examine them carefully, they are so far from being true Christians that they cannot even appear to be such. So long as they are Christians in name alone, so long can their comedies neither be Christian in every respect nor be worthily presented to or watched by Christ and Christians. But they remain theaters of impiety, gymnasia of intemperance, incitements to evil, spectacles of shamelessness, mockeries of religion, and stumbling blocks for slippery youth. This, finally, is what the wishes, counsels, admonitions, and precepts of the most pious Fathers desire and intend. For Ambrose says, etc.; Lactantius, etc.; Salvian, etc.; Tertullian, etc.; Augustine, etc.

XIII. He transcribes the very lengthy teachings of all those Fathers; since I have given them above, I omit them. He concludes on page 52: *What then must we Christians do? I wish you yourself, circumspect reader, to judge. The glory of GOD and the salvation of the Christian Church are at stake. So far as I am permitted to conjecture, in your judgment we should be the more hostile even to the most splendid comedies, the more they have drawn their origin from the devil and are now fuller of the works of the devil than they ever were; and the more ready to erase their name, the more unworthy they are of Christians and the less, in this great, long-standing, and desperate disease of the Church, comedies that are Christian in every respect are either to be wished for or expected.*

It is therefore our part, who wish to be true members of our Church, to flee those comedies as works of darkness. It is our part, who have given our names to Christ - and we all gave them in Baptism - to turn away our eyes lest they see the vanities of comedies. He who is on the way of God, says Ambrose, *does not look upon vanities. The perfect way is Christ. He, therefore, who is in Christ, how can he look upon vanities, when Christ has crucified all the vanities of this world in His flesh? Let us therefore turn our eyes away from vanities, lest the mind desire what the eye has seen.* Homily 16 on Psalm 119. *It is our part to detest those comedies the more, the worse they make us and the greater the damage they leave behind.*

To use the words of Salvian, book 6 of On the Government of God, page 197: Some even very great crimes can be recounted and named while the honor of the speaker remains intact, such as murder, robbery, adultery, sacrilege, and other things of this kind. The impurities of theaters alone are such that they cannot honestly even be accused; thus, in exposing the shamefulness of these obscenities, so novel a circumstance occurs to the accuser that, although he who wishes to accuse them is without doubt honorable, he nevertheless cannot speak of and accuse them while preserving his honor intact. All other evils also pollute those who do them, not those who see or hear them. For although you may hear someone blaspheming, you are not polluted by the sacrilege, because you dissent in mind. Although you may come upon a robbery, you are not defiled by the act, because you abhor it in your soul. The impurities of spectacles alone

make the crime of those who act and those who watch entirely one. For while the spectators approve these things and willingly see them, they all commit them by sight, by hearing, and by assent, so that this saying of the Apostle falls upon them in a peculiar manner: because they are worthy of death, not only those who do these things, but also those who consent to those who do them. In brief: it is our part to do all those things which the Holy Spirit commands in the sacred writings, which the Fathers of the Church once urged, and which our theologians rightly admonished, solely for the glory of GOD and also for the salvation of the Church.

Single Section — A Consequence to Be Seriously Considered

SINGLE SECTION

A Consequence to Be Seriously Considered

I. I copied these things with a trembling hand, moist eyes, a shaking mind, and all the limbs of my body quivering; and while writing I often spoke with myself amid sighs and groans: Do you see with what gravity of discourse, what solidity of reasoning, what abundance of learning, what appearance of piety, and what force of refutation this Lutheran heretic attacks, detests, and shakes present-day comedies? He recalls the cause to the tribunal of the Scriptures, the most holy Fathers, common sense, and sound reason, so that he may confirm it more efficaciously and demonstrate it more clearly.

What if, I objected to myself, this Lutheran were to attack in this manner those Catholics who are not ashamed to purge the present-day theaters of guilt and who do not hesitate to evade the oracles of Scripture and the testimonies of the Fathers? You Catholics, in order to prove that the dogmas of faith concerning which disagreements rage between us and you must be believed in the sense in which you interpret them, oppose to us the perpetual doctrine of the most holy Fathers and cry out with all your strength: The tradition of the Fathers! The tradition of the Fathers! But we Protestants ask you whether the Fathers confirmed with so unanimous a consent and with a more abundant supply of arguments any dogma of faith brought into danger by our Luther; whether they fortified it with a stronger efficacy of eloquence; whether they rushed with more ardent force and hurled so many darts of zeal against those who denied dogmas of faith of this kind as they did against those who defended respectable attendance at theaters. Explain yourselves. Is the doctrine of the Fathers to be admitted in articles of faith, but not in precepts of morals? Is it permitted to cavil at it in the latter, but not in the former? Let the patrons of theaters furnish a clear answer.

II. While I revolved these things within myself in serious meditation, these thoughts occurred to my mind. Dissolution of morals, relaxation of discipline, corruptions raging everywhere, the pride and ambition of many ecclesiastics, their dances, simoniacal bargains, wolflike ignorance, and public scandals were the cause why the Lutherans and Calvinists seceded from our Catholic Church. What if the same vices now raged both among the people and among the clergy? What if there were the same ignorance among the clergy, the same thirst for pleasure and delicacies, roughly the same pride and luxury? What if laxer opinions and more pernicious doctrines were now creeping abroad? What if evangelical morality were branded with the most hideous mark of monstrous rigorism, and its intrepid defenders were represented as rigorists and Jansenists? What if, through hidden passages and by right and wrong alike, the indignation and persecutions of the great were stirred up against them? What if there were now no full liberty even to condemn the corruption of theaters? What if male and female actors, together with their hearers and spectators, were now admitted to the sacraments of Christ?

What if theologians themselves, when consulted whether attendance at comedies is lawful for ecclesiastical men even when it is forbidden to them by a special edict of their bishops, were to reply: Proceed, proceed, Your Lordship, laying aside every scruple of guilt, even venial and slight, because episcopal edicts are penal. For what evil is there in going to spectacles?

III. If the crimes of our age are compared with the crimes of the sixteenth century, when the Lutherans and Calvinists revolted from the Roman Church, perhaps this difference will appear: theirs were coarser, more horrible, and more shameless; ours have become more delicate, painted with more exquisite art, and, as it were, more learned in their artifices. If the learning of the two ages is compared, our age is more learned and erudite. But the doctrines of not a few men which concern the spirit of the Gospel were never laxer. At that time crimes came forth more freely with the mask removed; now, adorned with trappings, encrusted, curled, and smeared with the coloring of honesty, they ravage the vineyard of Christ more savagely and uncontrollably. Never was there so great a profanation and sacrilegious administration of the sacraments. Never was there so great a persecution against the sincere and genuine doctrine of Christian morals. In the first ages of the Church, as has been said elsewhere and will often have to be said, faith suffered persecution; now the precepts of morals are subject to a persecution which is the more savage the greater the appearance of piety which it bears. If all heresies derive their origin from the depraved morals of Catholics, they likewise grow, are strengthened, and are enlarged by the depravity and stumbling blocks of Catholics.

IV. The Lutherans, Calvinists, and other men of the same bran most foolishly seized upon the corruptions which were creeping and spreading more widely in the Catholic Church as an occasion for adulterating the dogmas of faith. For never, even in the first ages, was the vineyard of Christ without thorns and tares, nor will it ever be. Let the morals of many Catholics and many ecclesiastics be depraved:

are the dogmas of faith which the Roman Catholic Church teaches, proposes, and defends therefore less true or less firm, or are her precepts of morals less holy? Did not the very holy Fathers, whose doctrine the Protestants object to us, rebuke and reprove the vicious Catholics of their own times? We too at the present day acknowledge with tears and groans the most grave evils of our Church. Against the deeply corrupted morals of so many Catholics and ecclesiastics we send forth the sound of our voice, we cry aloud, and we strive according to our strength to heal the wounds of our aging Mother.

V. But this consequence flows spontaneously from the preceding chapter: the morals of Catholics must be reformed; the very lax opinions of many casuists must be exterminated; and the incredible audacity, most pernicious to the Catholic Church, of those who foster laxity, who encrust the most manifest corruptions with the coloring of honesty, and who strive most shrewdly to defame, persecute, and bring the defenders of sounder morality into hatred and odium, must be restrained. Unless barriers are set against the torrent of so many evils, I seem to myself to see a fatal crisis and a certain cataclysm of punishments threatening not very far away. The passage from iniquity of morals to heresies, and from heresies to impiety, always occurs.

The weak and unbelieving see the divisions of sects and the prodigies of errors. They see the depraved morals of Catholics, dissenting opinions, and laxer ones prevailing day by day. They hear the defenders of softer doctrines craftily promoting silence and peace so that, with no one contradicting, the poison of laxity, covered with the veil of benignity, may proceed more freely. Set amid so many waves and storms, they infer that nothing, nothing is stable, but that all things are vain and are arbitrary inventions of human minds. Therefore nothing is to be believed, but each person is to live according to his own disposition and morals. Behold whence the monster of impiety, which continually grows and is enlarged, takes its beginnings. Let all the ages of the Church be

traversed: certainly none will be found in which unbelief, Epicureanism, indifferentism, and atheism have flowed more freely and more widely than in our own.

What remedy is there for this extreme disease? Let those who preside, for whom the most severe and most dreadful judgment will be held, consider and meditate. Let them turn their minds to our ancestors and to their deeds, endeavors, efforts, labors, torments, shedding of blood, and anguish, by which they either purified the Church of God from vices or raised her from the foundations. They were illuminated by a divine and most splendid light; therefore their way alone is true and alone leads to port. That indolence which carnal prudence suggests is the most fatal of all evils and the most hostile to God and the Church. First of all, therefore, the spirit of fortitude must be stirred up, the armor of God must be taken up, and evangelical zeal must be kindled.

What? The most bitter enemies go about like roaring lions, that they may devour Christ's flock, devastate the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, undermine the foundations of our religion, and utterly destroy and exterminate the kingdom of Christ; and the leaders and commanders of the Christian soldiery, appointed by God, see the war and do not take up arms to defend and protect the sheep committed to them, the business of their own salvation, the honor of religion, the glory of God, and the kingdom of Christ? God forbid that we should have reason to fear that so great an indolence will occur.

Chapter XXVIII — Another Sophism Is Repelled: Confessors Absolve Male Actors, Female Actors, Female Dancers, Female Singers, and Spectators of Comedies; What Evil, Then, Is There in Frequenting Theaters?

CHAPTER XXVIII

Another Sophism Is Repelled: Confessors Absolve Male Actors, Female Actors, Female Dancers, Female Singers, and Spectators of Comedies; What Evil, Then, Is There in Frequenting Theaters?

I. If there are confessors who administer the sacraments of Christ to male actors and to female actors who practice in theaters the profession of dancing, behaving wantonly, singing, reciting the fables of poets, and representing the loves of Cleopatra, Semiramis, Sophonisba, and similar heroines and their heroes, and also to their spectators and approvers, so great a perversion and sacrilegious profanation must be deplored with the most bitter tears. It is expedient to believe that no similar confessors are found in the Catholic Church. But if there were such, they would betray the mysteries of Christ, distribute pearls to swine, and, as most unworthy betrayers of their own ministry, hurl themselves and their penitents headlong into eternity.

II. But the prevarication of certain confessors, if any such truly exist, is most ineptly thrust forward. For one must look not at what certain unfit and ignorant ministers do, but at what Holy Church prescribes. Above I adduced the canons especially of the Fathers Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Salvian, and of the councils and the Church, which decree that sinners of this kind are to be kept from the sacraments. Bishop Cyprian, writing to Eucratius, testifies that the splendor of the Divine Majesty is obscured, evangelical discipline is broken, and the honor of the Church is defiled when the sacraments are administered to actors and their spectators. Chrysostom confirms Cyprian, and Augustine confirms the doctrine of Chrysostom in On Faith and Good Works, chapter 18. Since his words, unlike those of Cyprian and Chrysostom, were not transcribed above, I place them before your eyes:

In good doctrine, both he who hears and does can be good, and he who hears and does not do is evil; but in evil doctrine, he who thinks it true, although he does not obey it, is evil, and he who obeys it is worse. It is certainly wonderful that brothers who think otherwise, when they ought to depart from that pernicious opinion, whether new or old, themselves also say

that it is a new doctrine by which most wicked men, openly professing that they will persevere in their crimes, are not admitted to baptism; as though they were traveling I know not where, when prostitutes and ACTORS are not permitted to approach the Christian sacraments unless bonds of this kind have been loosed or broken. According to their opinion, all such persons would of course be admitted, unless Holy Church retained the ancient and vigorous custom which arises from this most manifest truth: those who do such things shall not possess the kingdom of God. Unless they do penance for these dead works, they are not to be permitted to approach baptism; but if they have slipped in, they cannot be saved unless afterward, having changed, they do penance.

Let the readers and defenders of certain casuists of laxer ethics meditate seriously and more deeply upon this doctrine of the most holy Father Augustine. After the manner of those whom the holy Doctor condemns, they accuse the sound doctrine by which actors and those who frequent theaters are barred from the sacraments as new, rigid, and Jansenist. *They say that it is a new doctrine by which*

most wicked men are not admitted to baptism. Just as, since the creation of the world and after the fall of Adam, there always have been and always will be sinners, so there always have been and always will be teachers who sew cushions under every elbow. Thus the Holy Scriptures cry out. *False Christs shall arise*, says Matthew 24. *There shall be lying teachers among you*, adds Peter in his second epistle, chapter 2.

Not a few confessors absolve young lovers who play at reciprocal love with one another for periods of five years, not merely for years; they absolve usurers; they absolve those who stake immense sums of money upon games of chance. Whom do they not absolve? What follows from this? But lest we seem to condemn the ignorance and practice of those confessors who absolve male comedians, female comedians, female singers, and female dancers without their renouncing their art solely by the authority of the ancient Fathers, it is pleasing to overthrow so great an error also by the authority both of recent theologians and of saints. And lest I be long, I shall transcribe what Father Jerome Florentinus teaches in the place cited, page 327, where he has these words: *All the theologians who treat the texts cited above consider nothing at all concerning veniality and agree that the sacraments must be denied to persons of this kind for this reason alone: because they who recite notably obscene comedies sin mortally.* It has already been evidently demonstrated, and can be denied by no one of sound mind, that the comedies which male and female actors represent as lovers in order to soothe the spectators are notably, indeed most gravely, obscene.

III. But let all confessors prick up their ears and hear the holy Archbishop Charles Borromeo thundering in this manner in his *Instructions to Confessors*: *We see that through the fault and inertia of confessors innumerable corruptions and most grave offenses prevail everywhere in most arts and professions.*

IV. Let them hear St. Thomas of Villanova crying still more deeply in sermon 6 after the Third Sunday of Lent: *What destroys the Church of God today except the flattering adulation of confessors, their beguiling and caressing assent? They extinguish the worm of conscience, remove the sting of sin, and cast their penitents down to hell. Alas, wretched men charged with souls, not curators but murderers, not counselors but deceivers, what will you answer to the Lord for the flock which you have deceived by your flatteries and slaughtered by your counsels?*

V. Let confessors hear again the Council of Toulon celebrated in 1704, whose lengthy testimony I transcribed entire above in chapter 4, number 10, and of which I now recall a few words: *The assembly of Christians is called a mystical body, whose head is Christ and whose soul is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, whoever defends the occupation of comedies as worthy of the Christian profession consequently teaches that Christ takes pleasure in them and that the Holy Spirit directs Christians to these exercises; this savors of blasphemy. Moreover, as St. Paul testifies, those who do and those who consent, and much more those who cooperate, are punished no differently from the authors of crimes. Therefore we command all CONFESSORS to DENY ABSOLUTION to those who, after correction, refuse to abstain from frequenting comedies and theaters.*

This discipline alone, as it seems to me, the true discipline of denying absolution to those who do not abstain from frequenting the theaters described by me, flourishes, by the mercy of God, throughout the entire most celebrated Church of Paris, as Natalis Alexander testifies in epistle 31. The words of Chrysostom from homily 3 *On David and Saul* must be brought before our eyes again: *And what, they say, has been committed here that is so great a crime that they should be kept from these sacred rails? Indeed, why do you ask what offense is graver than that of those who, having plainly contaminated themselves by adultery, shamelessly and after the manner of rabid dogs rush upon the sacred table?*

But if you desire to know the manner of the adultery, I shall relate to you not my own words, but those of Him who will judge the whole life of man. He who looks upon a woman to lust after her, He says, has already committed adultery with her in his heart, Matthew 5. If a woman met by chance in the forum and rather carelessly dressed has often captivated, by the very sight of her face, a man looking upon her with curiosity, with what countenance will those men be able to say that they did not look upon women in order to lust after them, when they go there not simply and by chance, but deliberately and with so great a purpose that they even despise the Church, and for this reason proceed there and, sitting there throughout the whole day, keep their eyes fixed upon the faces of those abandoned women?

VI. I beg and adjure all confessors to read and meditate humbly upon the most sacred Gospels of Jesus Christ; and they will immediately understand that present-day theaters are most greatly opposed to the spirit of the evangelical law. Let them maturely weigh the Christian profession: *I renounce Satan and all his pomps.* Let them consult all the Fathers who, with St. Cyril of Jerusalem in the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, teach: *The first pomp of the devil is the spectacles in the theaters, the races of horses in the hippodrome, the hunts, and every other vanity of this kind, from which that holy man of God asks to be delivered: Turn away my eyes, he says, lest they see vanity. Therefore do not be curious in frequenting spectacles, where you may behold the petulance of actors* - he would now add, of female actors - *filled with every insult, and pursue the dances of effeminate men.* Many things have been said elsewhere concerning confessors.

Chapter XXIX — The Opinions of Thomas Tamburini, Hermann Busembaum, Leonard Colendall, Sanchez, Filiucci, Thomas Hurtado, and Others Are Refuted

CHAPTER XXIX

The Opinions of Thomas Tamburini, Hermann Busembaum, Leonard Colendall, Sanchez, Filiucci, Thomas Hurtado, and Others Are Refuted

I. It is by no means enough to have manifested the truth unless the errors with which not a few are accustomed to entangle and obscure it are refuted at the same time. There is scarcely any precept of evangelical morality which, especially during the last two centuries, certain casuists have not attempted to twist and accommodate to human appetites. For since they were wholly unable to reform men's morals according to the evangelical norm, not a few writers on moral matters endeavored to temper the evangelical law according to men's morals, as Augustine often warns. Therefore, not only with the intention of detracting from the casuists - far be that crime from me - but with Christian zeal to preserve my readers from the danger of error and seduction, I shall bring forward a few of their very many most lax opinions, so that each person may know how to guard himself against them.

Father Thomas Tamburini, book 5 *On the Decalogue*, chapter 7, section 4, number 18, teaches these things: *AS A RULE it is not lawful for actors to represent very shameful things from which it is morally known that many will sin. I said: AS A RULE. For if the actor's necessity is so great that he needs that profit for his sustenance, or for something similar, I would not deny that it is lawful once or twice - but without a morally probable danger of his own pleasure, which, alas, how difficult it is to avoid, especially in an actor representing shameful things - until another manner of living is opened to him after he has diligently sought it.*

Actors, as a rule, need the profit from their art for their life, or for something similar, just as other craftsmen do. Therefore they can lawfully represent very shameful things, although they know morally that many will sin as a result. How many times can they represent these very shameful things from which they know morally that many will sin? Once and again. What if, after one and another representation, they still need the profit from their art? Why do you torture the mind with so many troublesome questions? They may represent these very shameful things, from which they know morally that many will sin, *until another manner of living is opened to him after he has diligently sought it.*

Let the actors testify to their confessor that, after diligent inquiry, they have been wholly unable to find another manner of living. Therefore they can practice the very shameful art whenever they need its profit for life, for suitable adornment, or for appropriate comforts. Is it therefore lawful for actors to support their lives by the wages of crimes? If we say that these are horrible, indeed horrendous, monsters of laxity, will certain defenders of softer ethics be able, after their manner, rightly to accuse us of detracting from the most celebrated Tamburini, as they call him? They will say that I have produced Tamburini's testimony truncated and adulterated. A thousand times in my works I have declared myself ready for retraction if I have erred even in a single point. Let them therefore disclose the truncated texts, and I shall immediately sing a palinode, and most willingly indeed, because I am bound to this by religion.

II. Hermann Busembaum, book 3, tract 4, chapter 2, doubt 1, number 2, section 8, writes these things: *Shameful words, the reading of obscene writings, the viewing of SHAMEFUL comedies, dishonorable songs, gestures, letters, and gifts of love, if they are done merely from curiosity or vain amusement, are not mortal sins.* Is this Christian ethics, or pagan? Are things so shameless found in Terence, Marcus Tullius, Plutarch, or Seneca? Yet he adds: *It is otherwise if they are done either with a dishonorable, that is, venereal intention, or with danger of the spiritual ruin of oneself or of others.* Sanchez, *On Matrimony*, book 9, distinction 46, from number 3; Filliucius, tract 30, chapter 10, question 5.

This petty distinction is a snare for the unskilled. *If they are done with danger of the spiritual ruin of oneself or of others?* Is it called into doubt whether the reading of obscene writings, the viewing of shameful comedies, and dishonorable songs induce danger for oneself and others? *If they are done with a dishonorable intention, or with danger, etc.?* Therefore obscene and shameful things can be represented and watched with an honorable intention? They can be done *from vain amusement*? How charming! What vain amusement is produced in reading obscene writings, in seeing shameful comedies, and in dishonorable songs? Is the venereal plague covered by these artifices of petty distinctions? Busembaum confirms this opinion of his more laxly in the same place, numbers 3 and 4. And although he is not speaking about comedy, he nevertheless explains more clearly and confirms more strongly what he taught concerning the viewing of comedies, saying:

Kisses, embraces, pressures of the hands, and similar things which are not obscene, if they are done merely for the sake of courtesy, paternal love, or increasing honorable love or benevolence, are not sins, even if venereal pleasure arises, provided that consent is not given to it. Lessius, number 56; Filliucius, number 171.

But if those things are done from some venial vanity, jest, curiosity, levity, petulance, INDEED EVEN SENSUALITY, OR A SENSUAL and natural AFFECTION - provided that this is not accompanied by venereal pleasure nor done for its sake, and, if such pleasure arises contrary to the intention, that it is repelled and the action then discontinued - they do not exceed venial fault, as Filliucius, Lessius at number 62, Sanchez in the place cited, and Diana, part 4, tract 4, resolution 36, teach. *Nevertheless, the contrary is safer.*

Excellently and wisely said. Therefore it is safer to abstain from these things? But men commonly execrate tutiorism worse than a dog or a snake. Whence, I ask, was this distinction between sensual affection and venereal affection summoned? Whence were those scales taken for weighing and separating venial fault from mortal, especially in matter so slippery and muddy? *Kisses, embraces, pressures of the hands, and similar things which are not obscene, if they are done from some vanity, curiosity, petulance, indeed even sensuality, or a sensual affection, do not exceed venial fault*, as Filliucius, Lessius, Sanchez, and Diana teach. Do you desire gentler and more flattering things? But let us speak more truly and gravely: can things more lax and more full of scandal be taught by a Christian man in this pitch-black matter? Certainly, unless my own love deceives me, the aforesaid things inspire horror and draw forth tears rather than call for a longer refutation.

III. Father Thomas Sanchez, book 9 *On Matrimony*, distinction 46, number 40: *From these things it is inferred, first, that although attending comedies is not a mortal sin where neither shameful things are represented nor the manner of representation is shameful, OR IF THESE THINGS CONCUR, they are heard solely from curiosity, without probable danger of falling into any mortal sin. But when shameful things are represented, or the manner is shameful, and they are heard for the pleasure arising from the shameful things themselves in the manner explained at number 38, or with probable danger of ruin, it is lethal. This is established from the things said there. But if you ask whether at least clerics constituted in sacred orders sin mortally if they attend merely from that*

curiosity, I answer that they do not sin mortally when scandal is absent; and I believe that today scandal is absent, since it is exceedingly common for clerics to attend them.

IV. Father Lucius Ferraris, in the *Canonical-Juridical Library*, volume 2, under *Cleric*, from number 17: *But if comedies are heard solely from vain curiosity, without probable danger of a fall, even if shameful things are represented and the manner of representation is shameful, it is more probable that this is not a mortal sin, provided scandal is absent; and scandal now seems to be absent because it is exceedingly common for clerics to attend comedies.*

V. *Excessively lax*, says the Supreme Pontiff BENEDICT XIV in book 7 *On the Synod*, chapter 61, *not to say openly erroneous and scandalous, is the doctrine which Lucius Ferraris hands down*, etc. Whether this doctrine is the very one which Father Sanchez teaches, you, reader, be the judge. Scandal is absent, they say, *because it is exceedingly common for clerics to attend comedies.* What a robust argument! Suppose it were exceedingly common for clerics to fornicate. Would scandal therefore be absent? Scandal is inherent in a public shameful action and in assenting to it by one's own presence. The danger of a fall is likewise inherent in it. Therefore such precisions and petty casuistical distinctions are futile and pernicious, especially in venereal matters.

VI. Father Leonard Colendall, in the index of cases added to volume 2 of Father Claude La Croix, under *shameful comedy*, page 16, has these words: *To watch shameful comedies merely from curiosity or levity is PROBABLY not a mortal sin; it is otherwise, however, if they are watched with a dishonorable, that is, venereal intention, or with danger of spiritual ruin.* Book 2, from number 237; book 3, page 1, number 887. Father La Croix, in the place cited, book 3, page 1, number 887, brings forward the doctrine of his master Busembaum, which I transcribed above, and does not refute it. On the contrary, in the place cited, book 2, from number 237, he condemns spectators of shameful comedies of mortal sin; because, as I said above, the theology of La Croix is, as it were, an index of contrary opinions, lax and not lax.

And although Father La Croix sometimes says that one opinion is more probable than another and asserts that it should be embraced, nevertheless, by virtue of the principles of probabilism which he expounds at length in book 1, it is lawful for anyone to embrace the less probable opinion. And lest my adversaries be able to repeat their customary tale, namely that I am stirring up hatred against La Croix and the other casuists and attributing mutilated texts to them, let them hear the most celebrated Father EUSEBIUS AMORT, who writes these things in volume 1 of *Scholastic Theology*, page 165.

VII. *Catalogue of Probable Opinions concerning the General Principles of Morals from Father La Croix.* And after indicating other catalogues of lax opinions, he writes these things concerning Father La Croix: *I have excerpted a new specimen from Father La Croix from the first and second books of his Moral Theology concerning the general principles of morals. This will suffice for the present purpose to show how broad a road probabilism opens to laxities. For from this catalogue alone it will be evident that at length it will be lawful to follow almost all those opinions which this author in his Moral Theology - or, as someone calls it, HISTORY OF PROBABLE OPINIONS - lists as probable, or at least as opinions adopted by authors whom he himself cites elsewhere as grave authors fit to form a prudent judgment.*

It is indeed true that Father LA CROIX sometimes adds to opinions of this kind which he lists that the opposite opinion is more probable, or that the opinion which he lists does not appear probable to him, or does not appear probable to some other author. But what do clauses, annotations, and limitations of this kind avail in practice for

cutting off innumerable laxities, when in the general principles license has in fact already been granted to follow opinions that are even doubtfully probable or even slightly probable, provided that they are truly theologically probable; or even the opinions of a single grave author, provided that the reasons have not been so weakened by other authors that no probability any longer remains, not even a slender one, or at least a doubtful one?

Whoever weighs these things attentively and with an impartial mind will certainly notice that no shore can be set against laxities and corruptions in the world unless it is said that each person, according to his capacity, is bound to consider directly the truth or falsity of opinions, etc. I shall give this entire catalogue elsewhere.

VIII. Father Thomas Hurtado, volume 1, *Various Questions*, tract 1, chapter 5, resolution 8, number 65, writes these things: *It is inferred, third, what must be said concerning actors commonly called comedians who are in a proximate occasion of sinning or are themselves an occasion of sinning for others: whether they are to be absolved unless they leave the theatrical art. Hurtado - another of that name - denies it, but nevertheless St. Thomas, II-II, question 168, article 3, reply 3, expressly admits the contrary.* I have wholly overthrown above and elsewhere the manifest calumny imposed upon the Angelic Doctor. Therefore, lest I do what has already been done, I proceed to transcribe the most lax doctrine of Father Hurtado, who continues thus at number 70:

Therefore the theatrical art is not unlawful in itself, just as neither is the office of notary and other similar professions, in which one scarcely escapes sin; and yet one is not bound to leave it before being absolved. But if they have the purpose of not sinning and sorrow for the past, they can be absolved seventy times seven. For the fact that actors, from cohabitation with women, are almost ALWAYS IN AN OCCASION OF CONCUBINAGE AND OF ADULTERIES OR FORNICATIONS - since those women are almost always evil and of a disordered life - in no way prevents their being absolved, although all the less so, if when they approach sacramental confession they have those four things which Navarrus and others require above. For since the theatrical art in itself is an art that is not evil, indeed in itself civilly honorable and lawful, one is not bound to leave it BECAUSE OF THE OCCASION OF SINNING which one has in it, since through the notable inconvenience which follows from leaving it, the occasion becomes involuntary, etc.

Number 73: *If Father Hurtado - the other of that name - had noticed all these things, he would not so severely condemn either the actors or almost the entire Spanish commonwealth which runs together to their comedies and representations. Although they ARE AMOROUS AND INGENIOUS, they recount the deeds of others, whether in ADULTERIES, or in duels, or in other matters of sins; these things are done only relatively and historically. Therefore*, he adds, volume 2, tract 8, question 7, section 1, page 126, *it belongs to a prudent theologian to CALM the consciences of the faithful and to give them motives by which they may practice that viewing without detriment to the soul.*

IX. These are the theorems of certain casuists; the desires of those men conspire toward this point: *It belongs to a prudent theologian to calm the consciences of the faithful and to give them motives by which they may practice that viewing* - of spectacles - *without detriment to the soul.* Therefore the consciences of the faithful are disturbed in watching theaters. And for this reason it belongs to a prudent theologian to calm them. But by what antidote, by what medicine can modern, prudent, and benign theologians calm them? Behold: they must give motives by which they may be able, without detriment to the soul, to watch male actors, female actors, and female dancers who persist in an occasion of concubinage and who recount adulteries and other obscene things historically.

But can those modern and benign theologians bring it about that what is sin is not sin? Certainly, they say: one Diana, says Caramuel, removed six hundred sins by his benign opinions. Does he also possess a secret remedy by which uncontrolled concupiscence may be prevented from being kindled and delighted by the sight of obscene things, and from being titillated by so many enchantments and delights? But why do I further offer up for ridicule monstrous inventions which draw forth tears and mourning and inspire the gravest horror?

X. Therefore, leaving aside those opinions and their authors, all of whom I respect and venerate, and whom I do not doubt wrote with an upright and pious intention, it concerns me to recall the oracles of Scripture to the faithful of Christ so that they may guard against their own danger. The Evangelist Matthew predicts these things in chapter 24: *False Christs shall arise and shall give signs, so that, if it were possible, even the elect might be led into error.* The prince of the Apostles, Peter, cries out in his second epistle, chapter 2: *There shall be lying teachers among you, who shall bring in sects of perdition; and many shall follow their luxuries, through whom the way of truth shall be blasphemed.* The luxuries which St. Peter here sets forth as detestable are understood not only of the senses but also of the mind, according to the ecclesiastical phrase of Alexander VII: *That supreme license of luxuriating minds.*

Single Section — The Unheard-of and Incredible Inventions of the Pamphlet Entitled In Praise of the Comic Art, a Discourse by Signor Doctor, etc., Are Refuted

SINGLE SECTION

The Unheard-of and Incredible Inventions of the Pamphlet Entitled *In Praise of the Comic Art, a Discourse by Signor Doctor, etc.*, Are Refuted. The Bold Ignorance of Certain Christians Is Beaten Down by the Most Eloquent Pagan Orator Aristides' Oration on Why Comedies Must Not Be Performed

I. When I had withdrawn my hand from the tablet and this work was laboring under the press, the praised pamphlet came into my hands. It consisted of about two sheets and was written in an elegant Italian style in commendation of the comic art. Out of respect I suppress the author's name, and I honor and esteem both his skill in the medical art and the other gifts for which he is distinguished. I undertake to refute only the errors of the discourse which are most pernicious to the Christian profession, omitting those which are opposed to true and solid learning, lest I depart more than is just from my purpose. For a little while I hesitated whether I should pass over or refute this pamphlet; but I immediately laid aside the hesitation and began to consider that the aforesaid discourse would be worn in the hands of clever little fellows, little women, and little matrons, and was fitted to bewitch the minds of the unskilled,

and to bring infamy upon all Italy if, with no one crying out against it, it should pass immune from censure.

II. The author therefore writes these things on page 18: *Nor, as the most learned Signor Marchese Maffei observes, is any law found which marks with infamy those who performed comedies or tragedies. And in fact St. Thomas says that the office of the actors' art - that is, understood in this sense as comedians - is ordered toward relieving the minds of men, and that those who practice it within due limits are never in any state of sin.*

III. We have already overthrown these two very gross errors above, having adduced the laws which brand actors, whether comedians or tragedians, with the mark of infamy, and having vindicated the doctrine of St. Thomas from the vain inventions of the unskilled. Therefore there is no reason for us to linger longer in refuting these putrid fables.

IV. The author proceeds in the same place to scribble these things: *And if in France, through EXCESSIVE RIGORISM and through having MISUNDERSTOOD certain laws, they seek to deny ecclesiastical burial to actors in comedies, the invincible and glorious British nation had no difficulty solemnly burying in London, in Westminster Cathedral - the church in which their kings are crowned and buried - their valiant and very rich, no less than BEAUTIFUL, actress Miss Oldfield, rendering to her at death almost the same honors which they had shortly before rendered to their immortal philosopher Newton.*

V. As many words, so many deliriums, so many blasphemies and signs of temerity. Who would ever have induced himself to believe that an Italian and a Catholic man who was not wholly insane could have scribbled such things, unless he read those same things committed to public print? What? A physician does not fear to extend his censorial rod against the sacred discipline of the Gallican Church, and he is not ashamed? Is the entire Gallican Church ignorant of the laws enacted by both jurisdictions, sacred and civil, against actors? Has it fallen into the extreme of excessive rigorism?

What, I ask you, praiser of the comic art, do these words *rigorism* and *laxism* signify? But let more horrible things come under examination.

A Catholic man appeals his cause from the Gallican Church to the synagogue of London - a man, I say? A Christian man calls the most worthless of women, Oldfield, valiant, very rich, and no less beautiful, and represents her as a leading woman presented with a royal tomb? Voltaire also relates the honors bestowed upon this little prostitute in epistle 23.

VI. He adds on page 23: *Indeed, what ought most greatly to stimulate us to cultivate the comic art and to honor comedians* - let him therefore abandon the medical art and cultivate the comic art - *is that the principal gate of this city, and a good part of our city which lies outside that gate, takes the name of ST. GENESIUS, glorious martyr of Jesus Christ, who was an actor, or comedian as we would say, and who, publicly confessing with greatness of spirit the true faith of Jesus Christ in the theater, wished to die. Hence he has been taken as protector of persons of the theater, as one belonging to their art.*

VII. This one thing was lacking to complete the crime: that after casting upon the Gallican Church the calumny of savage rigorism and placing the English synagogue before it, he should vomit blasphemies even against the holy martyrs reigning with God. St. Genesius, blinded by the darkness of pagan superstition, practiced as an actor. But after professing the faith of Christ, he execrated the infamous art and expiated by martyrdom the crimes perpetrated in it. And is the holy martyr now asserted to be the defender of actors and of the comic art? The most holy Apostle Paul persecuted the Church of Christ. Will Paul therefore grant protection to those who persecute Christ? Will the Holy Thief crucified at Christ's side therefore be the patron of thieves and robbers, so that they may rage with prosperous success? Such horrendous monsters of impiety are published in Italy in public print, with no one crying out against them.

VIII. He brings his discourse to an end with these words on page 24: *But finally I turn to you, valiant maiden Signora Antonia Cavallucci. Since I have composed this weak discourse, whatever it may be, in commendation of the comic art for your sake more than for any other thing, I say that our city ought to be greatly obliged to you, because by your gentility and grace you have for almost half a year honestly gladdened the spirits of our citizens upon the stage, showing yourself in this a worthy daughter of Bartolomeo Cavallucci, who in Rome was regarded upon the theaters as another Roscius of our times.*

And here, by your singing, you have made your worth known not only upon the stage but also in very many academies of the noble citizens of this city, singing in particular a most beautiful prologue in praise of these ladies of ours. And although for all these glorious labors of yours you have received many slanders and persecutions stirred up against you by the envy of the malevolent - a reward now customarily granted, because of the hardness of the times, to persons of merit and ability - nevertheless you ought to be content with your virtue alone, remembering that it will be no small reward to have been recognized and in part also, so to speak, recompensed by him who better than anyone else in this city could recognize the virtue and worth of your spirit.

IX. An argument worthy indeed of so great a writer; and so strenuous a valor and heroic virtue demanded no other praiser. For he, by his own testimony superior to all his fellow citizens, penetrates more deeply, comprehends more exquisitely, and weighs more exactly the merits and virtues of scenic persons. No mortal will envy her so great a glory and such praises. It is marvelous that he did not take care that a maiden endowed with so many illustrious gifts should be married to one of the patricians.

Many noble families of our Italy lament and mourn because, as I have said elsewhere, their young men, fascinated by the enchantments of similar female singers and maddened by the poison of female dancers, squander their patrimony and the health of the body, not to say that of the soul, and not rarely, to the perpetual infamy and disgrace of their families, take these putrid little prostitutes as wives. But they complain undeservedly unless they strive with all diligence to have this pamphlet and others like it burned.

Noble men, guardians of public honor and of virgins, grieve when they see their sons, captivated by love of these Sirens, dissipate their money and, drunk with the wine of prostitution, plunge themselves wholly into their embraces. They grieve when they behold both wives forgetful of their own state and made more shameless, and well-born girls wholly stripped of modesty and shame. But all those women and men procure for themselves some excuse and compassion if, enchanted by so many allurements and spells, they become slaves of venereal pleasure, when they see all these things done with impunity and read pamphlets in which pestilential poisons of this kind are extolled with magnificent praises, no one opposing them.

But in truth the noble governors of cities can allege no excuse if, aware of the deed, they do not endeavor with every diligence and vigilance to exterminate pamphlets of this kind published in commendation of the comic art and of male and female actors. I ask that the following words on page 23 be weighed seriously: *We people of Rimini, finally, ought even more than others to CULTIVATE the comic art and to HOLD ITS ACTORS IN HONOR, and especially those who sustain the principal parts, since we are very near Sarsina, where Plautus, the father of Italian comedy, was born and flourished,* etc. *Indeed, what ought most greatly to STIMULATE US TO CULTIVATE the comic art and to HONOR COMEDIANS AND ACTORS,* etc.

Oh shame, and unheard-of crime! Young men and girls are by their very nature especially inclined toward these poisonous spectacles. When they feel themselves urged by published pamphlets to cultivate these things and to honor and esteem actors and shameless female actors, with what force will they not be carried away toward female singers and dancers of this kind? Who will be able to impose bridles upon them? Concern for the ordering of domestic affairs alone, and the duty of preserving the form of civil government, ought to move the supreme powers to restrain so corrupt a set of opinions and so uncontrolled a seduction.

To this depth of evil do antiquarians and certain cultivators of profane learning fall when they do not hesitate to interpret Christ's Gospel, of which they are wholly ignorant. I myself would fall into no lesser errors if I wished to write about the medical art or about monetary affairs, for the shoemaker must not go beyond the sandal. I do not doubt that those praisers of the comic art will retract the things which they have written on this argument if they maturely meditate upon the Christian profession which they made at baptism.

What the author relates concerning an actor promoted to sacred orders by virtue of a pontifical dispensation, in order to infer from it that the comic art is not stained with the taint of infamy, disclosed his own ignorance. Did the comedian need the privilege of a dispensation? Why, I ask? Because he labored under the impediment of infamy. The learned man ought to have been ashamed to injure his own reputation in order to free male and female actors from the mark of infamy which the entire pagan and Christian world has branded upon them.

X. But so that not a few Christians who do not fear to declare comedies honorable and say that they were invented to correct morals may be covered with fuller shame, it is pleasing to bring forward the authority of the pagan ARISTIDES, the most eloquent of all the orators of his age. Nor do I doubt that, with the praiser of the comic art and the other antiquarians, the severe opposition of one pagan to comedies must be valued more highly than the discipline of the entire Gallican Church, from which an appeal was rashly made to London. Aristides' *Oration on Why Comedies Must Not Be Performed* is found in volume 1 of his works, Oxford edition of 1722, page 504. He speaks in this manner.

XI. *Much indeed would contribute toward persuading the Smyrnaeans if a discourse were pleasing to those who hear it. But when men approach to admonish, most people not only do not readily make use of their counsels, but do not even allow them to speak at all,* etc. After a longer exordium, he sets forth the argument of his oration, which is of this kind.

XII. *This, therefore, I say: celebrate the feasts of Bacchus, and also those of Venus and all the other gods, by pouring libations, sacrificing, singing paeans, bearing crowns, and finally omitting nothing that pertains to the worship of the gods. But one thing is joined with these which, as it is somehow pleasing to the multitude, is most troublesome to all good men: namely, abolish slanders and those COMEDIES, both by day and by night; be neither their authors nor actors, and bring upon the stage none of the things which are dishonorable.*

For thus, as I shall say, the matter stands. If anyone hears abusive words unwillingly, they are not pleasing to him; but if willingly, he becomes accustomed to malignity, which is the beginning of wickedness. Nor can there be any greater crime either of a private person or even of an entire city than to rejoice in evils. For whoever is held by a desire for such things must be seized by envy, which holds the highest place among human offenses and deserves no pardon, and must increase it within himself. What greater proof of our reverence toward the gods can there be than that we neither say nor hear anything indecorous in their presence?

Unless perhaps in the presence of a friend whom we revere we should refrain from speaking evil of someone, however well deserved, while, when the ears of the gods are employed, we partly say and partly hear things which we would not readily call honorable, but would rather denounce as shameful. And that you may understand that I say nothing NEW, but things established long ago both by laws and by public customs, consider the heralds who at the very first word in public assemblies command men to keep sacred silence; consider also the priests and those who take auspices for us while we sacrifice; consider, finally, yourselves, who devote the greatest care to this matter in your prayers.

It would certainly be absurd to regard auspicious words as both the best of all and especially suitable for sacred rites, yet meanwhile to grant impunity to those who revile; to conduct ourselves most modestly in sacrifices, but, before those to whom we perform sacred rites, under this pretext both to hear and to say every most shameful thing; and both to take it gravely that those same gods endure abuse and to set them forth as its patrons. But if we think this is pleasing to the gods, we contradict ourselves, since we approach the gods abstaining wholly from such things. If, however, we know that it displeases them, yet we delight in it, in what manner are we pious, or do we win over the gods by those things which we ought to flee for their sake?

Now, indeed, we command boys both at school and at home to speak good words; we teach them that deeds which are shameful cannot be spoken of honorably - note well. Yet again, assembling those same boys together with women and every age into one place, we propose prizes for abusive words and reward splendidly those who excel in that matter. But things which, if anyone either did or suffered them, would not permit him to advance beyond the lustral basin, we sing amid the sacred rites; and we call it impious to sacrifice the things which ought not to be sacrificed, but we

place it in piety to honor the gods with that honor which is not becoming, while in other matters we diligently observe decorum, but here willingly receive shamefulness with both our eyes and our ears.

Finally, if one man in a chorus sings badly, he is hissed; but if the whole chorus sings ineptly, we make much of it. And if another reviles us in this way, we become angry; but when we revile ourselves, we believe that we are celebrating a feast day. So greatly are we contrary both to the gods and especially to ourselves.

XIII. From this, infer how gross is the ignorance of profane antiquity under which those men labor who scribble that the Fathers forbade Christians to frequent the theaters because they were dedicated to the gods, but not because of the representation of shamefulness and vices, when even pagan philosophers and orators themselves strove to bar the pagan people from theaters because they were detestable to the gods and pernicious to moral honesty. Aristides opposes to himself that most ridiculous invention which present-day theatrical men are also accustomed to thrust forward: namely, that comedy aims at correcting morals. This is what the most recent herald of the comic art repeatedly inculcates in the praised discourse, where on page 6 he writes: *Comedy was employed to imitate and to correct morals.*

He repeats the same thing on page 20: *But in comedy, whose end is chiefly to excite laughter, to imitate the morals of worse men, and to correct them pleasantly*, etc. Since the herald of actors refuses to hear the Fathers and the Church herself, let him hear, and let the other theatrical comrades in arms listen with him to, the pagan Aristides reproving those men. After the words praised above, he immediately adds these things.

XIV. *Nevertheless, SOME DARE TO AFFIRM that this license of reviling in the theater is useful, because in this way those who have lived badly are reproved and the rest conduct themselves more modestly from fear of abusive words. But I would value drunkenness very greatly if it could educate anyone, and if this were not exceedingly difficult to accomplish: that drunken men should lead others to temperance and, before they themselves had ceased, should instruct the rest concerning virtue. For who does not know that these things cannot first be taught by the crowd, any more than laws can be enacted or judgments pronounced by it?*

Will no one, then, sail to Corinth? Will all understand how the whole of life is to be spent, and will all stand at the helms, leading youth here and there as it seems good to them? And although we hold a selection of athletes so that, if any of them is unskilled, he departs ignominiously after paying the penalty, why, I ask, shall we so ineptly choose as leaders and teachers of the gravest matters every most frivolous man from any tavern, and conduct ourselves in such a way that we ourselves also appear to need teachers?

If, moreover, we employ not just any doorkeepers but the most trustworthy, lest we suffer some loss in our houses, shall we, I ask, voluntarily hand over to anyone to govern our children, our wives, all our supports, and, to say it in one word, the flower of the city? Shall we entrust to those men when drunk the persons whom we despised when sober? What of the fact that these are not times for teaching but for playing, whether they are the Dionysia, the Samian rites, or nocturnal rites? It would therefore be absurd if, at the time when we release boys from the teachers whom they have, we placed over them every most foolish man who thrusts himself forward, and did not perceive even from the place itself how ridiculous this institution is.

For it is not fitting that a teacher in the theaters should teach boys the things which are for pleasure and are destined for recreation. But there are surely other places which take their name from the thing itself, in which philosophers may teach; and this not by mocking and shamelessly reviling in this manner, but by instructing as befits freeborn children and by teaching them, among other things, to beware especially of shamefulness - note well.

XV. Prick up your ears, illustrious heralds of the comic art; direct your mind again to Aristides. In this manner, after describing the other evils which young men and the rest draw from the sight of comedies, he continues his discourse:

Therefore comedies are so far from having to be performed for the sake of reforming youth that rather, for this reason alone, so that youth may safely cultivate virtue, they must be abolished. For we can punish the wicked by another means also. But why should we afflict the good with such an injury and permit those against whom not even a form of legal action ought to have been brought to be vexed with impunity by the insults of anyone whatsoever? If to this is added the fact that even good men generally prefer to suffer the loss of money rather than of reputation, and this the more because they are more modest by nature, the importunity of comedy and the necessity of abolishing it will be wholly manifest.

Moreover, it can scarcely happen that the city does not publicly share in the reputation of private men. For as most of those who are censured in comedies are, so are almost all said to be. But consider your ancestors, THE ATHENIANS, whom the remaining monuments of writers adorn with many praises: ONE COMEDY LACERATED THEM, and even now it furnishes arguments to those who are eager to speak evil, since they are convicted by themselves.

And I omit to say how great a difference there is, both before earth and the gods, between present-day and ancient shamelessness, and how great an abundance of admonitions and useful precepts was contained in those parts which they called the Parabases. Nevertheless, as the proverb has it, it was pleasant even to suffer from a worthy piece of wood, if this happened to anyone. But where so much wickedness is seen in words, so much shamelessness in songs, so much baseness in gestures, and vices so great that no comedy can express them - note well - what will there be that delights us?

Shall we endure these things as honorable? Nothing is more shameful. Or as useful to see or hear? They are signs of corruption. For once anyone, whether man or woman, has become accustomed to hearing evil and bearing the worst abuse, he soon relaxes his mind and then learns wickedness which was previously unknown. What of the fact that none of these things pertains to Bacchus? etc.

XVI. I now wish upright and well-conducted readers to compare with Aristides' oration the things which those who in our age desire to be called Christians write. What wonder - O immortal God! - if even impiety itself advances in triumph, if some Christians in this very Italy of ours do not fear most boldly to defend as honorable and worthy of praise those things which pagan writers detest by every kind of argument as shameful and infamous? The pagan multitude boasted of the respectability of comedies, just as the half-learned men of today do; but Aristides cries out: *Deeds which are shameful cannot be spoken of modestly.* No one but a fool will deny that the deeds related in comedies are shameful or vicious.

The pagans objected that morals were corrected by comedy. But Aristides cleverly offers up this most inept invention and vain delirium to be mocked. The pagans muttered that the gods were honored by comedy. Against them Aristides proves that comedy is unworthy of the gods and of upright men. Therefore let the frivolous heralds of present-day comedies depart, devote to curses their little writings most unworthy of an upright philosopher, a Christian man, and our Italy, and perform severe penance if they wish to attain, as I pray, eternal salvation.

Final Chapter — A Recapitulation of the Entire Dissertation

FINAL CHAPTER

A Recapitulation of the Entire Dissertation. The Replies of the Holy Fathers to Everything Objected by Defenders of the Theaters Are Touched upon Briefly

I. Present-day comedies, all things considered, are shameful and obscene either by reason of their words, the matter represented, the gestures and dances, or the fornicating song and prostitute music. Pagan women who were not prostitutes were commonly absent from the ancient theaters of the Romans. The Christian women who come forth upon the stage are for the most part shameless little prostitutes, infamous women, violators of their baptismal profession, sources of ruined modesty, refuse of brothels, and slaves of the devil; they must be wholly barred from the sacraments of the Church.

Theaters of this kind are camps in which the world, the flesh, and demons enchant, soothe, and incite not one sense, not one virtue, not one precept, but all human senses and affections. They assault all the virtues - penance, humility, poverty, chastity, and modesty - and persuade men to deride and despise them. They triumphantly extol the graver crimes - pride, ambition, vengeance, prodigality, and lasciviousness. They wage universal war upon the Gospel of Christ and strive with all their strength to extinguish the very spirit of the divine law.

II. Nothing is lawful for Christians which cannot be referred to the glory of God. Do those who, having entered into an alliance with God's enemies - the world, the flesh, and the devil - wage the devil's war against God glorify God? Do those who take up again the pomps and vanities which they renounced glorify God? Do those who frequent the sanctuary of Venus, the gymnasia of vices, the satanic congregation, the chair of pestilence - namely, the theaters, as all the Fathers teach - glorify God?

III. Nor do the very lovers of scenic pleasure dare to deny that theatrical stages conflict with the evangelical profession, whose spirit is to restrain our senses, bridle concupiscence, afflict the flesh, abstain from pomps and vanity; for the efforts and studies of those stages tend directly toward flattering the senses, kindling concupiscence, and gradually instilling carnal pleasure into souls. But they deny that this conflict is deadly and that those who go to the theaters sin mortally. Yet they are shamefully deceived, and they deceive others.

IV. Those who of their own accord cast themselves into a grave danger of mortal sin, sin mortally. In present-day theaters there is a grave and most grave danger of venereal delight, which, with no one dissenting, is a mortal sin. All holy men testify with one voice to the gravity of the danger; therefore all who freely expose themselves to this danger are stained with mortal guilt. And that danger is the graver because frequently the poison infects the heart without the mind noticing it; but the voluntary assumption of the danger is itself a crime, even if by accident the fall does not follow.

Moreover, although chastity remain undefiled and the mind unharmed by any shamelessness, no one who assembles there can avoid the most grave crime of scandal. The sins of the male and female mimes, which are certainly mortal, and the other crimes of the spectators, recoil upon the head of

every person present. To this point return all the things which have thus far been set forth more fully in this Dissertation.

V. The holy Fathers of the Church always employed the doctrine thus far handed down in order to overthrow theatrical corruption. You will find every pretext and excuse which is thrust forward today to lend respectability to theatrical pleasure overturned by the Fathers. Nothing at all is brought forward today in defense of theaters which was not anticipated and crushed by the Fathers, as has been shown more fully above and as I shall now make manifest in a few words.

VI. Where, men once croaked, just as they do at present, do the Divine Scriptures forbid the frequenting of theaters? Tertullian replies in book *On Spectacles*, chapter 2, saying: *How vain, indeed how desperate, is the argument of those who without doubt display an evasion for admitting pleasure. They say that no mention of abstinence from it is expressly or locally determined in the Scriptures so as directly to forbid the servant of God to attend assemblies of this kind.*

Let vain-speaking men now hear the testimonies of Scripture. *Do not*, says St. John, First Epistle, chapter 2, *love the world, nor the things which are done in the world. If anyone loves the world, the charity of the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.* Let them hear Paul crying out in Ephesians 5: *Let all uncleanness ... not even be named among you, as becomes Saints; nor baseness, nor foolish talk, nor scurrility, which is not to the purpose.* And again in First Thessalonians 5 he adds: *Abstain from every appearance of evil.*

Scripture does not specifically forbid theaters because, when the Scriptures were given, the faithful were not yet laboring under so great a madness, replies St. Cyprian in his book *On Spectacles*. *Where*, they say, *are these things written? Hear the reply. If truth had descended even to these particulars, it would have judged most poorly of its faithful. For both generally and in the commandments certain things are more usefully given.... In place of a commandment severity speaks, and reason teaches what Scripture left unspoken. Let each man deliberate only with himself and speak with the person of his profession.*

VII. Whence, then, does it happen that learned and upright men consider the frequenting of theaters honorable? Cyprian replies in his book *On Spectacles*: from the desire to win greater crowds for themselves, to please men, and to please the world. *There are not lacking flattering defenders of vices and indulgent patrons, who furnish authority to vices ... so that the pleasure of spectacles is sought as though innocent, for the relaxation of the mind. For the vigor of ecclesiastical discipline has been so enervated, and through every languor of vices it plunges so far toward the worse, that now not an excuse but authority is given to vices.*

What thunders would the most holy Martyr of Christ not add, what weapons of eloquence would he not hurl against not a few casuists and vain smatterers who, indeed, furnish authority to theatrical vices? St. John Chrysostom, considering this objection in homily 6 on Matthew 2, deplores it with tears: *Therefore I groan, because so great an evil is not believed to be an evil.* And again, in homily 6 *On Penance*, he adds: *Therefore this is the very worst evil: when a man is sick and does not know that very thing, that he is sick, and, miserably and wretchedly burning, does not feel the fire.* In the place cited on Matthew he again grieves that *they applaud the mimes for the very reason for which they ought to have attacked them with stones.*

VIII. Again, men captivated by theatrical pleasure reply that they possess so elevated a mind that they suffer no impression and no disturbance from the representations of comedies. Those men, ulcerated throughout, do not feel their mortal wounds. Since those who speak thus are generally advanced and of mature age, by the false display of their own security they induce younger men, and

even their own sons, to frequent the theaters. Tertullian sharply lashes them in book *On Spectacles*, chapter 15, and mocks them as madmen.

For even if someone enjoys spectacles modestly and uprightly, according to the condition of his dignity or even of his nature, nevertheless he is not of an unmoved mind, without a tacit passion of the spirit - note well: the interpretative consent of the Scholastics. *No one comes to pleasure without affection; no one experiences affection without its incidents.... But if affection ceases, there is no pleasure; and that man is already guilty of vanity by assembling there* - note well - *where he obtains nothing*. Tertullian convicts them of folly.

IX. No less forcefully and powerfully does Chrysostom refute these boasters in homily 1 on Psalm 50, concerning David: *When there are so many precipices, so many corruptions, how could I believe that you are immune from the bites of beasts? Are you rock? Are you iron? You are a man, subject to the weakness common to nature. Do you perceive fire and yet are not burned? Is that consonant with reason? Put a lamp in hay, and then dare to deny that the hay is burned. What hay is, that is our nature.* But in homily 38 on Matthew he attacks these lying boasters of chastity from another side, and refutes them and covers them with shame in such a way that, even if they should burst, no opening for escape lies open.

He sets before himself their ostentation of purity of mind in these words: *What then, you say, if I show that no harm arises from this attendance? Certainly this very thing is harm: to consume time without cause* - note well - *and rashly, and to be a stumbling block to others. For even if you suffer no harm, you render another man eager for this spectacle. But how do you suffer no harm, you who furnish an occasion for these spectacles? For the juggler, the corrupted boy, the fornicating woman, and all those diabolical choruses lay upon YOUR HEAD the cause of the spectacles.*

For just as, if there were no spectators, there would be none to present games of this kind, so, because there are spectators, they themselves suffer the fire of their deeds. Therefore, although you should do this without loss of chastity - note well - *which certainly cannot happen, nevertheless you will pay grave penalties for the ruin of others, whether of those who watch or of those who present the spectacles.* After this no escape remains to defenders of the theaters. One of two things, therefore: either let them abstain from theaters, or let them know that by frequenting theaters they cast themselves headlong into eternal damnation.

X. Finally they cry out: Is the mind to be relieved by no solace, are the powers of the body to be restored by none? Are we to spend our life in continual labor and worship? Far from it. God created many delightful spectacles of joys. Meditate upon them, and you will rejoice. All the Fathers, but especially Cyprian and Tertullian, wonderfully expose to ridicule those blind men and mad slaves of the world and of demons who desire to be fed, delighted, gorged, and fattened only upon fictitious fables, human chimeras, and the devil's illusions, while they disdain and reject the most substantial grounds of true joy and gladness; and they hate us because we display true pleasures and most honorable matter for delighting themselves. But let Tertullian speak in *Apology* 38: *How do we offend you if we presume other pleasures? If we are unwilling to know delight, the injury is ours, not yours. But we reject the things which please you, nor do our things delight you.*

But he rebukes them more vehemently in *On Spectacles*, chapter 28 and following, declaring that they are delighted in this exile, but we in the future, as Christ foretold: *The world will rejoice, but you will be made sorrowful; but your sorrow will be turned into joy.* John 16. It cannot happen that anyone attains both joys. One or the other must be rejected. Theatrical men prefer to enjoy worldly and diabolical joy in the present exile rather than to await future joy. But let Tertullian speak: *Let guests of this sort be fattened*

with their sweets: both their places and times and their host belong to them. Our supper, our wedding, have not yet come. We cannot recline with them, because neither can they with us. The matter is arranged by turns. Now they rejoice, we struggle.... You are dainty, O Christian, if you desire pleasure also in this world; indeed, exceedingly foolish, if you think this pleasure.... Tell me, if you please: we cannot live without pleasure, we who ought to die with pleasure? For what is our desire other than that of the Apostle: to depart from this world and be received by the Lord? Here is our pleasure, where our desire is.

Let those initiated into the mysteries of worldly vanity consider these things, ruminate upon these things, swallow these things. Let them hear Chrysostom in homily 6 on Matthew: *God does not grant play, but the devil.... For it belongs to God* - note well - *to grant a humbled soul, trembling, oppressed, modest, penitent, and contrite.* And a little earlier in the same place: *When you are to pay penalties for so many sins, do you sit unconcerned for yourself, indulging in miserable laughter and lamentable jests, and concerned only for pleasure?*

XI. Let them again hear the Martyr Cyprian in *On Spectacles*: *He who has recognized himself as a son of God will never admire human works. He casts himself down from the summit of his nobility who can admire anything besides the Lord. Let the faithful Christian apply himself to the Sacred Scriptures, and there he will find spectacles worthy of faith. He will see God establishing His world ... just shipwrecks ... the seas dried up for a people ... he will behold harvests descending from heaven. He will see in some faith struggling with fire, wild beasts overcome by religion.... How becoming is this spectacle, how delightful, how necessary: always to behold one's hope and to open one's eyes toward one's salvation. This is the spectacle seen even after the eyes have been lost. This is the spectacle which neither praetor nor consul presents.*

XII. Finally let them hear St. Augustine, who thunders these things in *On Catechizing the Uninstructed*, chapter 16: *There are men who do not seek to be rich ... but wish to rejoice and rest ... in theaters and spectacles of frivolity.... Through zeal for spectacles they become like demons.... As is the food taken, so is the health which follows.* And again in sermon 171 *On the Words of the Lord*: *Let joy in the Lord prevail until joy in the world is ended. Let joy in the Lord always be increased; let joy in the world always be diminished until it is ended.... What, therefore, is this world, and what is joy in this world, joy of the world? I say it briefly: the gladness of the world is wickedness unpunished. Let men live luxuriously, trifle at spectacles, give themselves over to baseness, suffer no evil, and you behold the joy of the world.*

XIII. The most acute Augustine sets before himself the last thing they thrust forward: namely, that theaters are not to be abolished, but that abuses and corruptions, or the wickedness of poets or actors, are to be removed. Is that indeed so? Can the kingdom of the devil, the temples of Venus, the sewers of vices, be reformed? But let us hear Augustine's reply, at once acute and charming. For he asks whether the devil can be converted: *Has the devil become a Christian?* Augustine, book 1 *On Genesis*, chapter 20. All the Fathers teach that theaters are subject to the dominion of demons. These are the chief part of the pomps which Christians renounced in Baptism. Theaters are the chair from which demons, through the work of female and male mimes, poets, and spectators, preach and persuade pride, ambition, vanity, luxury, and lasciviousness; they declaim against the virtues of Christ, exalt the works of the flesh and of the world, and strive to magnify the powers of darkness.

Therefore St. Augustine concludes in sermon 1 *On the Creed, to Catechumens*, chapter 2: *Flee spectacles, dearly beloved; flee the most shameful dens of the devil.... Admirable is our spectacle, in which God assists, faith obtains strength, innocence fights, and holiness conquers.*

XIV. Lastly, all theologians, and even the patrons of the more lenient ethics themselves, truly disapprove and detest base and obscene comedies and tragedies - commonly called operas. All confess these to be the works which men and little women represent while playing out a mutual love affair. But such are commonly all those which are performed in Europe. Therefore, in the judgment of all, both the actors and the spectators sin mortally.

Nor do certain casuists avail them in any way, for these either consider comedies according to themselves and in a certain metaphysical abstraction, or within the baseness and obscenity itself, by a subtle and chimerical abstraction, distinguish and separate the pleasure of curiosity from venereal pleasure, honorable solace from base solace, in the same and single action which, all things considered, is in fact base and shameless, not merely somewhat shameless. For those very few either treated this argument perfunctorily or fell into a pernicious and deplorable laxity. Therefore the spectators of comedies and tragedies cannot be excused from grave guilt by even the least appearance of probability.

Appendix to the First Dissertation — A Synopsis of Father Mariana's Treatise On Spectacles

APPENDIX TO THE PRECEDING DISSERTATION
IN WHICH A SYNOPSIS IS PRESENTED OF THE TREATISE
OF FATHER JUAN DE MARIANA, OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS
Against Spectacles
PROLOGUE

After I had brought the preceding Dissertation to an end, there came into my hands the treatise *On Spectacles* by the most celebrated Father JUAN DE MARIANA, the most wise Jesuit, concerning whom, before many others, Father Alegambe writes these things in his *Library*: *With the greatest intelligence, most acute judgment, singular memory, and the study of many years, he most diligently cultivated every kind of discipline; and to sacred Theology he joined a rare knowledge of all the liberal arts and of history, both ecclesiastical and profane, and besides this a mastery of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages.... So great was the fame of his learning that no one among all was believed to equal him.... Having suffered many adversities with admirable equanimity, he proved himself superior to evils by the evidence of every virtue.... An extraordinary lover of poverty, he never admitted anything singular in any matter; of rare abstinence and incredible constancy in his hardships.*

I. Cardinal Baronius, whom Father Alegambe himself cites, has these things concerning Father Mariana at volume 8, year 788: *A lover of truth and an excellent cultivator of piety ... Juan de Mariana, free from private affection, a worthy professor of the Society of Jesus.* Among the other works worthy of gold and cedar which Father Mariana published, he issued a little work against spectacles, and it was inserted in the folio volume entitled *Seven Treatises of Juan de Mariana of the Society of Jesus*.

III. Since, indeed, I have always considered it an honor and a glory to summon to my aid and defense in the works thus far published by me the THEOLOGIANS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS, most excellent in learning and distinguished in holiness, I judged it useful to me to fortify and confirm this Dissertation against present-day spectacles by the wisdom and authority of the most learned Jesuits. I chose to cite before the rest two most splendid lights and brilliant ornaments of the Spanish nation, Ribera and Mariana, both so that I might more firmly establish my opinion and so that, when occasion was given, I might again rout the rancid and inveterate calumny of certain men who, whether they wish it or not, babble that I, otherwise most devoted to the wiser theologians of the aforesaid Society, am hostile to it, and most kindly portray me as a hater and impostor of moralists.

Nor is it strange: for if Father Mariana, as Father Alegambe testifies, suffered many adversities because, as Baronius says, he was a lover of truth, shall I myself, a defender of truth, as I trust, escape the weapons of hatred and envy? The Apostles themselves lamented: *The world hates us*, to whom Christ the Lord replied: *Know that it hated Me before you.*

But lest anyone be able to suspect that I set forth Father Mariana's doctrine less than sincerely, I shall outline a synopsis of the whole treatise in the words of the Author himself. I shall omit only those things which pertain to learning not necessary, at least for strengthening my cause. Hence the defenders of theaters will understand more clearly that I am asserting, against vain inventions and

putrid fables, not a new opinion or one more rigorous than equity, but the common doctrine of the Fathers and of all theologians who have tasted the spirit of the evangelical law.

IV. And before I bring this preface to an end, it is useful to taste a few of those things in which Father Mariana rebukes and refutes the license of many theologians in forming opinions and in twisting the divine law to the corrupt morals of men. In chapter 1 he cries out: *The depraved custom of men blinds their minds, and certain great theologians* - that is, PATRONS OF LICENSE - *endeavor to defend the things which we see done everywhere, as though consonant with law and equity, abusing voice and writings; it will be easy to refute them by the testimony and authority of the ancient theologians who did not disagree in this matter.*

And again in chapter 20 he adds: *It often happens that the better part is defeated by the worse in number of votes, a thing which Livy often deplored.* Lastly, near the end of the same chapter, he adds the following: *Many crimes are neglected in all nations, especially if deceitful men, theologians through a painted reason, stand as patrons; how great is often their liberty in pronouncing and how great in some the desire to please the people, we all know. It is miserable not to be able to deny what it is shameful to confess; this is a great calamity of our order: that there is nothing so absurd that it is not defended by some theologian.*

With this Christian sincerity Father Mariana, a lover of truth and free from private affection, speaks, a vigorous imitator of the Evangelists and the holy Fathers. Let those men direct their minds to this who fear that the reputation of certain casuists is diminished when the license of their lax rules is checked and their false opinions are refuted. Let them venerate those men just as we venerate the casuists also; yet the power to rout falsehood, if any occurs in their writings, must not therefore be taken from us.

Chapter I — Why a Disputation on Spectacles Is Undertaken. The Various Kinds of Spectacles

CHAPTER I

Why a Disputation on Spectacles Is Undertaken. The Various Kinds of Spectacles

I. I shall treat in a single chapter the things which Father Mariana arranged in the first two chapters. In the first chapter, with a magnificent array of words and thoughts, he sets before the eyes the reason why he undertook a disputation on spectacles, the gravity of the argument, and the most disastrous consequences of theaters and stages, in these words:

While I was considering that, by a new disputation on spectacles, I should restrain to the best of my ability the ancient madness for games, it very often came into my mind to wonder that our customs have so greatly degenerated from those of the ancients that the things which our forefathers censured with equal and harmonious voice as the mockery and disgrace, as it were, of the Christian religion, we see commonly practiced in our age as though consonant with piety. Custom has declined so far toward the worse. We certainly ought to refute this and confirm it by authority and arguments: the license of the theater, about which we labor especially, is nothing other than a workshop of shamelessness and wickedness, where men of every age, sex, and condition are corrupted, and through simulated and playful actions are formed for real vices.

For they are warned what they can do, and are inflamed by lust, which is chiefly aroused by sight and hearing; it is a grave thing to infect girls above all, and young men, with untimely pleasures, and especially ruinous to the Christian commonwealth. For what does the stage contain except the violation of virgins and the loves of women whose modesty has been prostituted, the arts of procurers and procuresses, and the deceits of maids and servants, explained in measured and ornate verses, distinguished by brilliant sayings, and thereby adhering more tenaciously to the memory - things of which ignorance is much more advantageous? The shameless motions and gestures of actors, and their voices broken after the manner of women, by which they imitate and express shameless women, what else do they do but inflame to lust men who are of themselves sufficiently prone to vice? Can any greater corruption of morals be devised? The things which are enacted upon the stage in representation are recalled with laughter after the play has been performed; then they are done without shame, as the desire for pleasure tickles the soul. These are, as it were, steps toward embracing depravity, the passage from jests to serious things being easy, with no great interval....

Moreover, since Christian piety demands that, at the mention of a crime by which the divine laws are violated and the snares of death incurred, body and soul should shudder, with what face shall we ourselves delight, and publicly delight others, when rapes and baseness are recalled? Away with so great a disgrace; let so grave an ignorance of the Christian name cease.

Let so grave an ignorance of the Christian name and of a nation cease, a nation which, when compared with other nations, ought to shine amid the darkness of night like heavenly lights through holiness of morals and the purity of its whole life.... This, therefore, is what we contend: to teach that the license of the theater brings certain ruin to Christian morals and the gravest disgrace upon the Christian name.

And would that a discourse equal to the argument undertaken should fall to my lot, so that our diligence might exert itself as greatly as truth has power. Nor must success be despaired of with whatever faculty of learning we possess, although a double difficulty, like a certain mass, stands besides in opposition to our efforts: the multitude of those who sin and the authority of those who patronize error. The multitude of madmen is an excuse for madness; under

this name also our depraved nature, which favors its vices and desires, closes its eyes lest it see its own foulness and the light which thrusts itself upon the mind, and does not easily permit itself to be torn away from the things received with pleasure, for which by nature we are most avid, especially when an appearance of usefulness or honor is presented, than which no calamity is greater....

Depraved custom indeed blinds minds; and, as we see happening everywhere, certain great theologians, patrons of license, endeavor to defend it as though consonant with law and equity, abusing leisure and letters. It will be easy to refute them by the testimony and authority of the ancient theologians who did not disagree in this matter, from whom we do not think the theologians of our age wish to depart. It is certain that we shall uncover all these illusions of counterfeit truth. It will be more difficult to restrain the multitude from madness unless public authority, which concerns the magistrates, should be added.

We shall certainly bring it about that men will henceforth run to theaters in which obscene subjects are treated no otherwise than to eating houses, thefts, murders, and brothels; this will be by far the greatest fruit of the labor undertaken. For there will be some who, once their depravity is known, cease to sin, prefer their salvation to base pleasure, and do not, prudent and knowing, rush madly and miserably into death and allow themselves to be carried away.

II. In the second chapter the Author gives a generic notion of spectacles, saying: *A spectacle is a game undertaken for the sake of pleasure.* From Tertullian and Isidore he judges that games were first invented by the Lydians, whence came the word *games*. In the highest division he assigns spectacles to the scenic and the gymnic. Among the scenic are numbered comedies and tragedies, mimes, pantomimes, archimimes, and all actors in fables. He says that actors were called *histriones* from Histria, whence they were first brought to the City; but whether they expressed various characters only by gesture and bodily motion is not sufficiently established. Many remove words from them in the plays. Gellius, book 7, chapter 5, gives the actor Polus both voice and tears.

I shall not attach great importance, he says, to whichever way it is understood; for, by an extended meaning of the word, I think that both those who by voice and those who by bodily gesture feigned shameless women or other characters were called actors. The *thymelici* also pertain to the stage, frequent mention of whom occurs in the Imperial laws. These served the play by song, strings, dancing, and other motions, and could rightly be called theatrical companions. Under the word *scenici* were comprehended all actors, mimes, histriones, and thymelici. In gymnic games are placed athletes, runners, charioteers, boxers, and those competing in throwing or swiftness of leaping. There the Author writes very many things, with varied and most abundant learning, concerning the distinction of the Theater from the Circus and the structure of each; since they do not pertain at all to our purpose, I pass them over.

Chapter II — On the Pleasure of the Senses

CHAPTER II

On the Pleasure of the Senses

I. In chapter 4 Father Mariana describes the incredible power and poisonous allurement of pleasure: *For gentle pleasure, though flattering, unless you beware, in no great space of time conquers all parts of mind and body, enervates the virtues, overthrows the mind itself, the citadel established on high, and casts it headlong into every kind of vice. Rightly and wisely Plato affirmed that even men of lofty spirit are rendered waxen by pleasure, so that, soft like wax, they yield to vices and impurity; and elsewhere he said that pleasure is the nourishment of all evils and that no greater danger presses from anywhere than from the pleasures poured around us on every side.*

Thus, throughout all memory, we see and read that men whom neither enemies could conquer nor any injury from heat, cold, or hunger could break were overcome by the allurements of pleasures. For what else led Solomon astray from such wisdom and uprightness? What rendered Hannibal the Carthaginian and his forces exposed to the enemy, if not the delights of Capua? The wines and banquets of Campania conquered him whom arms had not conquered. It is sufficiently established that this also happened to the Romans, unconquered before they had experienced the enjoyments, conveniences, and other pleasures of Asia.

Pleasure, as though conquered by fire, wholly weakens and breaks iron natures. Since nothing in man is more excellent than virtue, nothing is so hostile to this divine gift as pleasure. For when it rules, there is no place for temperance, fortitude, liberality, or the other virtues; nor under its dominion can any part of honor subsist, because it is vicious and deadly and is the weapon of him whose single work is to conquer the minds of men and defile them with the stains of vices. Pleasure is the fabricator of death; and just as God calls man to life through labor and sweat, since virtue is placed in difficult things, so through delights and sweetness we hasten toward death.

Therefore all delights and pleasures of the senses must be guarded against as snares, lest, captured by that softness, we and all that is ours be reduced beneath the dominion of death. If you yield to pleasure, you must yield to pain, labor, hardship, and poverty, because ambition, anger, avarice, and the other vices are hostile to poverty; in a single assault they will occupy the soul.... The more difficult the act which must be undertaken, the greater the pleasure which He placed in it, as one may consider in the procreation of children: lest the races should fail, He mingled a most ardent desire in bodies, so that each sex might most eagerly seek the other and by that means living creatures could be propagated and multiplied.

Although He gave this desire to all living things, it has sharper goads in human beings, either because human knowledge is greater and the flesh softer, or because He wished the human race to be propagated more widely.... Other living things, indeed, perceive no other pleasure, or scarcely any, beyond that which is received from intercourse and from food; to this, certainly, the functions and delights of their other senses are referred. But to man was given an unlimited pleasure, which is taken through all the senses, so that virtue might restrain him as he fell into vice. For violations, adulteries, and every crime are excited by no other allurements than pleasure.

But there is a distinction: excessive pleasures of food and lust are censured and placed among the vices; what is perceived through the eyes, ears, or smell is not, and this is for many an occasion of error, so that they think no censure is incurred from the sight of games or the hearing of musical harmony. Aristotle rightly says that only those who are overcome by the pleasure of touch or taste are called incontinent, and so forth. But in other pleasures also there can be a certain kind of incontinence, perhaps less commonly recognized, yet most real. The pleasure of the ears

and eyes, received from seeing games and from the sweetness of voices and songs, is no less vicious and no less deadly than other delights.

For who would not judge luxurious and wicked the man who sits whole days in the theater or, conquered by greed for that pleasure, keeps scenic artists, lyre players, and comic actors at home? All bodily delights are incitements to vices, and baseness has great force for corrupting and defiling minds.... This depraved desire rests within no boundaries; like fire, the more we give it, the more it seeks, and often, advancing from honorable pleasures, in a moment it draws men toward unlawful things, and, making the passage from one pleasure into a different one, ends in baseness.... Therefore excessive pleasures must be cut off, because they are fomentations of vices and supply food to vices; once received, they remain within no boundaries, but move on to baser delights.

Again and again they stir the goads of lust in the inmost entrails and excite and inflame that natural heat, until they lead the whole man into the snares of eternal death. In nothing is there more sin in life than in loosening the reins to this depraved desire. To restrain and repress it at the beginning would have been salutary to many, who surely ought by their own ruin to render others more cautious, lest they permit themselves to be infected by this stain and plague, however gradually it insinuates itself and deceives under the appearance of honor.

II. In chapter 5 the Author asks why the stage delights so greatly, and among other reasons gives this one. On the stage admirable and unusual events are recounted, terminated by some more marvelous outcome, as we discern in tragedies and comedies; unbelievable things are so composed that they seem deeds rather than fictions. *Moreover, it is human to admire unusual things and despise daily ones; and those things appear most marvelous and express the greatest pleasure which contain the most unexpected things, yet these appear most dangerous.*

But if we are very often captivated by bare narrations of events, what will they do when splendor of speech and eloquence have been added? Then measured and ornate verses tickle minds and drive them wherever they wish; by their splendor they persuade the more, and they adhere more easily to the memory and mind of the hearers. For we who are composed of measures above all are captivated by measures, and discourse bound by measures is accustomed to excite more vehement movements in every direction.... Finally, what greater allurement is there? Most beautiful young men, or, what greater plague is there, girls of exceptional loveliness are brought forth into the theater, fit to detain the eyes not only of an unruly multitude but even of prudent and moderate men. Can the beauty of any gem, flower, or living creature be compared with human beauty? Can anything bend eyes and minds more powerfully, even if it is set before them naked?

And thus far honorable comedies and tragedies have been discussed. If so many things producing pleasure are brought together in them, what if every single thing is referred to baseness? What object most of all binds men, and so binds them that the bare mention of it carries away their minds? Is the fable about the violations of virgins, the loves of prostitutes, and the baseness of procurers? Can any pleasure more powerful than that be devised? I do not think so. Excitable forms are set before the mind, fomentations of vices are suggested, desire is aroused from the image and recollection of the matters, and, through feigned loves as though they were present at real ones, spectators are gorged with base pleasure, as though they had wallowed in a sewer.

III. Father Mariana explains the distinction between old and new comedy in chapter 6, and in chapter 7 shows that comedies do not accord with the worship of the gods. There he also refutes the most inept quibble of those who prattle that comedies and tragedies are suited to correcting morals. For this vain excuse is offered: in comedies the various events of human life are expressed, frauds are uncovered, and teachings are given by which young men are made more cautious. I contend that

those men err entirely. For it is not for drunken men to recommend sobriety, nor is every most base man a suitable preceptor for teaching uprightness, to recall hearers publicly from vice to virtue, from madness to reason, and from brutality to humanity. Let us not entrust the care of the door to just anyone, lest something happen at home which brings disgrace, but to a man of proven faith.

Chapter III — Women Are Not to Be Introduced upon the Stage

CHAPTER III

Women Are Not to Be Introduced upon the Stage. Which Is the More Enormous Crime: That Women, or Young Men Adorned in Women's Clothing, Come Forth upon the Stage?

I. *Another depravity follows*, Father Mariana continues in chapter 8, *neither less than the preceding nor less to be repelled: women of excellent beauty, exceptional gracefulness of action, and charm are introduced into the theater, which is the greatest incitement of lust and possesses the greatest power to corrupt men. For actors, since they measure all pursuits by profit and refer everything to gain, in order to entice the multitude, which they know is captivated especially by the sight and hearing of women, undertake every fraud with no care for honor. The duty of the tongue is overcome by the recollection of so great a crime, the more because this baseness also has its patrons, not just any men among the people but men eminent for a reputation of learning and modesty. Since their error extends more widely and has driven deep roots, we shall endeavor, so far as lies in us, to remedy it by this disputation.*

II. From Gregorio Giraldi, who says that Phrynichus the tragedian first brought a female character upon the stage, he observes that in ancient times women were brought upon the stages. In the Floralian games naked women came forth with their private parts uncovered. But those little women were little prostitutes and public slaves, without the Christian religion. Alexander ab Alexandro observes it in book 6, chapter 8, and it is gathered from the Theodosian Code, book 15, title 7, and from Tertullian, chapter 17 *On Spectacles*. These so unbridled harlots arouse nausea and disgust rather than allure honorable men.

But at the sight of a beautiful and adorned woman who adds gestures and words broken into softness, what can be more powerful, asks Father Mariana, *to entice souls, drive them into everlasting death, and set them aflame? I certainly do not see. Paul forbids a woman to teach in church lest her voice move those who hear her to lust. Thus Anselm interprets it. And will there be a man who promises himself and others security from that danger? I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not even think of a virgin.* Job 31. *Can anyone escape unharmed in a burning furnace? Yet theaters are more fiercely kindled than the Babylonian furnace, the evil demon supplying firebrands and exciting the flames, base thoughts and desires aroused both by other things and by the sight and hearing of a woman.*

And the fire which feeds upon minds is more powerful than that which feeds upon bodies, and the more calamitous because those who are burned feel nothing; otherwise they would not laugh but would change their gladness into tears. It is the gravest kind of misfortune to regard calamity as delight, a matter which Chrysostom himself discusses more fully. I marvel that men are carried away into that vanity and apply themselves thirstily to spectacles, and do not consider that by their example they draw the younger into the same destruction. Furthermore, not content with that evil, THEY PROVIDE PATRONAGE TO THE COMMON MADNESS, so that they may appear to sin without reproach.

III. *They add that either comedies must be abandoned altogether, or women, if they are unwilling, must be invited voluntarily to act in plays. For, they argue, there is greater danger when elegant boys are introduced in women's dress and adornment, by whose appearance the spectators are solicited to perverse and abominable lust; and indeed not without reason do they argue that this crime must be avoided more diligently. For what is baser and more ruinous than that foulness?*

I omit one or another passage of the Author in which a most illustrious nation is censured, so that I may yield to truth and obedience. For if the vice which our theologian ascribes to it was creeping about in his time, in our age it is banished from that nation by the zeal and vigilance of its bishops and other pastors, who yield to no other nation in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord.

But desire for the female sex extends more widely and has far greater impulses, not only in most corrupt and depraved men, such as those who indulge in loves of boys, but also in other men conspicuous for some praise of uprightness and modesty. For when God, as Basil says in his book On Virginity*, created living things distinguished into either sex, He implanted in their bodies a goad of mutual desire, among human beings especially, so that they might seek one another and rejoice in mutual union, a far greater desire in the man. For He subjected the woman to the command and power of the man, since, formed from his side, He ordained that, as a part, she should obey the whole; but He made the man, as it were, tame through desire and love for the woman, tempering his fierceness and strength.**

For he loves her as his own member and through union strives, as it were, to join her to himself again. Thus a woman has within herself a certain virtue and marvelous power of drawing a man to herself, no otherwise than a magnet, though it is not itself moved, draws iron to itself; by this it has been brought about that a woman's body and parts are more pleasing to the senses than a man's, soft, fair, of high and sweet voice, and of a most becoming appearance of face and whole body.

IV. *Against this most powerful desire all who strive to attain the dignity of chastity must fight in a contest never interrupted, even to the end of life.* But other things also must be added. The stage women whom actors assemble and assist are of venal beauty. For how could women surrounded by so many wanton and idle men live chastely by day and night? It would surely be a greater miracle than if fire burned in water. And having generally been carried away from a base trade, whether joined in marriage to some actor from that infamous company, or, as more frequently happens, bound to someone by a habit of fornication, once shame is laid aside upon the stage they return to their nature and, making their body common among many, bring ruin to all and drive many mad by their arts.

We know that in former years, in a certain company of these people, as was heard from the judge's own mouth, a certain woman from this troop who played the character of Magdalene was found joined in a base relationship with the actor who represented Christ the Son of God by voice, gesture, and clothing. A signal foulness, and the greater because they were heard with great applause from the people and often shook tears from the spectators.

V. Then, aroused by the sight of these little women, idle and ruined young men, of whom there is a great number everywhere, what do they not do, what frauds do they not undertake, to satisfy their inflamed desire? We know that often, having formed a band and by agreement, they abducted those women for lust and took them away from the actors, whence arose grave quarrels, wounds, and murders, as young men fought with the sword among themselves over the prey and with the actors. Nor is there any doubt that those young men often migrate from one town to another, despising parents and family property for love of these little women, blind and mad, rushing into sword and flame, and not ceasing until, once that money is consumed, the women send them home empty and sucked dry.

It is altogether most shameful when, through the middle of the squares and in the very lodgings, most noble young men, with no care for decorum, accompany these women and crowd their sides, no

otherwise than dogs inflamed with lust or horses neighing at the sight of a mare, toward which, after giving birth, they are carried by burning desire, fierce and rabid, with no care for bridle or rider, not even for a stick though it beats their back. Whoever does not judge such disgraces worthy of being driven away with every effort is iron-hearted and deprived of the common sense and reason of men and of other living things.

VI. In chapter 9 he proves by many grounds of reason that theaters ought not to be publicly assigned to actors. He sets before the eyes the losses which flow thence into the commonwealth: namely, the neglect of the arts, the softness of young men, the losses of family property, and very many other things. The multitude of actors and theatrical men is an inert and useless burden upon the commonwealth, since they are enervated by pleasures. This kind of men extracts a great quantity of money by various arts; they increase the price according to the convenience of the place and rent seats at an enormous charge. Will vigorous soldiers and prudent senators emerge from these bacchanals among the young men?

Chapter IV — Actors Are to Be Barred from the Sacraments

CHAPTER IV

Actors Are to Be Barred from the Sacraments

I. I disclosed above, from the tradition of the Fathers, the perpetual discipline of the Church: that actors were always rejected from the Sacred Mysteries. Father Mariana confirms this same truth in chapter 10: *It is manifest from law 1 of the Digest, concerning those marked by infamy, that actors are marked by disgrace and infamy; therefore actors who come forth upon the stage are numbered among the infamous, but in this manner: if they come forth at least once and again upon a public stage, and obscene matters are treated in the play. For thus learned men interpret the words of that law and temper its severity: Panormitanus on the chapter* Cum decor*, concerning the life and uprightness of clerics; Silvester, word* Infamy*, number 9.*

Nor does it matter whether the obscenity is contained in the principal arguments, in the intermediate acts, or in the very songs sung to obscene and base tunes and openly or obliquely indicating baseness. For each is equally base and brings equal ruin; nor does the recollection of baseness, when aroused, kindle less fire in the minds of the hearers than an open recounting, the more because a wound inflicted by ambush is more difficult to avoid. But if actors of this kind are held infamous, they must necessarily be subject to MORTAL SIN. For so grave a punishment would not be imposed upon innocent men or those who sin lightly.

But if anyone thinks that the sordidness and mockery of the art are being censured, why are porters, butchers, charcoal burners, and other most sordid arts subject to no infamy? Add to this that all the others who by that law are placed among the infamous are bound by GRAVE GUILT: procurers, abductors, betrayers in judgment, and all others. What cause is there, then, for us to make actors exempt from the common law and innocent? Especially since one is called infamous whose life and morals are reproved, as is gathered from the Gloss on the Digest, concerning those summoned into court, law Sed si hac lege*, section* Praetor*.... They are worthy of censure not only who recount base things in open words, but also those who signify baseness obliquely and dissemblingly. For even formerly, in the time of the Romans, the most shameful men, although the actors*

refrained from obscenity of words, whom no one, as I judge, would wish to excuse, were all the more pernicious because, if they acted otherwise, they would easily drive the hearers from the theater by the obscenity of their words. And nearly all the actors in plays who commonly perform in Spain for hire are of stupidity of this kind; for openly or dissemblingly they cast every kind of baseness into the minds of their hearers in almost every action: the frauds of procurers, the loves of prostitutes, the violations of virgins, and other things which it is not necessary to recall; and therefore I decree that they, as though stained by the marks of baseness, must be repelled from the Church and barred from participation in the Sacraments.

Moreover, who does not see the inference which follows by a necessary conclusion: namely, that spectators who by their presence foster and patronize the practitioners of an infamous art become participants in their crimes and must be punished with an equal penalty—that is, barred from the Sacred Mysteries until they prove that they abstain from corruption of this kind?

Chapter V — On Theatrical Music

CHAPTER V

On Theatrical Music

I. Nothing is more frequently in the mouths of spectators of theaters, by which they attempt to make their access to theaters honorable, than that they come there so that innocent song and the solace of music may recreate and cheer their minds, thinking that they can thus gorge themselves upon the pleasure of this musical charm without perpetrating any guilt. This enticement of pleasure so fascinates the minds of men that they sin even in the middle of the light. Musical harmonies have very great power both to form and to deprave minds. They who believe that they were born for pleasure reject music instituted solely for the sake of pleasure. Song and music have this end: that truths, when sung, may be instilled more easily into the minds of hearers by the sweetness of the harmony and may penetrate more deeply. It is more evident than to require proof that music has very great power for this end; it also has power to soften character and to mollify the rough minds of men. For even wild beasts are marvelously captivated when they are held by rhythms. But if music can raise minds upward by its harmony in celebrating the divine praises, who will be able to explain adequately the most powerful force of that same music to fascinate the hearts of men and to excite carnal affections, when with the sweetest melody it extols the love affairs of Cleopatra, Sophonisba, Semiramis, and the most obscene actions and deeds of other harlots?

II. Father Mariana writes more about music in chapter 11. *Plato*, he says, *affirmed from Damon's opinion that musical modes are never changed without the greatest change of the laws, and that great caution must therefore be applied to what sort of music citizens use*; and, after setting forth the various kinds of music, he concludes in this manner:

This force has now for the most part fallen away, and nothing has our magistrates and princes less solicitous than the care of what sort of music the people and the young commonly employ. We therefore ought not to marvel that so great a corruption of morals has arisen in this dregs of the times, and indeed that all vices, with their battle line formed, have rushed into cities and towns without distinction of sex, age, or condition; and especially that they have settled upon levity and baseness, since musical modes have everywhere been broken, particularly by theatrical license and by harmony dissolved into wantonness. And since base words are mixed with music, artfully composed in order to deceive, certainly in a dissembling manner, and base songs taken from the streets, taverns, and brothels are recalled to memory by simulated modes, this is the most certain ruin of morals. The evil is the graver because these things are carried from the theaters into the squares and individual houses, with baseness fixed in the memory as though by glue.

Detestable baseness; but such are the morals. And although among a Christian people nothing should be heard except what is honorable and holy—the praises of the Divine Majesty and the most celebrated deeds of heroes, as Jerome testifies was customary in his time in Palestine, where artisans and farmers mitigated their hard labors by singing the praises of God—we see, on the contrary, that it happens that through the squares by night and through houses by day nothing resounds except the praises of Venus, to the great disgrace of the Christian people and of the magistrates who neglect this care, and to the great injury of the commonwealth. Would that we could deny that those base modes from common songs have often crept even into the temples. In this matter sense and words fail us. For the magnitude of the crime overcomes the office of the tongue: both because of the desire of those who do it to

charm the ears of the people, and especially because of those who allow so great a crime and disgrace to go unpunished, gathering praise for modesty, humanity, or festivity from the reproach of divine worship and of the Christian religion.

Therefore I make an end if I have impressed this: THEATRICAL MUSIC BRINGS A MOST CERTAIN PLAGUE, CORRUPTS the morals of individuals throughout cities and towns, and gradually instills depravity; and princes who neglect that care which ought to stand among the chief concerns of the commonwealth will pay the most grievous penalties, both living and dead, for the commonwealth badly governed.

III. If I myself were to write such things in this age of ours, which some are not at all ashamed to call golden, it would be the least of my troubles to undergo censures for imprudence, rashness, audacity, and severity. And yet the pagans Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch themselves, inflamed by this zeal for preserving the integrity of morals, committed similar things to writing. Chrysostom called scenic song fornicating and theatrical music meretricious, while the whole chorus of the Fathers sang in accord. In volume 2, book 2, dissertation 2, chapter 3 of the *Christian Theology*, I touched upon some things concerning music introduced into the temples of Christians which incites excessively to softness and pleasure, and concerning effeminate and comic men who defile and incredibly profane the praises of God on the more solemn feasts of the Catholic religion; but I did so with a fearful pen and a trembling hand, because the profanation has become so strong that it is scarcely lawful for us to open our mouths.

Chapter VI — What the Ancient Fathers, Pontifical Law, and Pagan Philosophers Thought Concerning Scenic Entertainments

CHAPTER VI

What the Ancient Fathers, Pontifical Law, and Pagan Philosophers Thought Concerning Scenic Entertainments

I. In chapter 12 Father Mariana divides the testimonies of the Fathers into three classes. The first two kinds censure the pagans because the spectacles were dedicated to the gods. *The final head of testimonies*, he says, *which is drawn from baseness, pertains no less to us; nor are we less bound than those ancients—indeed all the more, inasmuch as the Christian profession demands a greater holiness of morals.* With overflowing abundance our Author brings forth the testimonies of the Fathers against both the most foolish superstition of the pagans and the carnal pleasure of pagans and Christians, forbidden to all without distinction. I pass over all these things because they are already well trodden and have been supplied above with a liberal hand. It is enough to indicate that our Author, together with all others not wholly ignorant of ecclesiastical matters, has routed the most inept comment, scarcely worthy of an old woman: namely, that the Fathers condemned the theaters only under the title that they labored under the crime of idolatry. It is enough for me to touch briefly upon the few things which he writes near the end of the chapter.

II. *Chrysostom says in homily 29 on chapter 6 of Matthew that theaters were constructed by the devil in cities to corrupt men, and he calls scenic entertainments the plague of a city; and in homily 69 on chapter 21 he says that a theatrical chorus is the fountain and spring of all evils. Then in homily 15 to the people he says that theaters have produced fornication, wantonness, and every incontinence. And in homily 8 on penance he calls theaters the chair of pestilence, the gymnasium of incontinence, the workshop of luxury, the orchestra of shamelessness, and the Babylonian furnace. Finally, in homily 31 on chapter 4 of John, he says that spectacles are solemnities of demons; and in homily 42 on the Acts of the Apostles he concludes: "Theaters bring great evils upon cities—great evils, and we do not know how great."*

What may be dinned into the ears of our people—that these entertainments procure the gravest advantages—is all the more dangerous because we do not perceive that morals are gradually changed and become worse, that the modesty of virgins is diminished, that young men become wanton, that old men return to lust, that unhappy marriages, thefts, and embezzlements arise from them, and many other crimes scarcely heard of in the preceding century. Thus far Chrysostom. *Do we not see, when we consider how great a corruption of morals has arisen in these years? Who will remedy these evils unless God looks down upon us from heaven and, pitying our errors and incurable madness, provident princes and magistrates, made more cautious by the memory and examples of a former age, seriously consider these things before they pronounce for the other side? We beseech them not to bring into the Christian commonwealth a vanity overturned by so great a labor of the Fathers.*

III. Our Author adduces in chapter 13 the decrees of the Romans against theaters, whence he infers: *Now see how unworthy it is that, as Tacitus says in book 14, no Roman citizen was permitted to act as an actor and all citizens continued down to his age in fear of the severe law, yet a Christian man should be permitted to practice scenic arts with impunity.... The Emperor Tiberius expelled actors from Rome, and women were marked with disgrace; yet after his death Gaius Caligula, the plague of the commonwealth, recalled the actors, as Dio Cassius*

relates in books 57 and 59. And, after producing several laws of Theodosius, Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian against theaters, he proceeds thus:

Thus far what the civil laws sanctioned has been briefly explained; let the discourse pass to the ecclesiastical laws, by which it has been decreed that actors must not be admitted to Sacred Orders and must be barred from the Sacred Table and the Sacraments, as has been said above. The Third and Fourth Councils of Carthage and the Sixth General Council of Constantinople, canon 51, prescribe these things: "The holy universal Synod wholly prohibits those who are called mimes and their spectacles; then also the spectacles of hunts—which were held in the arena—*and the dances which are performed upon the stage. If anyone acts otherwise, if he is a cleric, let him be deposed; if a layman, let him be excommunicated." Whether these laws, fixed by the great prudence of our Fathers, are observed at this time all understand of themselves, with no one pointing it out, since we everywhere see people of every age, sex, and condition flowing to those spectacles, even very many from Sacred Orders and—what it is shameful to say—monks professing a stricter life. There are also those who contend that these things are done honorably and do not conflict with Christian laws, sinning through ignorance of antiquity, wickedness, or both vices; let us leave them here.*

IV. In chapter 14 our Author recounts the decrees of all peoples and nations against spectacles. In ancient times the Spartans themselves permitted no spectacles of comedies or tragedies; after the entertainments were admitted as their custom degenerated, access to them was forbidden to women. But, as Aemilius Probus observes in the preface to the *Lives of the Commanders*, after the best custom had been turned into luxury, there was no widow so noble among the Spartans that she did not go upon the stage when hired for pay.

But we, Mariana adds, *do not set forth what time has introduced, whereby all holy and excellent institutions are corrupted, but what was preserved in an uncorrupted city and with morals intact. Let the Massilians therefore be placed next, who held that institution for a longer time, as Valerius Maximus is witness in book 2, chapter 1. That same city*, he says, *"the strictest guardian of severity, gave no entrance upon its stages to mimes, whose plots for the most part contain acts of rape, lest the custom of watching such things should also assume a license of imitating them." Does less danger threaten at this time, or should we Christians be less cautious than the Massilians? The Roman emperors often banished actors from the city and prohibited their art as though it were a plague of morals. Even Domitian himself, with that depravity of life, removed the pantomimes; and for this reason also the baseness of vice is depraved, that it is rejected by its own authors, whereas virtue, on the contrary, receives praise even from enemies. When Nerva had restored them out of hatred for Domitian, at the people's demand it was sought from Trajan with no less contention that he should remove them again. Thus Pliny testifies in the* Panegyric*....*

What Plutarch relates concerning Solon in his Life is well known. Having heard a tragedy by Thespis, he said to its author, "Are you not ashamed to tell so many lies?" When he replied that it did no harm if lies were spoken in jest, Solon struck the ground with the staff by which he supported his body and said, "If these things are praised, they will involve the commonwealth in real evils; serious things will arise from jokes." Aristotle, in the last chapter of book 1 of the Politics*, where he discusses the education of boys, says: "Therefore games"—*understand, of boys*—"ought for the most part to be such as are imitations of the things which they will afterwards have to do in earnest"; and, after a few intervening words, he adds: "Therefore all obscenity of words must be exterminated from the city by the legislator. For from the liberty of speaking basely follows the doing of base things." Finally he concludes with these words: "Wherefore all base things must be removed far from boys, and especially whatsoever contains obscenity or wickedness."*

Would one who left such precepts for the education of boys send them to the theaters? Would his master Plato grant theaters to citizens, when in book 10 of the *Republic* he judges that poets, and

Homer himself, must be driven from the city? Let the great philosophers or theologians proceed, therefore—and, I shall add, let those initiated in the mysteries of antiquity proceed—and permit theaters to cities as though an honorable and by no means destructive thing, when Plato and Aristotle, endowed with that wisdom and not instructed in our morals—that is, Christian morals—denied all pleasures except honorable ones with so great a zeal.

Chapter VII — Scenic Entertainments Are Not to Be Permitted

CHAPTER VII

Scenic Entertainments Are Not to Be Permitted. Spectators Sin Mortally Either Because They Cast Themselves into the Gravest Danger of Venereal Delight, or Because They Perpetrate Grave Scandal and by Their Presence Confirm an Infamous Art. What Interpretative Consent Is, as Distinct from Express Consent

I. In chapter 15, which is the last concerning spectacles, Father Mariana besieges the spectators of theaters on either side, leaving no passage open for flight. Before reducing his adversaries to extremity, he premises a few things and dispels a little objection. I shall transcribe his words according to my custom.

II. *The greater part of the disputation undertaken has been completed; with the Divine Majesty supplying us the faculty of words and arguments, we have driven away an inveterate madness from many. The things which must be gathered together in summary and recalled to memory at this place are these. We have said that actors such as we now see in Spain, mixing base things with honorable ones for the sake of gain, are marked with infamy, and that this art, most inclined to corrupt the morals of the people, is not free from guilt.*

For, as to what the adversaries object—that the sight of an adorned and finely dressed woman would be no less harmful and would inflame desire no less than the theaters, although we do not compel her to desist and do not affirm that it would be a MORTAL matter unless she casts aside costly clothing and cosmetics—the objection is acute, but it will be easy to solve from St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae*, II-II, question 169, article 2. He affirms that adornment is indeed granted to married women so that they may please their husbands, but not to others; especially if they seek by adornment to excite another's desire, it will be a crime. But if it happens from levity of mind, they will be subject only to VENIAL sin.*

To these words of St. Thomas must be added that a woman's ADORNMENT will be MORTAL unless she desists when she knows that ruin is thereby being prepared for someone who will manifestly fall through that adornment into harmful desire, which Silvester adds under the word Adornments*, at the end of section 4. Therefore a woman's adornment is not always imputed as a crime, since it is not certain that it will be harmful to anyone, except perhaps to those who, being utterly ruined, stumble everywhere at any occasion, however slight; an upright woman ought not to care for those who rush headlong to death, having even struck a covenant with hell. In theaters, on the contrary, the ruin of many, even of the modest, will be most certain. For who would not burn amid such flames? Adornment, gestures, songs, maxims, the flute—all things inflame toward baseness and lust.* I shall add a few things.

III. What if, in private conversation, a woman finely dressed, charming, wantonly adorned, were to besiege and allure you by glances of the eyes, gestures, the bending of her whole body, the sweetness of song, and love songs? Would it be lawful for you to remain with her, to look at her, and to contemplate her without mortal guilt?

IV. I premise one or two words so that the doctrine which I shall presently transcribe from Father Mariana may be more evident. He who of his own accord subjects himself to the gravest and proximate danger of mortal guilt sins mortally, no one dissenting. Either there are no gravest and proximate dangers in the world which of their nature lead into sin, or theaters of this kind are such

dangers. But the sin which one is in danger of committing in theaters is mortal—namely, morose venereal delight, which admits no parvity of matter. Moreover, deliberate consent to this delight is twofold. One is express and, as they say, formal, when a man expressly notices that he is being impelled by venereal delight, wills it with deliberate mind, and takes pleasure in it within himself. The other consent is interpretative, when, freely and of his own accord and with no compelling cause, he chooses those things which of their nature introduce delight; for then we interpret him who wills one thing to will the other itself. Having touched upon these things, I transcribe what Father Mariana immediately adds.

V. *I add now that spectators are scarcely ever free of guilt, because of the manifest danger to which they expose themselves of inflaming the desire for venereal pleasure—at least of morose delight, in the case of those who are more modest. For what is interpretative consent if not to cast oneself into the very flame of pleasure, even if the mind should will most firmly and have a certain prejudged resolve to reject consent to the pleasure? For if anyone should be of iron breast, one who is not moved—such as I believe are found in very small numbers—he ought to consider that iron natures are mastered by the fire of luxury, as Jerome says.*

VI. Next Father Mariana attacks the spectators from the other side. Although I grant gratuitously what all the Fathers deny can scarcely, or not even scarcely, be admitted—that a spectator emerges from the theaters uncontaminated by the stain of venereal delight—they nevertheless strike against the other rock: namely, that of approving and, by their presence, fostering the mortal crimes of male actors, female actors, and other spectators. Wherefore our Author proceeds thus.

VII. *And though he may be free on this side, on the other he will not escape the guilt which is called scandal: drawing others by his example into danger and sin. This must especially fall upon grave men because of their authority and profession; and princes, especially bishops from Sacred Orders, are entangled in a guilt the greater in proportion when, giving themselves to this vanity, they even call mercenary actors to their houses. However much they excuse themselves on the ground that nothing obscene is done before them, the people, ignorant of this, are drawn to the theaters by the example of their leader, with no distinction between honorable and base things. It is accounted a kind of obedience to imitate the pursuits of princes; and in every part of life examples move more than words.*

VIII. Let princes and kings consider these things. *For*, says the most learned Father Mariana, *there is no excuse in the claim that no obscenity occurs in their courts. The people at least know that comedies and tragedies of male and female mimes are represented there, and indeed by the artistry of those more excellent in this art; and they perceive no distinction between what is base and what is honorable. They recognize the deed by which they are incited to corruption; they do not know the quality of the deed. Yet, if the matter is seriously weighed, nothing there smells of obscenity and of crude, impure, and sordid baseness in voice, gesture, and movement; whether something illicit, refined, painted, and splendid, which penetrates more deeply, reigns there, let the wise judge. Are there not more distinguished and learned male and female mimes there? Is there not music more modulated and harmony sweeter? Are there not dramas of more celebrated poets, mixed with little tales and the trifles of love? Are there not the profane plots of tragedies? What shall I say of the majesty of the scenes, of the most brilliant apparatus, of the pomp, splendor, luxury of the seated spectators, and of the other allurements which shine more brightly here than elsewhere?* But the most learned Father Mariana has said enough and more than enough, without any need for me to amplify this argument more fully.

IX. With these things established in this manner, before the remaining matters are gathered together, a grave and difficult question remains for us: whether princes ought to tolerate these entertainments,

though vain and base, for the recreation of the multitude, so that, refreshed by such a spectacle, artisans, craftsmen, and farmers may resume with greater spirit the labors by which the commonwealth is sustained, just as brothels are everywhere allowed to men of the lowest condition lest they undertake greater crimes.... Arguments are available on both sides, and I myself would not regard it as a matter of great consequence whichever way we think. For I did not hope that by our disputation an evil could be utterly torn up which, as I see, has put down deep roots, with many eminent men also from the number of those who sit at the helm of the commonwealth—which is the gravest plague—possessed by the vain persuasion that entertainments of this kind must be given to the people.

I shall have enough if those whose salvation is a care to them are admonished by our labor that this entertainment is harmful and is not sought without danger to the soul. For perhaps, once the matter is known, some will privately cease, and prudent magistrates will publicly reject that baseness, judging the salvation of many more important than an empty pleasure. For my mind was inclined to judge, with many others—Caelius Rhodiginus, book 8, chapter 7; Petrus Gregorius, in the *Syntagma of Law*, part 3, book 19, chapter 25; and others—that it would benefit the commonwealth if actors for hire were wholly removed. For they know every path to money, and for the sake of money they undertake every baseness and instill it in others. By their mercenary art they drain away money and, while the senses are as though lulled by pleasure, secretly extort—

money, which they consume with no less baseness. They make citizens grow torpid in idleness and sloth, which is the root of all vices. They prepare the way for all vices and frauds, especially for lust, which is taken in through the ears and eyes. On feast days they diminish divine worship, when time ought to be given to divine things, by drawing the people to spectacles - a plague which seemed worthy of expiation by every sacrifice.

But if we do not obtain the complete removal of scenic entertainments, and nevertheless it pleases men to give this recreation to the peoples, which force and equity seem to demand, we certainly desire to obtain some selection, so that an indiscriminate license to do anything whatsoever may not be granted to actors, but that they be circumscribed by fixed laws and limits, limits which no one may transgress with impunity. Yet I thought that this madness could not be sufficiently restrained by any laws.... Let the people understand absolutely that actors, whom I do not think can be contained on every side so that they abstain from baseness, are not approved by the commonwealth, but are granted by the magistrate for the recreation and importunate demand of the people; for since he cannot obtain the things which are better, he must tolerate lesser evils.

X. In reality actors cannot restrain themselves from obscenity. What? They represent obscene plots, every one of the poets' little tales stained either with venereal filth and mingled with the frauds of male and female lovers, or stained with anger, savagery, cruelty, ambition, treachery, and poison. They represent all these things joined with their little mistresses - namely, shameless little women - and will they restrain themselves from obscenity? These are monsters and most splendid chimeras.

Let the people understand, therefore, that princes permit these spectacles as they do brothels, so that greater evils may be avoided. But just as it does not follow from the toleration of prostitutes that acts of fornication are lawful for Christians, so no one can rightly gather from the permission of theaters that the base comedies and tragedies - as are all those now recited in public theaters through the assistance and appearance of male and female mimes, or little prostitutes - will be lawful.

Second Appendix — On the Spectacle of Bullfighting and the Sacred Representations Customarily Performed in Spain

SECOND APPENDIX

On the Spectacle of Bullfighting and the Sacred Representations Customarily Performed in Spain

Chapter I — Whether the Bullfighting Customarily Practiced in Spain Is Lawful

CHAPTER I

Whether the Bullfighting Customarily Practiced in Spain Is Lawful

I. Father Mariana, in chapter 16, discusses with his customary great learning whether the permission of prostitutes is expedient, and assails it with invincible and sufficiently ample arguments; he treats more matters pertaining to this in chapters 17 and 18. Then in chapter 19 he relates the origin of bullfighting, and in chapter 20 he finally examines whether this fighting, as it exists in Spain, is lawful. The decision of that dispute depends solely upon the quality of the fact. Four pontifical documents - those of St. Pius V, Gregory XIII, Sixtus V, and Clement VIII - prove that it was stained with guilt. But because this fighting can in the course of time be moderated and circumscribed within just limits, it cannot immediately and legitimately be inferred from those pontifical documents that in our age the aforesaid spectacle is vicious and full of guilt, since it may have been restrained within proper bounds. No one can decide this controversy better than our Author, since he himself is a Spaniard. From him I shall taste a few things which settle the matter.

II. And first, as regards its origin, it is certain that it flowed from superstition. *It was the custom of the Romans,* says Mariana in chapter 19, *to slaughter slaves at the funerals of the dead, as though by another's evil they might lighten their own grief. Gladiators purchased for a price were substituted for so monstrous a custom; fighting at the funeral of the dead, they appeased the shades with their own blood. Finally wild beasts were added, with which men contended and exhibited a cruel spectacle; these were called hunts. Hence the Taurian games, which were given in the Circus Flaminius, as Varro testifies in book 4, arose from the impious worship of the gods no less than the others. Superstition had so far driven men mad that they placed pleasure in the shedding of human blood. Constantine abolished the gladiators, and Arcadius and Honorius completely suppressed the custom when it had been renewed through the negligence of other princes. The Taurian games also ceased, or the fighting of men with bulls.*

This custom, however, Mariana continues, *was either never abolished in Spain, or after an interval was resumed among our nation, because it is especially devoted to spectacles. Add that in Spain there are extremely fierce bulls, their ferocity increased by the aridity of the places and the nature of the pasture.*

Thus the very thing which ought most to deter men, lest they become savage, more vehemently inflames a nation ready for arms and of restless disposition to seek bullfighting passionately, to such a degree that the fiercer the bulls are and the more men they kill, the greater pleasure the sport produces. Having indicated in a few words the origin of bullfighting, I proceed to the principal matter.

III. The Fathers and the graver theologians have execrated this bullfighting as savage, cruel, and hateful to humanity. Cassiodorus teaches these things in book 5, letter 42: *A detestable act, an unhappy contest, to wish to contend with wild beasts which a man does not doubt he will find stronger than himself. There is therefore presumption only in deceiving, a single consolation in deception. He who may not deserve to escape the wild beast will sometimes be unable even to find burial. While the man still survives, the body perishes; and before it is made a corpse, it is cruelly consumed. The Athenians first brought this cruel sport, bloody pleasure, impious religion, and human savagery into the cultivation of their city. Men go, therefore, to such things as humanity ought to flee.*

IV. St. Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of Valencia, detests the cruel custom and rebukes his Spaniards, the devotees of a savage spectacle, for their blindness, in sermon 2 on St. John the Baptist, in these words: *Surely, who would abolish that bestial and diabolical custom of our Spain of goading bulls? What is more bestial than to provoke a brute so that it may mangle men? O dreadful spectacle! O most cruel sport! You see a Christian brother suddenly mangled by a beast and deprived not only of bodily life but also of the life of the soul, and you delight and take pleasure in it? With what zeal did the holy Doctors labor to remove atrocious and obscene spectacles from the Church? This has been done: Spain alone has preserved this rite of the Gentiles to the loss of souls. And there is no one to rebuke and prohibit it.*

But I, although I know that it will not profit, shall do what I ought, so that I may free my soul. Therefore I denounce to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that all of you who do this, or consent to it, or do not prohibit it when you can, not only sin mortally but are murderers. Nor are you alone; the spectators also are not altogether safe from mortal sin, although I do not dare to condemn them.

V. The Spanish theologians dispute on either side whether this bullfighting is lawful. Father Mariana, in chapter 20, reports the arguments of both sides. Those who say that this fighting is stained with guilt prove it from chapter 1, *On Tournaments*, where the Lateran Council prohibited knights from meeting to display their strength, because from this there often resulted the deaths of men and even of souls. This death of men occurs in the same manner in goading fierce bulls, as manifest experience establishes. Moreover, the Sixth General Synod, canon 51, just as it prohibited the spectacles of mimes, also severely prohibited the most savage corruption of hunts, such as bullfighting. For it is the same thing to fight with a lion as with a bull, and it makes no difference, says Cardinal Torquemada on chapter 18, *On Hunters*, distinction 86, whether the beast with which one must fight is armed with teeth or with a horn and strikes with it, since an equal danger threatens on either side.

The First Council of Arles, canon 4, established these things against the fighters: *It was resolved that they be separated from Communion for as long as they engage in the fighting*. The Second Council of Arles established the same in canon 20. By fighters are understood those who fought with beasts and who were also called hunters.

VI. Nor is it a reply to say that whoever perishes, perishes through his own rashness, since no one is compelled to enter such a conflict with beasts. For everyone also goes voluntarily to an obscene comedy, and they are not therefore free of guilt. Nor do the Fathers, especially Cyprian, condemn the ancient Romans any less because, in costly clothing and the vigor of age, they exposed themselves to wild beasts and rushed into voluntary death.

If an ox had struck someone with its horn, it was ordered to be killed, Exodus chapter 21; and the owner was subject to the same penalty if, having been warned that the ox was accustomed to gore, he had not guarded it. How much more severely, then, do those deserve to be punished who bring a raging bull into the middle of a multitude, a bull which then, says Father Mariana, gives the greatest pleasure when it lays more men upon the ground? Thus at Cuenca, which is a noble city among the Celtiberians, a bull which had killed seven men was consecrated to immortality, an image of the deed expressed in a painting in a public place - a monument of madness and inhumanity. Nor can these things be said to happen by accident, since they occur frequently. Several crimes then follow such a spectacle: ostentation from the display of clothing and ambitious adornment; luxury from banquets more lavish than is right and from the promiscuous assembly of women and men; anger and inhumanity from the sight of the bloody conflict.

VII. On the other side they object the custom of Spain drawn from ancient times, which, although sometimes interrupted, repeatedly restored, flourishes through the care of the magistrates. They add theologians who defend a spectacle of this kind as lawful, such as Joannes Medina, *On Restitution*, question 21; Bartholomaeus Medina, book 1, chapter 14, section 28; and Navarrus in the *Manual*, chapter 15, number 18.

VIII. This controversy is not of such importance that it requires a longer disputation. For if this bullfighting is conducted with such caution as removes the danger that deaths and mutilations of men may follow, it is lawful and free of guilt; but if, on the contrary, it has that danger joined to it, no one can deny that it is unlawful and vicious. As to the fact, however - namely, whether this bullfighting is cautious, moderate, and free of every grave danger - only those who are present can determine it.

Four pontifical documents prove that in past times a conflict of this kind was not restrained within the proper bounds of moderation. In 1567 St. Pius V, by his Constitution beginning *Pius, Bishop, etc., Concerning the Safety of the Lord's Flock, etc.*, under penalty of excommunication prohibited all princes and kings from permitting these bloody and base spectacles of demons to be held. He inflicted the same penalty upon all who fought with wild beasts, whether on foot or on horseback, and deprived those who died there of ecclesiastical burial. He also subjected to the same penalty of excommunication all ecclesiastics, both Regular and Secular, constituted in Sacred Orders or possessing ecclesiastical benefices, who were present at spectacles of this kind.

Then in 1575 Gregory XIII, by his document beginning *Gregory, Pope, etc.; It Has Been Set Forth to Us, etc.*, removed the excommunication and other ecclesiastical penalties only as regards laymen and knightly brothers, provided that the said knights had not been initiated into Sacred Orders. But because some theologians of Salamanca and professors of civil law defended by voice and writing that it was lawful to attend spectacles of this kind, Sixtus V in 1586, by his document beginning *To the Venerable Brother, the Bishop of Salamanca, etc.*, confirmed the Constitutions of Pius V and Gregory XIII.

Finally, in 1596 Clement VIII, at the urging of the King of Spain, who had caused it to be represented that the penalties imposed by the preceding pontiffs had hitherto profited nothing, but that very many had fallen under them and graver evils than before had flowed forth, abolished those censures. Yet he left subject to them monks, Mendicant Friars, and the others of every Regular institute and order. The Supreme Pontiff nevertheless commanded that bullfights be restrained with such diligence and moderation that deaths of men would not result from them.

Father Mariana, who presents these four pontifical documents entire, adds these things: *Not even in this document* - that of Clement VIII - *is anything determined concerning the condition of the sport, whether it is to be numbered among honorable or unlawful things. The decision of that question is left to be judged from the very nature of the matter and from the other conditions which were produced above.* Then he concludes: *And I do not even see greater diligence being applied at this time to prevent anyone's death from following in the fighting, as the Pontiff commanded, than was customary fifty years ago.*

IX. From this it is gathered how chimerical is the plan of those who propose that spectacles full of pleasure and wantonness should be corrected, not abolished, when spectacles which are cruel, bloody, and contrary to humanity itself can scarcely be corrected. For things which are nourishment

for human affections or passions are more easily taken away than restrained within the bounds of honor.

For who are those who meet with beasts? Men who are themselves bestial, swollen with pride and savagery, who, in order to give spectators a display of their strength, courage, and bodily agility, cast off every bridle of moderation and throw themselves into dangers of death like men drunk with fury and mad. In several cities of Italy bulls are goaded while confined by a long rope, every danger being removed. But who could hope that such caution would be employed in Spain? The bulls are fiercer, and the nation is prepossessed by ancient custom and manners: if the bullfighters were to goad bulls as in Italy, they would fear that, although they ought to furnish proofs of their courage, swiftness, dexterity, and rashness, they would become an object of reproach and mockery to the spectators, not of applause and admiration. Consequently no moderation can be hoped for among them.

Wherefore either savage and bloody spectacles of this kind must be abolished - something which it is scarcely lawful to desire, much less to hope - or all who hold their eternal salvation more important than a cruel and most foolish pleasure must abstain completely from spectacles of this kind. If confessors fulfilled their duties by denying absolution to all who attend such spectacles, either the spectacles would immediately cease or the number of spectators would be diminished. For many Christians sin because of the most grave negligence and in no way excusable ignorance of confessors.

X. Father Mariana therefore teaches that the aforesaid spectacles of bulls must be abolished, saying in chapter 20: *The custom received in Spain and confirmed by long time does not move us to withdraw from our opinion. In every nation many crimes are neglected, especially if there are patrons, deceitful men under a painted appearance of reason - theologians whose frequent liberty of pronouncing, and the desire of some to please the people, we all know. And it is wretched that we cannot deny what it is shameful to confess, which is the great calamity of our order: that there is nothing so absurd that it is not defended by some theologian.*

For sufficient provision is not made for the dangers of individuals by the voice of a herald, and perhaps not even in this manner can it be brought about that killings and wounds do not follow amid so great a rashness of the populace, as Gregorius Lopez affirms on law 57, title 5, and finally chapter 25. He concludes: *Therefore we condemn the whole apparatus of the stage, the arts and baseness of actors; we affirm that it is unlawful to bring bulls into the arena, a foul and cruel spectacle; we decree that prostitutes, a corruption of tender age, must be removed. This is our judgment, and our opinion will stand forever.*

Therefore with as great a voice as I can I proclaim and denounce: let baseness and disgrace depart; let corruptions of morals be removed. Let us have no commerce with the theater, none with the circus, none with the foulness of a brothel, as a nation born for holiness and directed by so many safeguards toward every uprightness. Let them burst if they will - whoever, striving to commend themselves to the people, wish these and similar recreations to be granted to the people, clothed with arguments not sufficiently suitable.

XI. Finally, in the last part of the disputation, after transcribing the spectacles of Tertullian which are offered to the Christian people for contemplation, he makes an end in this manner: *Lest we appear excessively severe and rigid, and no one should contend that our morals are equal to the ancient discipline, we shall give other recreations, but neither obscene nor harmful.*

Let horsemen and foot soldiers meet one another in a playful contest after the manner of a just battle, individuals against individuals or in a formed battle line. Let young men contend in running, wrestling, and throwing, with prizes also proposed for the victors to kindle the contest. From horseback let them cast missiles at one another after

the manner of a Moorish battle, in which one part of the line first runs forward with great force and, after reeds in the likeness of javelins have been hurled at the adversaries, retreats and yields to the pressing adversaries, whom the other part of the line, left as though in reserve, receives; others do the same from the opposite side. Let the sport continue in this manner. All these are imitations and images of wars, suitable for exercising the strength of the body and acquiring dexterity.

Nor will it be less useful to establish a contest in skill with the bow, or, with balls shot from an iron tube bursting forth flame in the manner of lightning, to contend at a proposed target, a prize being assigned to him who first takes aim; we know that this is done in other nations with public advantage and the greatest fruit. Let dances in the Spanish manner be added, with the pipe and drum regulating their sound by the beat of feet. Let any other things be added which human sagacity and industry can devise for the recreation of the people, provided that they abstain from baseness and savagery, as befits Christian morals. Let there be nothing obscene which might excite the sting of lust, nothing cruel which might be abhorrent to Christian piety.

But I know the obstinacy of depraved men: we shall never obtain that, abandoning foulness, they follow better counsels and salutary precepts. Blinded by an induced darkness of evils, they are blind and lie in the deepest shadows. They will more readily drink deadly poison than obey those who admonish them rightly. What then? Shall we lose our labor? By no means. For if we shall not be able to hold them back from the death toward which they rush with great force, or to recall them from error to the true way, from darkness to light, because they themselves have stopped their ears, we shall nevertheless strengthen others whose opinion is not so stable in evil or founded and fixed by solid roots, lest they knowingly gorge themselves upon pleasures, or pollute with obscene and foul spectacles souls born for holiness, and, knowing and prudent, exchange for eternal torments the immortality proposed by God to the true worshipers of piety. If it should happen that at least some, aroused by our labor, become more cautious, we shall judge that our effort was not uselessly expended.

Chapter II — How Shameful It Is to Introduce Theatrical Singers into the Temples of God

CHAPTER II

How Shameful It Is to Introduce Theatrical Singers into the Temples of God. To Represent the Deeds of the Saints in Theaters by the Art of Actors Is a Sacrilegious Profanation

I. They report that in Spain a custom, established over a long time and confirmed by the consent of the multitude, prevails whereby they are accustomed to celebrate the more solemn feasts with the representation of comedies. I could scarcely bring myself to believe that an illustrious nation which, free from the plague of heresies, preserved and vindicated the doctrines of Christ intact through an uninterrupted series of centuries; which has always abounded above others in men most excellent in holiness and learning, and day by day overflows through the singular mercy of God, could rashly violate and pollute the most pure holiness of the Christian religion by the profane representation of comedians. And yet the matter is almost so, as the books published there attest.

II. Father Mariana, in chapter 7, aggravates with grave discourse the wickedness and disgrace inflicted upon the Saints when their deeds are represented by the mouths and gestures of comedians. He relates that Aristides the Sophist rebuked the Smyrnaeans because they celebrated the feasts of the gods with comedies. St. Augustine, in book 2 of *The City of God*, chapter 13, mocks the ancient Romans because they marked actors with infamy and celebrated the worship of the gods through their mimetic representations:

Let it be answered me, says Augustine, *by what consistent reasoning theatrical men are driven from every honor and scenic entertainments are mingled with the honors of the gods? Roman virtue for a long time did not know those theatrical arts; and although they were sought for the delight of human pleasure and crept in through the vice of human morals, the gods demanded that they be exhibited to themselves. How, therefore, is the actor cast aside through whom a god is worshiped? And with what effrontery is the performer marked with the infamy of theatrical baseness, if the one who exacts it is adored?*

Tacitus, in book 14, reports that the Romans themselves recognized this profanation of religion and prohibited actors from the temples, saying: *And no slight passions of the populace blazed up, because, although the pantomimes had been restored to the stage, they were prohibited from the sacred contests.* With what effrontery, therefore, Father Mariana cries out, are musical actors brought from public and profane theaters into the temples of Christ, so that through them the holy joy of the feasts may be increased? What of the fact that ecclesiastical laws have declared emasculated comedians unworthy of Sacred Orders, distinction 33, canon *Maritum?* And will divine worship be made illustrious by the work of the same men who are repelled from Sacred Orders as though darkened by the mark of infamy? Who does not see that this custom will be destructive to the holiness of religion, will bring the greatest disgrace upon the Catholic commonwealth, and an incredible insult upon the dignity of the Christian name? How many scandals arise from this? How great a profanation of temples, how great a contempt of the Divine Majesty?

Christians turn their backs upon the sacramental Host and the divine presence so that they may listen more freely to emasculated comedians, applaud them, and with sacrilegious temerity transform

the most sacred temple into theatrical dancing. Such a depth of darkness and most deadly blindness has been reached that so great a sacrilege has passed into custom, and the most shameless actors are hired with a vast quantity of gold to pollute the praises of God.

III. The most wise Pontiff Benedict XIV, in his Encyclical Letter issued in 1749 for the holy celebration of the Jubilee Year, writes among other things: *There is no one, however, who does not condemn theatrical song in churches and who does not require a great difference between ecclesiastical song and that of the stage*. What, then, is theatrical and scenic song? It is that which is produced by mimes and by emasculated men marked with the brand of infamy. Therefore, if, by the determination of the Supreme Pontiff, there is no one who does not condemn and detest scenic song of this kind in churches, with what confidence are theatrical musicians brought from the stages into the churches? For they disfigure the majesty of the divine praises and pollute the holiness of heavenly doctrine; they excite neither piety, nor spiritual devotion, nor purity of soul, but provoke and inflame their hearers to softness, impure love, and carnal pleasure. Whoever desires more upon this matter may consult the commentary on the Holy Pontifical Letter published by the learned Pietro Pompilio Rodota.

IV. But what shall I say of the other incredible sacrilege, whereby the deeds of Saints Peter, Francis, Dominic, and Magdalene, and the most holy Passion of Christ Himself, are exhibited in public theaters by the art of male and female mimes? Had I not myself read entire volumes printed in the Spanish language and composed of comedies and tragedies of this kind, I could never have been brought to believe so portentous a monster. Into the histories of the Saints there are mixed the basest interludes, performed by mimes and pantomimes with the most obscene gesticulations, most apt to promote laughter, lust, and every kind of crime. When I consider that these things are done in Spain, I am affected with a more bitter grief because I regard that illustrious and most celebrated nation with greater respect and veneration. What, I ask, does it profit sharply to defend Catholic dogmas, which enlighten the mind, if the foundations and commandments of morals and holiness, which preserve the integrity of souls, are utterly undermined? If religion itself is brought into derision and mockery?

If you ask me which of the two crimes is more enormous and detestable, profane or sacred comedies, I would rather that the profane comedies and tragedies of Cleopatra, Semiramis, Sophonisba, and the like be acted by players than that the sacred histories of the Saints be profaned upon the stage by the same men, with the utmost disgrace and through their most foul mouths.

And, to touch upon the matter in a few words, toward what do sacred comedies of this kind—that is, sacrilegious ones—tend? That worship may be offered to God and His Saints? But worship offered to God and His Saints contrary to the rite of the Church is superstitious. That the hearers may be excited to devotion and piety? Will theaters, which by the consent of all the Fathers are gymnasia of Venus and dwellings of demons, be temples in which Christians are made holy? But in fact, you say, many shed tears while they contemplate spectacles of this kind. Drunken men also often weep. Those tears are the fruit of a more tender and weaker nature, not of a comic representation. Will female mimes of abandoned modesty and the basest male actors teach chastity and uprightness to their hearers from the stage? Or, finally, do those sacred representations tend to make their hearers cheerful, refreshed, and festive? This is the gravest of all perversities. What? Shall the most holy Passion of Christ and the heroic deeds of the Saints in penance, chastity, and meditation upon heavenly things be subjects of laughter, recreation, and pleasure?

Holy men left no stone unturned to exterminate male and female mimes, to destroy theaters and stages, and to remove every occasion of baseness and obscenity. And a time has arrived in which the most pious deeds of the Saints themselves come forth upon the stage in the theaters execrated by those very Saints, and are made material for vanity, theatrical recreation, and carnal pleasure, to be represented by the mouths of actors, mingled with the most obscene ludicrous acts. The perversity of this superstitious profanation surpasses all belief and exceeds the whole power of eloquence.

But why do we carry the matter further? Our efforts are vain and our labors barren unless the assistance of confessors is added. The ministers of God who are confessors and counselors to magistrates, princes, and kings are able to cure so sacrilegious a corruption. It is theirs to suggest to the supreme powers that they free the Christian religion and their own nation from so shameful a disgrace. It is theirs to bar the spectators from the Sacraments unless they abstain from fostering so great a perversity by their own presence. But, what cannot be sufficiently deplored, we see the saying of St. Charles Borromeo confirmed only too greatly: namely, that through the negligence, ignorance, and human respect of confessors, corruptions, abuses, and crimes rage everywhere in almost every art, profession, and state of life.

Second Dissertation — Against the Spectacles Represented in Certain Cloisters of Regulars during Carnival

SECOND DISSERTATION

Against the Spectacles Customarily Represented in Certain Cloisters of Regulars during Carnival

PREFACE

I foresee that greater disturbances will certainly be stirred up against this Dissertation than against the preceding one, because I attack the corruption and morals of those whose office it is to interpret the divine laws, to exterminate vices, to cure the infirm, and to recall offenders to the path of virtue. Why, some object—pleading the cause of their own morals—do you bring the comedies and abuses of certain Regulars into the open and expose them to public view? Why do you thrust stumbling blocks into Christian ears? Writings of this kind produce scandals, and indeed grave ones; they cause the derision and contempt of Religious men, not correction and profit. To be sure, whenever the Holy Fathers inveighed against the crimes either of Christians or of clerics, they immediately suffered the curses of wicked men.

I know, says St. Jerome in his letter to the monk Rusticus, *that very many will be offended, who take a general discussion of vices as an insult to themselves; and while they are angry with me, they reveal their own conscience and judge far worse of themselves than of me.... It belongs to discreet men and prudent women to conceal —indeed, to amend—what they recognize in themselves, to be indignant more at themselves than at me, and not to heap curses upon an admonisher.*

St. Bernard writes very many things upon this matter in his *Apology to William*: *I must be thought to dispute not against the Order, but for the Order. I rebuke not the Order in men, but the vices of men. And I certainly do not fear that in this matter I shall be troublesome to those who love the Order.... But if I displease any, they thereby make it manifest that they do not love the Order, since they are unwilling that its corruption and vices should be condemned.*

If the things which I have undertaken to condemn lay hidden within the cloisters, they would be pressed down in deep silence. But they resound through streets and squares, are carried about in everyone's mouth, and are condemned. I therefore admonish Religious men most humbly and beseech them with earnest prayers to reflect more deeply that they are intercessors with God for the people, and priests who immolate the unbloody Sacrifice in order to make the Divine Majesty, inflamed with a just wrath, placable, and His mercy propitious toward the faithful, from whom, for this end, they have received and day by day continue to receive both daily alms and the goods by which they are sustained. Yet when, within those very sacred cloisters, they themselves erect theaters and open stages, and, having put off their sacred garments and assumed the profane garments of male and female mimes, recite amorous dramas and woodland fables, they are no longer advocates and intercessors for the people before God, but sources of perfidy and impiety: they kindle the anger and wrath of God both against themselves and against the people, and provoke and irritate His vengeance, which must be feared.

What more? At that very season of the Bacchanalia, when demons with all their strength wage a general war against the Gospel of Christ, they drive the Christian people more powerfully toward the

aforesaid corruptions, although they ought to draw them back from the path of iniquity by the example of pious works, by evangelical exhortations, and by the fervor of prayers. For worldly men truly speak among themselves in this manner: With what face do today's preachers and the few confessors forbid theaters, dances, and comedies to us, if within their own cloisters they themselves, adorned, curled, and ringleted in the most vain garments of little women, act comedies, represent the characters of male and female lovers, treat the business of love and concupiscence, and sometimes do so more shamelessly and obscenely than the male and female mimes of the world? Who, therefore, does not see that this theatrical corruption, raging in certain cloisters, gives birth to a vast calamity of evils, intercepts the fruit of the divine Word, takes away the force of preachers' exhortations, and introduces most deadly scandals into the Church of Christ? Wherefore the charity of Jesus Christ, the honor of the sacred Orders which must be preserved, and the reputation of the Catholic religion which must be defended from the calumnies of heretics urge and impel us, according to our measure and slender ability, to counsel that ruinous comedies and profane theaters be removed and utterly exterminated from the cloisters of Regulars.

Chapter I — Regulars Who Put Off the Habit of Their Own Religion and Put On Lay or Theatrical Garments in Order to Represent Profane Comedies in Their Monasteries Sin Mortally

CHAPTER I

Regulars Who Put Off the Habit of Their Own Religion and Put On Lay or Theatrical Garments in Order to Represent Profane Comedies in Their Monasteries Sin Mortally. Superiors Who Permit This, or Do Not Prevent It with All Their Strength, Sin More Gravely, No Excuse Availing Them

I. That I may close every loophole in advance, I am now speaking of that corrupt custom which creeps through certain monasteries. It is of this kind: during Carnival certain Regulars represent in their own monasteries the very comedies which actors perform in public—

—theaters, or others very similar to them. They themselves erect theaters and stages and obtain from lay people garments suited to theatrical actions—male and female garments, according as the diversity of the performers demands. They consume three or four hours, more or less, in their fictions. Some admit friends or other secular persons to watch; others, belonging to a stricter institute, exclude everyone. This is the custom which prevails among certain cenobites, and this is the custom which we undertake to dispute. I shall speak below of sacred representations or of some private playful action. For clarity, I divide the disputation into eight chapters. In this one I shall examine only the change of garments; in the following one, the theatrical action itself. Thereafter I shall dissolve the sophisms.

II. The distinction between the stripping off of the monastic habit and its rash dismissal is familiar among theologians. They call it stripping off when a monk wishes to do something necessary or suitable for him which he can scarcely perform in the habit, and therefore, moved by a reasonable cause, lays aside the habit in order to sleep, to labor, to withdraw his own life from grave danger, or to exercise offices of charity toward his neighbor. But they call that dismissal rash which is made without a reasonable cause and which by its own nature is an occasion suited to wandering. *For those things*, says St. Thomas, II-II, question 53, article 3, reply to objection 2, *are said to be done rashly which are not ruled by reason*. On this there is no disagreement among theologians. Hence they commonly acknowledge that all Regulars sin mortally and incur excommunication when, having put off the garments of their own religion, they assume masks so that they may more freely run through the streets and attend theaters, since no reasonable ground for going about in this manner is present.

III. Whether Regulars perpetrate the same guilt and contract the penalty of excommunication when they rashly dismiss the habit within their own monasteries is not a matter of one opinion among theologians; rather, they dispute on both sides. The occasion of their controversy is the canon *That the Dangerous Occasion of Wandering Be Removed*. There is no occasion of wandering, say not a few theologians, among whom is Passerinus, volume 3, question 189, number 323, when the habit is laid aside within the monastery; therefore the law is not violated and, consequently, the penalty of excommunication has no place, especially because penal laws must be restricted. On the contrary, several others maintain that the canon also includes this case, namely the rash dismissal of the habit within the cloister. I am pleased to transcribe here what Thomas Sanchez teaches, book 6 of the *Summa*, chapter 8, number 61, page 119:

Second conclusion. It is enough that a Religious rashly lay aside the habit within the private walls of the monastery for him to be subjected to this excommunication, because the text requires only the dismissal of the habit, and those words, "In schools and elsewhere," are general. And although that Religious does not actually wander, that dismissal nevertheless brings with it the power of wandering, which the text forbade under that penalty. Thus teach Probus in the passage previously cited; Sylvester, word "Excommunication," part 9, case 24, question 5, number 53, notable 3; Tabiena, word "Excommunication," 5, case 23, question 1, number 2; Navarrus, Summa*, chapter 27, number 131; Sayrus, chapter 33, number 21; and Azorius, book 12, chapter 17, question 15, who adds that this is especially true when, stripped of the habit in the monastery and having assumed another, he is visible to the eyes of secular persons or exposes himself to them—as though he held the same thing when this does not occur.*

IV. Thomas Sanchez cannot fall under suspicion of excessive severity. It must be added that the cited authors teach that Regulars are subject to excommunication when they dismiss the habit even within the monastery, especially when they display themselves to be seen by the eyes of lay people. What, then, would they say of Regulars dressed in theatrical garments and exposing themselves upon the stage to be seen by secular persons? In this circumstance I would judge that the opinion of Sanchez and the others would be attacked by none of the theologians. And scarcely do the casuists themselves, with the exception of one or another, dare to teach the opposite, as we shall say below. Let it suffice now to add two other theologians of the greatest gravity.

The first is Paolo Comitolo, truly worthy to be called a theologian. In book 6 of his *Moral Responses*, question 8, he demonstrates at length that monks sin mortally and are excommunicated when they put off the habit in order to assume a mask. I shall transfer some things here: *I answer that which I have always professed, both in my public schools and in private responses: that all clerics initiated into Sacred Orders, and all who have professed an approved religious institute, by transforming the sacred habit which they ought to preserve into that of players, mimes, and Luperci, contract guilt worthy of eternal punishment, and that professed Religious are entangled in the censure of excommunication.... Angelus believes that the sentence of excommunication does not pertain to him who should be without the habit inside the monastery; Rosella and the common opinion contradict him in this matter. Let this therefore remain: BY THE COMMON CONSENT OF THE DOCTORS, a monk who casts away the habit for the sake of masks or bacchanals is excommunicated.*

Jacobus de Graffiis, *Decisions of Cases of Conscience Concerning Regulars*, book 3, chapter 5, number 77, writes: *Fourth: a Religious, by putting off or concealing the habit for a masked sport, even within the monastery, sins mortally—as when he uses a woman's garment, or another which is a cause of lasciviousness. Hence Rabanus says that it is against nature for a man to do womanly things. Likewise, because a mask is a garment of the devil—the text in the canon* Fucare*, On Consecration, distinction 5, is relevant—and the* Golden Candelabrum*, appendix, chapter 18, testifies that such use was invented by the devil. Likewise also because of the many improprieties and mortal sins which are accustomed to occur among those assisting a person to put on such a woman's garment, when these garments are borrowed from women, from the inspection of the games, and from scurrilous words—*

—which provoke levity, as well as from the memory of past things. Hence, if anyone knowingly exposes himself to the probable danger of falling into mortal sin in thought, word, or deed, he sins mortally.... Likewise also because scandal must be avoided: for although such a game be performed in a monastery, there are nevertheless always lay people present who are scandalized and say, "Where is the dignity of clerics?"... And although lay people should be absent, there are nevertheless always Religious men who fear God and who are scandalized.

V. But however the matter may stand concerning this opinion, which renders Regulars who rashly dismiss the habit within monasteries subject to the penalty of excommunication, we, treating the matter more closely, recall the case to that which is certain among all true theologians. Thus, although it may be called into dispute whether Regulars who are masked and act in their monasteries incur excommunication, we judge it to be placed beyond the hazard of dispute that they sin when they dismiss the habit rashly, that is, without a reasonable cause. Sylvester establishes this as a most certain principle under the word "Excommunication," part 9, case 24, in these words: *Secondly, note that the habit is never dismissed by a professed Religious without a reasonable cause without his sinning, because it is so annexed to the duties of monks that, in whatever place they are, etc.* And, as I have said, all acknowledge this. This sin is mortal or venial according to the various circumstances. It can become venial from levity, lack of consideration, and brevity of time. In the case set forth in our opinion, however, it is always a mortal and most grave sin.

And indeed it is so under a twofold title: first, because, having dismissed the sacred habit, they put on male lay garments; second, because they put on women's garments. For when they become theatrical actors, one sustains the part of a prince, another of a queen, another of a bridegroom, another of a bride; one, of a male servant; another, of a maidservant; this one, of a male lover; that one, of a mistress. And, to begin with the first point, Regulars about to represent comedies acquire exquisite and costly male garments which savor of pomp and vanity. This change of garments, even apart from the laws which forbid monks to lay aside the sacred habit without a just cause, by its own nature manifests a disturbance of order. For what is more deformed to right reason and sound sense than to see tonsured and Mendicant brothers wearing false, blond, powdered hair and dressed in silk? What is more monstrous than for those very men who, by the force of their profession, are bound to wear rough woolen garments to put on golden and silver cloths and the vainest worldly ornaments? This certainly, apart from any law, presents a deformity. Add, moreover, the constitutions of each Order, which command the habit to be worn openly, especially when Religious present themselves to be seen by the eyes of secular persons. There is no trace or vestige from which it may prudently be presumed that the aforesaid laws permit Religious to exchange the sacred garment for a theatrical garment, much less for a merely lay one.

VI. But let us come to the other point, which is the principal one and of the greatest weight. Regular actors frequently put on not only the lay garments of men but also the garments of women. This, moreover, is hateful and abominable to God, as is stated in Deuteronomy 22:5: *A woman shall not be clothed in a man's garment, nor shall a man use a woman's garment; for he who does these things is abominable before God.* Interpreting this text in his letter to Irenaeus, St. Ambrose assigns four causes of the abomination. *First,* he says, *why, O man, are you unwilling to appear as you were born? Why do you assume an appearance alien to yourself? Why do you falsely represent a woman, or you, woman, a man? Nature clothes each sex in its own garments.... Second, even among birds there is a proper comparison in respect of clothing between them and men. For in birds the natural garments themselves distinguish the sex.... The cock certainly has one habit and the hen another. Do they change their appearance? Why do we desire to change ours? Third, a lie is base even in a word, much more in a garment.... Fourth, chastity is rightly not preserved there where the distinction of sex is not maintained.* Whence there follows: *For he who does these things is abominable before God.*

VII. St. Thomas, I-II, question 102, article 6, reply to objection 6, bringing the text of Deuteronomy under examination, teaches that the law contained there is not merely ceremonial, abolished by the

Gospel, but also moral, to which Christians are no less subject than the Hebrews. Wherefore by the aforesaid law God willed not only to turn the Jewish people away from the worship of idolatry—men dressed in women's garments sacrificed to Venus, and women presenting a male appearance sacrificed to Mars—but especially to draw them back from lust, toward which masked games of this kind lead. *It was forbidden them that a woman should be clothed in a man's garment, or conversely. First, indeed, this was to avoid idolatrous worship, for the Gentiles used various garments of this kind, woven from diverse materials, in the worship of their gods; and also, in the worship of Mars, women used the arms of men, while conversely, in the worship of Venus, men used the garments of women. Another reason is to turn away lust, for through different combinations in garments every disorderly mingling in intercourse is excluded. But for a woman to be clothed in a man's garment, or conversely, is an incitement to concupiscence and furnishes an occasion for lust.*

VIII. St. Thomas interprets this same text in II-II, question 169, article 2, reply to objection 3, and determines that this simulation of the sexes, which is accustomed to take place by an exchange of garments, is vicious by its own nature. *In itself*, he says, *it is vicious for a woman to use a man's garment, or conversely, because this can be a cause of lasciviousness, and it is specially prohibited in the law.* It must nevertheless be observed that this exchange of garments and simulation of the sexes is not in itself evil in the same way as lying, fornication, blasphemy, and similar things of that kind, which are lawful under no circumstance; rather, it is said to be evil in itself, as theft is, because absolutely it has a deformity—

—and presents the appearance of evil. Circumstances can nevertheless occur in which it is lawful for a man to use a woman's garment, and conversely—for example, to preserve life or because of some other grave necessity, as the Angelic Doctor explains in the same place: *This can nevertheless be done without sin because of some necessity, either for the sake of concealing oneself from enemies, or because of the lack of another garment, or because of some other thing of this kind.*

IX. The precept of Deuteronomy, therefore, is partly positive and ceremonial, insofar as it was given to the Hebrews, and partly natural, because its transgression introduces a certain disturbance of order and simulation of the sexes. And although this was prohibited more severely to the Jews because of the particular danger of idolatry, to which they were prone, which had to be avoided, nevertheless, insofar as it is natural, it also binds all Christians. When necessity and reasonable cause are absent, those who do not observe it always sin: venially, indeed, if it is done from levity of mind, for a short time, and inconsiderately; but mortally—as seems to be gathered from the Angelic Doctor —if it is done with deliberate intent in order to perform some profane and playful comedy, over a space of about three hours, before a multitude of Religious.

X. These things having been established as most certain principles, who does not see the most grave crime which Regular men perpetrate when they put on the insignia of comedians? I have called it a most grave crime because Regulars perpetrate more crimes than do men of the world. First, they sin because they lay aside the habit of their own religion without a reasonable cause. They sin because they put on the vainest lay garments; they sin because they put on women's garments; they sin because they put on theatrical garments; they sin because they put on masked garments. For the present I shall say nothing of the profanation of a consecrated person, nothing of the profanation of a sacred place, nothing of scandal, of the danger of lasciviousness, and of the many other crimes which proceed from this pestilential abuse by an almost necessary consequence, because I shall place all

these things before the eyes in the following chapter, where I shall also reveal the crimes of the prelates who permit this abuse and of the spectators.

Chapter II — Regulars Who Act the Parts of Comedians in Their Monasteries and Represent Comedies Mixed with the Fables of Pagans Sin Most Gravely, Because They Are Christians and Because They Are Religious

CHAPTER II

Regulars Who Act the Parts of Comedians in Their Monasteries and Represent Comedies Mixed with the Fables of Pagans Sin Most Gravely, Because They Are Christians and Because They Are Religious. Prelates Sin under a Threefold Head: Because They Are Christians, Because They Are Religious, and Because They Are Superiors

I. To establish the conclusion set forth, we need do nothing other than recall to mind the principles which were established above. The comedies or tragedies which are performed today in theaters are in fact unlawful to all Christians, the circumstances being considered. Regulars frequently represent in their monasteries those very comedies, tragedies, or tragicomedies which are recited in public theaters, or certainly others very similar to them: namely, those which express vividly by voice, gesture, and movements of the soul the fables of the pagans, the arts and stratagems of the business of love, and the secret language of human passions—would that it were always in chaste speech, which I am willing to grant gratuitously. But if all these things are forbidden even to Christians themselves, how much more to Religious men, who, in addition to the renunciation of vanities and of the pomps of the world made in the Sacrament of Baptism, profess a state of penance, chastity, and sublime evangelical perfection?

The Angelic Doctor confirms this reasoning in a wonderful manner in book 4, distinction 16, article 2, response to the first question: *It must be said that there is a threefold difference among games. For there are some games which have baseness from themselves. Such games must be avoided by everyone, ESPECIALLY BY PENITENTS, who must correct past sin by mourning, such as the games which were acted in theaters, provoking men to lust*. They sin gravely because they are Christians. They sin most gravely because they are Religious. I would have you weigh this word: *were acted*.

II. That the force of this reasoning may shine forth more clearly, the vow of chastity which Regulars emit must be considered for a little while. For in truth, the more some delights are forbidden to us, the more strongly we are carried away into them. No human passion is more vehement in men than the concupiscence of lust, implanted in each person for the propagation of nature and kindled by the fire of original sin. But if all, as the common proverb has it, strive toward what is forbidden, those who are bound by a vow of chastity are surely driven by sharper stings of concupiscence, unless—and I would have this especially noted—the remedies by which that untamed and cruel beast is restrained are both put into practice, and all those safeguards which are necessary for preserving the most precious jewel of chastity are applied. For deprivation, as another proverb has it, produces appetite.

Hence the Patriarchs of the Sacred Orders, recognizing perfectly the difficulty of guarding so sublime a vow, prescribe innumerable safeguards necessary for the preservation of so great a virtue: namely, fasts, prayers, nocturnal vigils, austere clothing, a hard bed, modesty, moderation, and the custody of the eyes and of all the members in gait, posture, and bearing. They most severely forbid mutual entry into private cells, especially by the young, reciprocal touching, and scurrilous words or deeds. Yet all

these things are violated and utterly trampled underfoot at the time of spectacles. There are vain and splendid garments, scurrilous words, conversations not always entirely modest, mutual touching, vivid pictures of profane love, and more sumptuous feasts; to say no more, more efficacious stings and fuel of concupiscence everywhere seethe.

III. But in truth, that a more brilliant light may be added to this argument, we must weigh what is commonly brought forward in defense of those comedies: namely, that the use of spectacles would be a most grave mortal sin in religious institutes of stricter observance, but not so in other Orders of milder discipline, in which comedies and masks are permitted to relax and recreate the mind. What? Masks and spectacles are an occasion for obscuring chastity even among brothers of the strictest institute, fortified by fasts, prayers, and so many safeguards of divine grace, but not among Religious of a gentler institute, deprived of so many barriers? If spectacles bewitch strong men who are warriors in the heavenly army and draw them away from the way of God, or if there is a danger that they will draw them away, what devastation will they not produce among unarmed and delicate men?

Who can worthily lament that most deadly shipwreck of chastity which so many novices and so many young men experience after the spectacles have been performed? O God! What recollections of past crimes in penitents? What pleasures, what stings, what desires, what heats, what pitch, both in the actors and in the spectators? What phantoms, what monsters will the demon not depict in their minds and hearts in the midst of the spectacles? What is so base, so shameless, so obscene that he does not suggest it, that he does not incite, instigate, and urge them toward it?

IV. I seem to myself to have said enough about the injury which spectacles inflict upon the solemn vow of chastity; it remains for me to discuss the violation of monastic poverty and the other most grave evils. First, that the vow of poverty is violated on the occasion of spectacles admits of no doubt. Do the expenses consumed on theatrical apparatus, on the construction of stages, and on so many lights kept burning accord with the poverty of Mendicants? What shall I say of the money spent in hiring masks and actors' garments, although these are not rarely received on loan? What of the squandering of time both in committing the comedies to memory and in performing them? During the time in which they are bound to labor in the service of the Lord, to whom they have vowed their entire selves, they devote their work to the deceits of the devil. Would not a servant sin most gravely against justice if he withdrew so much time from the service of his master in order to squander it on things which in no way pertained to his master, and indeed were injurious to him?

Nor does the vow of obedience remain uninjured. For the prelates either resist or assent. If they resist, although they do not forbid it so as to avoid greater scandals, the offenders do not therefore escape the crime of disobedience. If they assent, both prelates and subjects become guilty of a certain disobedience against the Rule which prohibits it.

V. These are very great evils, but those which follow are not lesser. For these spectacles, besides providing a most grave occasion for transgressing the vows, place an obstacle before every exercise of monastic discipline. Set before your mind the minds of the actors throughout all that time in which they both learn their comedies by heart and recite them from the stage. What obstacles, I ask you, are these not to meditation, to sacred reading, and to discharging the Hours attentively and devoutly in Choir? What distractions and wanderings of the mind, what images do not remain impressed for a long time, which call one away from the worship of God, extinguish devotion, and render the heart arid, dull, and unfit for divine things?

What shall I say of the most holy Sacrifice? What Christian would not regard it as an offense against religion to act the comedian tonight and approach to receive Holy Communion on the following day? Do not even the milder theologians take care that secular persons, both men and women, abstain from spectacles at least on the day preceding Sacramental Communion? And do priests of God and priest-monks act comedians in theaters today and dare on the morrow to immolate the Son of God? If I were to deny that I am moved while I write these things, I should certainly lie. Jerome was angry because worldly men were today in the eating-house and tomorrow in the sanctuary, now among dancers and now among clerics. What darts would he not hurl against priest-monks if he saw them now comedians in the theater, now sacrificers at the altar? To sustain tonight the character of a beloved woman or of a female lover, to recount the ravings of that love—O shame!—by voice and gesture, and a few hours later to perform the most exalted ministry of an evangelical priest and to officiate at the sacred rites? But these portents are to be mourned with the bitterest tears rather than amplified at greater length.

VI. To all these are added the most enormous scandals of Christians and heretics. When Regulars perform these spectacles in some monastery, they furnish the entire city with abundant material for speaking against them. I myself have heard secular men murmuring because comedies are sometimes represented in monasteries more immodestly and shamelessly than in public theaters. And when obscenity or shamelessness is absent, then they accuse either excessive inexperience in so infamous an art on the part of such actors, or excessive stupidity. And certainly that most grave prejudice which spectacles of this kind inflict even upon evangelical doctrine itself can scarcely be expressed. For if we declaim from the pulpit against spectacles, the hearers immediately reply that these things are performed in the monasteries themselves. And thus they render the preaching of the divine Word useless in this respect, and the reading of books useless. Nothing, moreover, furnishes heretics who carp at the Roman Church with so great an occasion as these monastic spectacles—

—Dallaeus the Calvinist reproaches Catholics above all because the Church girds herself for the sacred abstinence of Lent by celebrating the days of the Bacchanalia; because every year, by established custom, they renew the masked and scenic games of the pagans; because by these most foul superstitions they prepare themselves for Christian fasts; and thus he exposes and defames them as guilty of idolatry. We reply that these things are the ravings of a transgressing multitude, the dissoluteness of bad Catholics, which our Church detests and abhors and endeavors with all her strength to prevent, and which she permits only with the greatest sorrow because they cannot be prevented. In this way we dissolve the calumnies of the heretics without difficulty.

But when they reproach us that similar things are done by Religious and priests within consecrated monasteries themselves, while the prelates see and consent, they press more powerfully and reduce us, as it were, to checkmate. Nor can we oppose anything other than that priests of this kind defect from their profession by doing such things, and that both subjects and prelates are guilty of sacrilegious profanation and are the sources of many crimes.

VII. And in truth it would be an enormous sacrilege to practice masks, comedies, or tragedies in a church, an abuse which so many Councils have condemned, because a church is a temple consecrated to God by solemn blessing. But priests consecrated to God by the solemn profession of three vows are a living temple of God. They therefore violate their profession, obscure the splendor of their own

dignity, and profane the divine priesthood. Monasteries are sacred places and are endowed by the Church with the privilege of immunity. It therefore savors of sacrilege to represent comedies there.

This is so true that even the Lutheran Bergerius confirms it in these words, chapter 4, *On Persons*, sections 9 and 10: *But if clerics and ministers of the Church, as was shown above, ought not to attend or be present at lascivious dances, by what reasoning can it be permitted that such a thing should be done in the very churches which the clerics serve?.... What has been said concerning churches must also be said concerning other pious and religious places, namely monasteries or religious houses, buildings, and colleges of canons, etc.*

I could enumerate many other evils which follow from these spectacles performed in monasteries. How many furtive departures from monasteries on this occasion? How many clandestine entrances of masked women into monasteries? What revels, what drunkenness? To say no more, Passerinus, an excellent man, volume 3, question 187, number 344, teaches that the dissolution of a religious institute proceeds from this corruption: *Hence it is that, not only in religious institutes of stricter observance, but in every religious institute, prelates must extirpate pestilences and voluptuous games of this kind, no custom notwithstanding, according to the decrees of the Council of Trent, session 25, chapter 1; and they sin gravely if they do not do so, and if they permit games of this kind, and much more if they give their subjects license to play them. For it is manifest that, through the use of these games under the pretext of the recreation of the brethren, a way is laid toward the dissolution of the religious institute, and especially holy poverty is overthrown.*

VIII. But if you desire to contemplate at one view all the crimes which Regulars perpetrate when they perform spectacles in their monasteries, set before your mind the rash dismissal of the monastic habit without a reasonable cause; the assumption of lay garments which savor of pride and vanity; masks and theatrical insignia; the representation of actors, comedies, and tragedies, base by its own nature; the violation of chastity, or the most grave danger of violating it; the injury to evangelical poverty; the perversion of monastic discipline; the prostitution of priestly dignity; the profanation of a sacred place; stumbling blocks to Christians, scandals to heretics, and the most grave disgrace to the Catholic religion. I could pursue at greater length these and very many other evils which follow from monastic spectacles and expose the holy name of the brotherhood to derision and hissing. But let it suffice to have indicated them.

IX. From all these things gather four conclusions. *First*, according to the common opinion of the Doctors, Religious who dismiss the habit of their religious institute within the monastery in order to assume masks and perform spectacles incur the penalty of excommunication. *Second*, according to all theologians—if you except one or another of no name or authority, or those who do not treat such questions by profession—they sin mortally and indeed perpetrate several most grave crimes. *Third*, prelates and Superiors are guilty of all the crimes which follow from the spectacles. The offenses of the subjects are cast back upon their heads. Futile is the excuse by which they are accustomed to defend themselves, namely, that they cannot prevent it; for if they cannot break off the iniquity, why do they voluntarily make themselves judges contrary to the divine command? *Fourth*, all spectators, whether Religious or lay, who attend these spectacles and lend a hand, sin gravely.

CONSEQUENCE TO BE MEDITATED UPON

I. Cloistered men are human beings like the rest, affected by the same flesh and the same concupiscence and subject to the same appetites. The tunic, hood, cowl, biretta, solitude, fasts, prayers, and the other sanctions of monastic discipline are safeguards—and indeed strong ones—for

guarding the most chaste divine law and efficacious antidotes against human appetites. Yet they do not remove the passions, do not take away the rebellion of the flesh, do not extinguish the fire of concupiscence, and do not tear up the root of pride, vanity, ambition, and other vices.

Wherefore, when I hear that some cloistered man has fallen into some most grave and most base crime, it causes me no scandal; rather, I greatly pity him, and, reflecting upon my own weakness and touched by a holy fear, I give thanks to God that I myself have not fallen into something graver. For no man commits a sin which another man could not commit, should the Ruler by whom man was made withdraw His hand. Then I say with Paul: *Therefore let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall*, 1 Corinthians 10; and to the Galatians 6: *You who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.* No fall of Religious men, although enormous, holds me fixed in astonishment when I meditate upon these and the other mysteries of divine predestination.

II. But in truth, when I place before my mind an assembly of thirty, fifty, or a hundred Religious, of whom some are prelates, others theologians, all initiated into sacred things and guardians of the divine deposit; when I see some of them acting comedians and others watching; when I seriously consider with myself that all or most conspire in this, that no one raises a voice against it, but all either applaud cheerfully or timidly connive; I confess that I am then seized partly by grief and partly by amazement, just as if I were beholding the abomination standing in a holy place in the House of God. My astonishment increases when I reflect that these priests of God, theologians, and prelates perform these things with a tranquil conscience and defend them all as lawful and honorable.

Indeed, I have heard some older and more learned men say: We permit these playful spectacles to the young so that they may not leave the cloister and proceed to the public theaters. Good heavens! They bring into the cloister a plague which infects everyone, lest someone be infected outside? Others, with raised brow and in a magisterial tone, pronounce as though from a tripod that these things must be performed by the young so that they may learn the manner of preaching, break their bashfulness, and become vigorous heralds of the divine law. O unheard-of portents! Must the form of apostolic preaching be learned from the gymnasium of comedians and tragedians—not to say, from the altar of Epicurus? These things need not be heightened further by oratory; rather, let each person meditate with profound humility upon the dreadful, deadly, and formidable scourges of divine vengeance, the mist of errors, and the darkness of blindness by which some of those who had been called to illuminate the people of God are surrounded.

Chapter III — By the Authority of Benedict XIV, the Most Wise Reigning Pontiff, the Comedies of Certain Cloistered Men Are Condemned

CHAPTER III

By the Authority of Benedict XIV, the Most Wise Reigning Pontiff, the Comedies of Certain Cloistered Men Are Condemned. The Supreme Pontiff Execrates the Lax and Scandalous Doctrine of the Newest Casuists in Favor of Clerics Who Attend Comedies

I. Although in chapter 23 of the preceding Dissertation I produced a fragment of the following testimony of Benedict XIV, I am nevertheless pleased now to report it entire from his distinguished work *On the Synod*, book 7, chapter 61, page 518, where he praises and reports several synodal decrees against the hunting, dances, and comedies of clerics. I shall transcribe a few from many. He therefore says:

11. St. Charles Borromeo renewed these most holy laws in his First Provincial Council, part 2 (*Acts of the Church of Milan*, part 1, page 19), *decreeing thus: Clerics shall not go about masked; they shall neither perform nor watch private or public dances.... They shall not attend plays, comedies, tournaments, or other profane and empty spectacles, lest ears and eyes devoted to sacred offices be polluted, distracted by playful and impure fictions and discourses.*

The Fathers of the Council of Bordeaux of 1583, canon 21 (volume 10 of Hardouin's *Collection*, column 1359), *of Bourges of 1584, title 25, canon 6* (ibid., column 1486), *and of Aix of 1585, title On the Life and Honorable Conduct of Clerics* (ibid., column 1533), *followed in the footsteps of St. Charles, decreeing the same thing in nearly the same words as he had established; and St. Francis de Sales, in his Synodal Constitutions, part 3, title 4, wills priests who descend to such a crime as to dare not only to watch but also to lead dances to be suspended ipso facto from divine offices.*

12. Moreover, the doctrine which Lucius Ferraris delivers in his Canonical-Juridical Library, volume 2, under the word "Cleric," part 4, number 17, is too lax—not to say openly erroneous and scandalous. For although he acknowledges that clerics must not be permitted to act comedians or to be actors in comedies, he nevertheless absolves from grave fault those who watch comedies, however base and obscene, provided that they foresee no probable danger of falling to threaten them from hearing those comedies, and that their presence introduces no scandal among the people. "But," he says, "if comedies are heard solely from vain curiosity, without probable danger of falling, even though base things are represented and the manner of representing them is base, it is more probable that there is no mortal sin, scandal being absent—which now seems to be absent and not to exist, because it is most frequent for clerics to attend comedies." Who is there who does not understand that even the mere narration of obscene things excites depraved movements of the soul in the hearers and gradually disposes them toward destruction, according to that saying of the Apostle, 1 Corinthians 15: "Evil conversations corrupt good morals"?

By what reasoning, therefore, and in what way can it happen that he escapes the danger of his spiritual ruin who attends the theatrical representation of those same base things—a representation which certainly has greater efficacy for disturbing the minds of the spectators, moving their souls, and finally inducing them to sin? Wherefore even the adherents of a milder Ethics condemn comedies of this kind; and, with St. Thomas, in book 4 of the Sentences, distinction 16, question 4, article 2, question 2, they teach by common judgment that not only clerics, but also laymen who watch them, scarcely ever escape grave fault. "To the second question it must be said that, if spectacles of

this kind concern base things and things provocative of sin, the deliberate viewing of them is a sin; and sometimes lust can be so great in them that it is also a mortal sin, whence all ought to restrain themselves from such a viewing." 13. We judge it superfluous to pursue this otherwise very weighty argument at greater length, because we have already treated it copiously in our notices 37 and 76, where we have accumulated many passages taken from approved authors in condemnation of comedies and dances.

II. Father Lucius Ferraris, deceived by the new casuistical method of probability to which he adheres, fell into the aforesaid laxity, full of scandal. Nothing occurs more frequently among modern Moralists than the argument of Father Lucius Ferraris: *This is commonly and frequently done; therefore it is lawful. Therefore it is probable that it lacks fault.* The cited author used this new method of reasoning. For he says: *Scandal now seems to cease and not to exist, because it is most frequent for clerics to attend comedies.*

St. Cyprian and, everywhere, the other Fathers declaim against this most grave error in these words: *What is public has begun to be lawful.* Clerics most frequently attend the obscene and base comedies of the present day; they very frequently go about masked. Therefore there is no scandal. Therefore *it is probable that they do not sin.* This is the new probabilistic method, alien to evangelical simplicity. For evangelical Theology argues thus: Clerics very frequently attend obscene comedies. Therefore the scandal is graver, the crime more enormous, and more destructive to the Christian people. For which of the Christians will count it a vice in himself to frequent base and obscene comedies which he sees publicly frequented by clerics? But let this be said in passing.

III. The praised Father Ferraris, as far as this point is concerned, did not err. He rightly called the comedies of the present day base and obscene. But in this he erred, says the Supreme Pontiff: that he taught that clerics who very frequently attend these comedies do not sin mortally.

IV. These things having been premised, I form the following argument from the doctrine of the most wise Pontiff Benedict XIV. The Supreme Pontiff condemns as lax and full of scandal—not to say erroneous—the doctrine of Father Lucius Ferraris, because he teaches that clerics may attend the base and obscene comedies of the present day without mortal sin, although he denies that it is lawful for clerics to act as comedians upon the stage. What if he had taught that clerics who act as comedians do not sin? Then surely he would have pronounced his opinion more than lax and manifestly erroneous. If clerics sin mortally when they attend comedies, they sin most gravely if they are actors. What crime, then, what wickedness, do cloistered clerics and priests perpetrate when they represent base and obscene comedies within the sacred cloisters themselves, while some are spectators and others actors? Although Father Lucius Ferraris, an advocate of laxer doctrine, did not dare to assert that clerics may act as comedians without mortal sin, Regular theologians are found who teach it, Regular Superiors who approve it by their authority, and entire convents of certain cloistered men who confirm by word and deed that the corruption of comedy is lawful.

Therefore either let them maintain that they discharge an honorable office when they act comedians, when they put on even women's garments, and when they utter their tales and base amorous discourses; or let them acknowledge that they perpetrate a sin. There is no way of escape here. If they defend the first, they uphold an opinion which, from the adduced judgment of the Supreme Pontiff, is evidently inferred to be not only lax and scandalous, but rash and erroneous. If they assert the second, they sin mortally. And then what conclusion remains for me to draw? Cloistered men sin when they act comedians, when they attend comedies, and when they profane the sacred cloisters by sacrilegious corruption; and yet they celebrate Mass daily throughout those very entire weeks in

which they perpetrate such things. Tonight they sustain the character of the beloved woman and of the little lover upon the stage, and on the following day they ascend the evangelical pulpit. Tonight, in profane and immodest women's garments, and at sunrise in sacred priestly vestments. Tonight they declaim obscene dramas of the poets, and on the following day they recite the holy Gospels of Christ. Far be so great a corruption from cloisters; far be it from persons consecrated to God, since it is not to be tolerated even in lay places or among laymen.

Chapter IV — Certain Sophisms Commonly Objected Are Refuted

CHAPTER IV

Certain Sophisms Commonly Objected Are Refuted

I. Defenders of spectacles are accustomed to bring forward two kinds of arguments, one drawn from the authority of Moralists, the other sought from human reasoning. For the present I shall dispel the little arguments which are commonly thrust forward; in the following chapter I shall examine the authorities of the Casuists which are frequently brought forward.

II. They object that there is no law which expressly prohibits either acting or watching the representation of comedies, or putting on masks; therefore it will be lawful, and so forth. Lovers of Christian pleasures thrust forward similar things in the time of Tertullian, who replies thus in book *On Spectacles*, chapter 20: *How vain, therefore—indeed, how desperate—is the argument of those who, without doubt by the evasion of admitting pleasure, demand that no mention of abstinence from it be determined specially or locally in the Scriptures, which directly prohibits a servant of God from being present at assemblies of this kind.*

III. This defense is certainly desperate, which requires laws prohibiting spectacles and masks to Religious, as though nothing occurred more frequently in the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Councils than canons which forbid this abuse to all Christians, and not only to clerics and monks. What, I ask, does that saying of St. Paul to the Romans, chapter 12, mean: *Do not be conformed to this world?* Upon this St. Thomas writes, among other things: *He is also conformed to this world who imitates the life of worldly men.* To what do so many holy texts look? *Blessed is the man who has not regarded vanities and false follies*, Psalm 39. To what? *Turn away my eyes, lest they behold vanity.* To what? *Baseness, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which do not pertain to the matter*, and so forth, *let them not even be named among you.* These things press upon all Christians; how much more upon Religious? Do laws not forbid Religious masks and comedies? What, then, do all monastic laws forbid when they command the open wearing of the habit? What do the sacred canons forbid when they prohibit its rash dismissal? But who does not see that the matter is most evident?

IV. Secondly, they object to the custom already received of performing comedies, tragedies, and the like in certain monasteries. That which is called a custom is a sacrilegious corruption. Where, among the several conditions necessary for a true custom, is even one? Is it reasonable? Does it promote the common good of monastic discipline, or at least not oppose it? Do you dare to adorn an abuse so deadly and so pestilential with the privilege of custom? Consult what has been disputed elsewhere at greater length concerning custom.

V. They object, thirdly, that although the use of masks, the dismissal of the habit, and the representation of spectacles is forbidden to Religious, nevertheless this is not to be understood so severely that it is unlawful even in a monastery, since then there is no danger of wandering. On the other hand, some consolation and diversion are fitting to Religious for the relief and cheerfulness of the mind. Since, even among Religious themselves, certain playful words or jocular deeds savor of the virtue of Eutrapelia.

VI. Let some men, otherwise not unlearned, be ashamed to reduce masked, gambling, and scenic games to the virtue of Eutrapelia. That I may not use many words, I shall transcribe what the Angelic

Doctor writes on this matter in the *Summa of Theology*, second part of the second part, question 168, article 2, in the body: *In the conduct of this life a certain rest is obtained by play. And therefore it is necessary at times to make use of such things. Yet three things seem chiefly to require caution concerning them. The first and principal is that this pleasure not be sought in any base or harmful deeds or words. Hence Tully says, in book 1 of* On Duties, *that one kind of jesting is illiberal, petulant, criminal, and obscene. Another thing to be considered is that the gravity of the soul be not wholly dissolved. Hence Ambrose says, in book 1 of* Duties: *Let us beware lest, while we wish to relax the soul, we dissolve all harmony, as it were, and the concord of good works. And Tully says, in book 1 of* Duties: *Just as we do not give children every license of playing, but that which is not alien to honorable actions, so in play itself let some light of an upright character shine forth. Thirdly, it must be considered, as in all other human acts, that it befit the person, the time, and the place, and that it be duly ordered according to the other circumstances, namely, that it be worthy of the time and the man, as Tully says in the same place.... And concerning such games there can be a certain virtue, which the Philosopher calls Eutrapelia.*

Now compare, if you please, scenic games, masks, theatrical representations, and all the things which are accustomed to be performed in similar comedies. Tell me, I ask you, does it pertain to a moral virtue that a Religious man, that a priest, should put on women's clothing, that he should act the comedian in a sacred place at Carnival time? Do all these things suit the person, the place, and the time? Consider how vainly and ineptly two or three Casuists argue, who reduce spectacles of this kind in monasteries to Eutrapelia, and at the same time confess that the sins are at least venial. The most learned Bossuet expounds broadly and clearly the doctrine of St. Thomas which not a few abuse.

VII. Is no playful delight, they repeat, no cheerfulness of mind, therefore fitting to Religious, and so forth? Hear St. John Chrysostom himself replying in homily 38 on Matthew: *What excuse, then, will there be for us hereafter, when we are citizens of Heaven, when we are enrolled in the choir of the Cherubim, when we are companions of the Angels, if in this matter we are worse than barbarians, although we may enjoy six hundred other pleasures greater than these? For if you wish to recreate your mind, go to orchards, to a river, or to ponds; contemplate gardens; hear the cicadas singing; frequent the tombs of the Martyrs, where there is health of body, profit of soul, and no harm. There is no repentance after the deed and after those spectacles.*

VIII. They object, fourthly, that spectacles of this kind are openly held in monasteries, or in the city of Rome itself. Must it then be said that spectators of this kind who assemble there sin? They would indeed sin if the spectacles were unlawful. I reply: What if I should say that innumerable men, indeed almost all men of God, execrate these spectacles? What if I should say that ecclesiastics who attend spectacles of this kind actually sin, and sin the more gravely the more exalted the dignity in which they are constituted? For they ought to use the authority given them by God to overturn these abuses and corruptions. Why do you object to me with the name of Rome?

At Rome, as elsewhere, it is necessary that many evils be permitted which cannot be prevented. Roman decrees which sometimes permit masks and scenic games to laymen do not approve the abuse, but impose a limit lest it spread more widely; just as they do not approve the trade of prostitutes when they command prostitutes to dwell in certain quarters of the city. It is the desperate refuge of vicious men who, to cast some veil of apparent honor over their crimes, proclaim that similar things are performed at Rome. Let them oppose to us, if they can, the laws, canons, and constitutions which are established at Rome—not the morals of men. We defend the former as honorable and holy, and we detest the latter. Indeed I shall add: on the one hand, it ought to seem no

wonder to prudent men even if worse crimes raged at Rome than elsewhere, because that city is almost a city of foreigners. Peoples and nations flow together there from every part of the world. Nothing contributes equally to the corruption of morals as diversity of nations, as is well known. Why, then, do you thrust forward the abuses of that city in order to seek patronage for your own vices? On the other hand, it would certainly be desirable and greatly to be hoped that the inhabitants of that august city should display the integrity of morals which answers to the holiness of the religion which they profess. Yet whatever the morals of men may be, the doctrine, profession, and religion are holy. And from the institutions of that religion—not from the customs of men—the rules of what is honorable or dishonorable are to be taken. But more of this elsewhere.

Chapter V — Other Sophisms Drawn from the Authority of Certain Casuists Are Overthrown

CHAPTER V

Other Sophisms Drawn from the Authority of Certain Casuists Are Overthrown

I. First I admonish the reader that no one whom I have seen, whether among theologians or among Casuists, treats from the outset and in all its circumstances the question which I have thus far discussed. Not a few indeed dispute about monastic spectacles; but some do so ineptly and confusedly, others contradict themselves so evidently, that from them there can arise not even the slightest probability in favor of this depraved corruption. If, however, any persons unknown to me defend the opposite opinion, they will champion manifest error. I add that not a few recent Moralists, who strive to encrust everything public with some cement of probability, must be read very cautiously. The multitude of sinners is for them a weighty foundation of probable honesty. And if one of them publishes some lax opinion, many immediately adopt it. How many will there be who will embrace the opinion of Father Lucius Ferraris with both arms? How many will there be who will say that the Pontiff, as a private doctor—which is indeed true—condemned it? Yet it is no less lax and scandalous on that account. But let those whom they are accustomed to oppose on behalf of theatrical games come under examination.

II. Thus they cite Sylvester, under the word *Habit*, question 2; St. Antoninus, part 3, title 24, chapter 53; Suárez, volume 5, on the third part, disputation 23, section 4, number 29; Lezana, volume 1, chapter 13; Bordonus, *Various Resolutions*, part 1, response 33, number 13, and resolution 35, number 6; Antonius a Spiritu Sancto, treatise 1, disputation 6, number 956; Antonius Cotonius, *Celebrated Controversies*, book 4, controversy 7, chapter 3; Octavius Maria of St. Joseph, volume 2, title 164; Bonacina, *On Enclosure*, question 2, point 2, number 15; Candidus Brognolo, in *Mirror of Clerics*, treatise 3, chapter 6, response 3; Belasius, in *Promptuary of Regulars*, under the word *Habit*, number 7.

III. That the reply may be precise and evident, let the praised authors be distributed into two or three classes. In the first I place St. Antoninus, Sylvester, Suárez, Bonacina, and Rotarius. Not one of them teaches that a Religious may lawfully, having dismissed the sacred habit, put on lay clothing together with masks within the monastery; still less that he may act masked comedies. Behold the words of St. Antoninus, part 3, title 24, chapter 53: *I do not think that a monk who dismisses the habit in his cell, or enters a bath secretly, or lies without the habit, is bound by this Constitution; otherwise few would be found not bound. But when he displays himself in the sight of men without the habit, or in lay dress, or as a secular cleric, without a just cause, he is bound.* Where is there even the least word here that favors masks and the comedies of Religious in their own monastery? Indeed, according to St. Antoninus, Regulars who act the characters of comedians in their monasteries and display themselves to many outsiders are bound by the bond of excommunication, and not only sin mortally. Read the entire praised chapter, and you will find not a word which suits masked monks within a monastery.

IV. Sylvester, under the word *Habit*, question 2, writes this: *Secondly, it is asked when and in what manner a Religious ought to use his habit. And I say always and openly. Always, indeed, that is, at every time, whether resting in bed or dwelling in any place, chapter 20, question 1,* Widow. *Yet in some religious institutes the daytime habit is different from the nighttime habit, and it suffices to wear it according to the institution of one's religious*

institute. Openly, moreover, when he goes forth in public; otherwise, dismissing it, according to the Archdeacon, is a mortal sin unless for a just cause, namely, because of danger of captivity or ambushes, or when he is in baths or sweat baths; which I understand of dismissing one's habit fraudulently by assuming another for use. Otherwise, if the proper habit is dismissed temporarily, not fraudulently, but for recreation, with no other habit assumed—

—or with another assumed not for use but for diversion in jocular familiarity, and things of this kind—as, for example, if in honorable recreation a Friar Minor puts on the habit of the Preachers, or conversely—no sin is committed. Where in this is there a word about masks, lay garments, or the clothing of comedians? Is it in this manner, writers, that authors are twisted for the confirmation or defeat of what pleases us? If, says Sylvester, in an honorable recreation a Friar Minor puts on the habit of the Preachers, or conversely, for an hour, no sin is committed. Where in this, according to common sense, is there any vestige either of deformity, fraud, or danger? This change breathes innocence, benevolence, mutual love toward each religious institute. But whoever concludes from this that Regulars may dismiss the sacred habit, put on lay garments, assume masks, and act comedians in monastic theaters, imposes such monstrous portents not so much upon Sylvester as upon inexperienced readers, who, deceived by similar citations, embrace the falsest and sometimes erroneous opinions as probable.

Peyerinus is guilty of a similar imposition. In his *Ascetical Commentary on the Rule of the Minims*, chapter 3, section 5, question 3, number 3, he writes: *Whence it seems that a Religious who puts on the costumes of actors is to be excused even from venial fault ... and Sylvester, under the word* Habit, *seems to think so.* This Casuist commits two most grave sins here. The first is that he imposes upon Sylvester, as is evident from what has been said. The other is that he teaches a most lax opinion, to say no more. Does it therefore savor of no indecency that Religious put on actors' costumes? And, dressed in this way, do they perform an honorable representation? Is that representation honorable which is made by Religious in the costumes of actors? If the subject to be performed is sacred, it is profaned by the garments of actors. If it is profane, it is doubly unbecoming to Religious. Casuists who cite authors in this manner and treat questions of morals should run through our *Critical-Moral Observations upon the Errors of Pontas*, especially the appendix of the two cases of conscience, so that from it they may be able to learn of what a crime they are guilty.

V. Suárez, volume 5, *On Censures*, disputation 23, number 29, merely affirms the opinion of St. Antoninus and Sylvester to be probable. Behold his words: *Hence it is probable, as Antoninus teaches, part 3, title 24, chapter 53, and Sylvester, under the word* Habit, *question 2: If a Religious dismisses the habit for a brief time and puts on another for some playful action to be performed among themselves on the occasion of some feast, under the title of some honorable joy, he does not incur this censure.* Suárez therefore writes that, according to St. Antoninus and Sylvester, it is only probable that a Friar Minor who, having dismissed his own habit, puts on the habit of the Preachers, or conversely, for the sake of honorable joy on the occasion of some feast, does not incur excommunication. Does he perhaps write that on the occasion of the Bacchanalia Regulars may appear masked in theaters, representing Dido?

VI. Martin Bonacina subscribes to the opinion of Sylvester and Suárez. Behold his words in *On Enclosure*, question 2, point 2, number 15: *Secondly, it follows that he does not incur excommunication who dismisses the habit and puts on another for some playful action to be performed among Religious under the title of some honorable joy, because it is not a rash dismissal. Thus Sylvester, under the word* Habit; *Suárez, in the cited place, number 29; and others.* Bonacina therefore speaks of that playful action of which Sylvester, whom he praises, makes mention; and Sylvester, as we saw, grants only that one Religious may put on the

habit of another religious institute for an hour, under the title of honorable recreation, having dismissed his own. And that it may appear more clearly how lamentable is the diligence of certain writers in citing other Casuists, it is useful to place before their eyes what Bonacina himself writes in volume 3, *On Censures*, disputation 2, question 8, point 6, number 13:

I say that a Religious who, within the private walls of his monastery, does not wear the habit of his religious institute is constrained by the aforesaid bond, according to the more probable opinion of the Doctors, even if he afterwards does not wander or leave the monastery. The reason is that the text speaks absolutely of those who dismiss the habit, in whatever place they dismiss it; especially if they do this in order to go about thus or to hide themselves, as is clear from those words, "in schools or elsewhere." And although the aforesaid Religious does not wander or flee from the sight of secular persons and secretly hide himself, he nevertheless acquires the power of wandering which our text intends to remove under excommunication. Thus Navarrus, chapter 27, number 131; Azor, in the cited place, chapter 17, question 15; Sayrus, in the cited place, number 11; Sánchez, in the cited place, number 61; Sanctarellus, number 17; and others. Bonacina therefore teaches that Regulars who dismiss the habit within the cloister not only sin but are punished with the penalty of excommunication; and he adds that this is the more probable opinion of the Doctors. Does Bonacina sound rigorous? Does he embrace the severer opinion?

VII. Rotarius is alleged no less falsely, book 3, chapter 1, point 12, number 11, volume 2, where he has these words: *Masked or theatrical games are also prohibited to Regulars, because in the chapter* Cum decorem, *On the Life and Honorable Conduct of Clerics, games of this kind are prohibited in a church even to laymen because of their indecency. But what is indecent by its own nature cannot be done by Regulars. Yet this is not to be taken with such rigor that a Regular may not represent some sacred or moral history for the sake of honorable recreation before friends at Carnival time. For by this he is not considered to devote himself to scurrility, or to the games of actors and jesters.* Rotarius teaches two things. First, that theatrical games carry indecency by their own nature and therefore are forbidden to Regulars. Second, that Regulars may represent a sacred or moral history before friends. Who denies this? Who brings it into dispute? Does Rotarius perhaps assert that Regulars, dressed in women's clothing or in the lay dress of men, may represent a sacred or moral history—

—represent a sacred or moral history? He has not a word about this. And if he did assert it, he would mingle sacred things with profane and associate light with darkness. For divine and moral deeds must be presented for human meditation not in profane but in sacred garments. Finally, even if Rotarius asserted this, it would contribute nothing in favor of the abuse which prevails among certain Regulars: namely, representing within their own monasteries those very same comedies of secular theaters which Rotarius teaches most explicitly to be forbidden to Regulars.

VIII. Belasius also, in the *Promptuary of Regulars*, under the word *Habit*, number 7, is customarily praised in support of cloistered comedies. Let us see how undeservedly they do so. Behold his words: *If the dismissal of the habit is made within the monastery, the aforesaid excommunication is not incurred, provided that it is done for honest recreation, or Eutrapelia.* Eutrapelia is a virtue. If the habit is dismissed for the exercise of true virtue, neither excommunication nor sin is contracted. Theatrical games are by their own nature dishonorable and are forbidden even to laymen. Are they an exercise of Eutrapelia, or of virtue, for Religious men?

Chapter VI — Cottonius, Brognolus, Bordonius, Antonius a Spiritu Sancto, and Octavius of St. Joseph Are Brought Under Examination

CHAPTER VI

Cottonius, Brognolus, Bordonius, Antonius a Spiritu Sancto, and Octavius of St. Joseph Are Brought Under Examination

I. Antonius Cottonius, book 4 *On Religious*, controversy 7, chapter 3, question 2, number 114, asks what sin Religious who use masks commit. *I reply*, he says, *that, from the force of the religious state considered in its rigor, it is a mortal sin, and that because of the dismissal or concealment of the habit it is subject to the aforesaid excommunication; and I do not doubt that a Capuchin, or another member of an observant Order, doing this for the first time would sin mortally, even in his own convent and with secular persons removed, although he might perhaps be excused from the aforesaid excommunication. But because of the custom already received, in one's own house, for some representation or game, it will be done without scruple. Hence it will be only a venial sin, because the relaxation of the state itself has softened the rigor of this obligation also.*

Let us run briefly through each point. First, he teaches absolutely that the use of masks is mortal for Regulars, even within their own monasteries, if the Regulars are of a reformed Order. Secondly, he thrusts forward an already received custom which has weakened this rigor in Orders already relaxed, in which the use of masks will be only a venial fault. Wherefore it is done without scruple. Do you hear? The use of masks in relaxed Orders is only venial, and therefore it is done *without scruple*. May venial sins, therefore, be swallowed without scruple, like clear water, in reformed religious institutes? Custom has not only softened the rigor of fasts, penances, and rough garments, but has also bestowed upon relaxed brethren the privilege by which they may commit venial sins without scruple. Whence such recondite Theology? But whence did he draw that this is a custom and not a manifest abuse? If it is an accepted custom, why is there sin even venially? Why is it a custom which removes mortal sin but not venial? What is the reason of that custom? For, in order that it may soften the rigor of a law, it must be reasonable, not opposed to the common good, and an occasion of virtue, not of vice. And because this author discusses none of these things, but writes merely at his own pleasure that the use of masks in relaxed Orders is only a venial sin and may be done without scruple, he is therefore of no authority and furnishes no support to the most false opinion concerning masked brethren and comedies within their own monasteries.

II. Bordonius, *Various Resolutions*, part 1, resolution 35, number 6: *Dancing, moreover, and the honest use of masks, performed for the sake of recreation among certain religious institutes at Carnival, with the dismissal of the habit, and even in the houses of their parents alone, are no more than venial, outsiders being excluded.*

III. Candidus Brognolus, in the *Mirror of Regular Clerics*, treatise 3, chapter 6, resolution 9: *Dancing, moreover, and the honest use of masks, performed for the sake of recreation among certain religious institutes at Carnival, with the dismissal of the habit, and even in the houses of their parents alone, are no more than venial, outsiders being excluded. For Superiors permit recreations of this kind in laxer religious institutes and do not prohibit them, nor does anyone have a scruple concerning mortal sin.* This author is a mere copyist; for he transcribes Bordonius in exactly the same words, without changing a syllable. Therefore something must be said of Bordonius. I do not place Bordonius among copyist writers, but among the inventors and amplifiers of lax opinions. Let ill will be absent from these words. I venerate Bordonius and all

writers. But when they publish erroneous opinions which drive souls into the danger of eternal damnation, the charity of Christ urges us to reveal the rocks of depravity and the occasions of perishing eternally. Bordonius wrote what seemed probable to him. We leave his good faith, innocence, and other gifts secure. But we assert that he wrote most lax things, and we have proved it evidently. Consult the entire Prolegomenon on monastic discipline. Shall we therefore exceed the bounds of modesty if we admonish readers to beware of so great a laxity? These things are said to soothe the ears and calm the minds of certain men who, when they do not see the idols of lax opinions worshiped by all, are moved and become angry. "Is this," they say, "how authors are mocked and theologians despised?" We, as has been said, venerate all theologians, but we detest the excessively lax opinions invented by certain men.

I would wish that these worshipers of all Casuists would exercise their zeal and wisdom in defending, not the authors, who are secure, but their doctrine. What is it to us, what is it to readers, concerning the authors? It is their opinions which create trouble for all Christians. Leaving the authors in peace, therefore, let us examine their books and their doctrines. Let those zealots, as I might call them, who under the specious pretext of veneration to be shown to all Casuists endeavor to defend their lax opinions, cleanse from the stain of enormous laxity the things which were written in the aforesaid Prolegomenon. Let them set aside their zeal for authors with whom they have no connection and no friendship, and whose reputation and honor are no less dear to us than to those men who never knew them. But they would wish these authors to be held in great value so that their opinions, accommodated to flesh and blood, might go forward with impunity and safety and obtain universal applause for themselves. Let the reader pardon me if, because of the calamity of the times, I pour forth so many words otherwise superfluous. Let the discourse return, therefore, to the point from which it departed.

IV. I say, therefore, that Bordonius with his copyist Brognolus—indeed, with a hundred and a thousand similar writers who, without any reason or legitimate authority, teach lax opinions—is of no authority and contributes not even the least degree of probability to his opinions. Therefore, even if Bordonius and Brognolus absolutely taught that the use of masks is lawful to Regulars, that opinion would not thereby acquire any probability. What of the fact that neither Bordonius nor Brognolus maintains that use of this kind is free from every fault, but only that it does not cross the limits of venial fault? *It is not*, they say, *more than a venial sin*, even if Regulars leave the monastery and dance and represent playful things in the homes of their parents. But if it is a venial sin, why do you assert that it is lawful because of an accepted custom, which, if it were a true custom, would remove every fault? Such a use is venially culpable even within the convent; venial in the home of one's parents. Suppose that in a monastery there are twenty brethren from the same city. These take as many companions at Carnival. Today one with his companion goes to the home of the parents of some; tomorrow to that of the parents of others. The others likewise visit the homes of their own parents masked. Why not also those of relatives and kinsmen by marriage? There they dance and perform spectacles. Now you have no small part of the city full of disguised brethren. All these things flow spontaneously from the principle laid down. Would that all these things did not in fact appear before the eyes somewhere by lamentable experience. What do you reply? Gather, therefore, reader, how true it is that infinite evils arise from the most lax opinions of certain Casuists.

They grant that mendicant Regulars, bound by a solemn vow of poverty, may expose six gold pieces, or twenty scudi, to gaming. They grant that the same masked men may dance in the homes of their parents. And behold everywhere very many Religious wholly occupied in the games and amusements of a mad world, with deadly disgrace and infamy to the sacred Orders and to the monastic state. Compare, if you please, the doctrine of the Councils, Fathers, and graver theologians—not the opinions of a few recent Casuists—concerning the games, habit, and conduct of monks; and sit as judge and pronounce the sentence whether they may lawfully be defended as probable.

V. Octavius of St. Joseph, volume 2, title 164, number 1501, writes—or transcribes—these things: *A cleric or Religious walking among three persons disguised or masked, commonly "mascherato," ... does indeed sin mortally. For masked play is forbidden to clerics and Religious.... Yet I think such masked play lawful both to clerics and to Religious at Carnival, if it is done without scandal, with the due circumstances and the license of the Superior, for the sake of honest recreation, especially without the presence of secular persons, in some private place of the Bishop or of a convent of Religious, as I remember seeing many, with the prelates permitting it.*

First he thinks that masked play at Carnival is absolutely lawful to Religious. What? At Carnival time, when Religious dedicated to God ought to call laymen away from the danger of sinning, do they themselves perform masked games? Does this savor of innocence? *Provided that this is done without scandal.* That was what had to be proved. *And with the license of the Superior.* A license of this kind would be sacrilegious, and prove the opposite. *For the sake of honest recreation.* This is a base recreation. *Especially without the presence,* and so forth. Then there is no room for doubt. Next, why? Because Father Octavius himself saw many Regulars masked, with their prelates permitting it? Admirably indeed. Let the judgment of others determine how great the authority of this excellent compiler is.

VI. Among the laxer Casuists I place another writer, although one of our own, in this cause—for in others I shall do so if he is as lax as here—Lopez de Texeda, who in volume 1, book 2, treatise 1, controversy 6, distinction 1, teaches concerning the dismissal of the habit an opinion which even Diana himself, volume 7, treatise 1, resolution 209, calls sufficiently lax.

VII. Father Joannes Baptista de Lezana, a pious and learned author, and therefore to be held in veneration, is also customarily alleged. But that it may be evident how undeservedly the authority of so great a man is opposed, his words, found in volume 2, chapter 13, number 5, must be set forth: *This excommunication is incurred even if the dismissal of the habit is made within the monastery, because the text of the said chapter does not require the wandering of the monk outside the monastery.... Hence some say that for a Religious to dismiss his habit even in the monastery, and to wish to put on women's clothing for masked play or for performing some comedy, is a mortal sin.* But he immediately adds: *If, however, it is done for honest recreation, Eutrapelia, or some other honest end, and the due circumstances are weighed, as far as it is of itself and by its own nature, it will not be a sin, at least not a mortal one; although it is always dangerous because of the weakness and corruption of nature.* Grassis, part 1, *Decisions*, book 3, chapter 5, number 57.

VIII. Lezana teaches three things. First, that brethren who dismiss the habit, even within the monastery, are excommunicated. Secondly, he reports the opinion of those who maintain that Regulars who act comedies dressed in women's clothing sin mortally. Thirdly, he himself determines that if the dismissal of the habit is done for honest recreation, Eutrapelia, or another honest end, with the due circumstances observed, it is not of itself and by its own nature a sin, at least not a mortal one; although, and so forth. Lezana speaks cautiously, although we can scarcely speak so cautiously that some member of a period, not subjected to the rules of severe criticism, cannot be

twisted into an evil sense. He therefore asserts that the dismissal of the habit and, if you please, even the putting on of women's clothing for some honest recreation, Eutrapelia, or another good end, is not absolutely and, as they say, of itself, a mortal crime. This I also assert. And I have already said from St. Thomas that a change of clothing of this kind is not by its nature a mortal sin.

Suppose that on a day of some great rejoicing, while the Religious indulge in honest diversion at recreation time, a Religious appears dressed in women's clothing or in some other lay habit, and before them performs for some interval of time something playful yet innocent and honorable. I myself would not condemn him as guilty of mortal sin, because of the levity, lack of consideration, and brevity of the time. Yet I would not absolve him from a sin among the gravest of venial sins, because of the danger, the frailty of human nature, and the abuse of proceeding farther. If he did this a second time, he would be guilty of a graver fault. For although, as Lezana said, it is not by its own nature a mortal sin, the matter is nevertheless full of danger and in practice is scarcely without fault. From this surely took their origin those theatrical comedies and tragedies which are performed in certain monasteries with the greatest scandal of all good men.

This, and no more, is said by Antonius a Spiritu Sancto, an author otherwise excessively benign, treatise 3, disputation 6, section 6, paragraph 1, number 956: *The same must be said if he does this from levity, as if during recreation someone dismisses the habit in order to put on for a short time within the convent the costume of actors.... Such a dismissal will nevertheless always be venial.* Have you heard the most benign Casuist? If even during recreation a Religious from levity—that is, without consideration—puts on the costume of actors for a short time, he sins venially. What if with deliberate intention? What if for several days? What if before friends, parents, relatives, and other laymen? From these things gather that even the laxer Casuists teach that it is not lawful for Regulars to act masked profane comedies by design; and consequently, even according to the Casuists themselves, the abuse of spectacles and masks now creeping through certain monasteries is unlawful and vicious; indeed, according to the most common opinion of theologians, it is subject to excommunication.

Chapter VII — Some Minor Questions on This Argument

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Some Minor Questions on This Argument

I. You will ask, first, whether, if within a monastery Regulars or nuns, putting on the garments of comedians, were to perform some comedies upon a pious subject so secretly that no secular person had access or even knowledge, they would sin mortally.

II. Father Joannes Pontas, volume 1, under the word *Comedy*, case 4, relates that this case, which had actually occurred at Milan, was proposed to him for resolution on November 18, 1716; and, producing the authority of St. Thomas, he replies that Religious of this kind sin, and indeed most gravely, although the subject of the representation is honorable and pious. The reason is clear: because the dismissal of the habit alone, rashly made, is a sin. The malice is increased if, in place of the religious habit, the garments of comedians are assumed, because this savors of a special baseness. Hence the Council of Cologne of 1549 forbids to nuns even pious and sacred spectacles themselves: *Although these spectacles may be exhibited concerning sacred and pious things, they can nevertheless leave little good but very much evil in nuns who look upon and admire external gestures.... Therefore we forbid and prohibit henceforth either that comedians be admitted into monasteries of virgins or that virgins watch comedies.*

III. You will ask, secondly, whether, if Regulars, having secretly received garments from parents and friends, were to perform some pious and entirely sacred comedy, they would sin. I reply: Whenever Regulars with deliberate intention dismiss the habit of their religious institute without a reasonable cause, they always sin. The performance of a comedy, however sacred, is by no means a reasonable cause for dismissing that habit. Furthermore, why do you dismiss the habit and assume a lay one in order to represent a sacred matter? Do not religious and sacred garments suit sacred matters better than profane garments? You mingle sacred things with profane while you treat sacred things in lay clothes. And this holds true even if you were to put on only men's garments. But if you also represented the form of a woman, you would without doubt perpetrate a graver crime. That the garments are procured from parents or friends makes no difference whatever, for the change of habit, rashly made, is vicious in itself. In the borrowing of garments, moreover, greater or lesser scandal can occur.

IV. You will ask, thirdly, whether, if Religious were to represent something playful without laying aside their own habit, but retaining it and adapting it into a ridiculous form, they would commit any fault. I reply: provided that they do not lay aside their own habit and that the playful narrative or deed which they represent is honorable, I judge that they do not sin, at least not gravely. Yet the ridiculous arrangement of the sacred habit so that it becomes material for laughter or fosters laughter does not seem immune from some fault. For that habit is sacred; those who kiss it gain indulgences. It therefore savors of a certain deformity when we abuse it to excite laughter. In order that playful acts may be lawful, they must pertain to Eutrapelia; that is, they must suit the place, the time, and the person, and the greatest moderation is required. There are six hundred things, says Chrysostom, which can recreate the mind innocently and honorably.

Abandon, therefore, spectacles of this kind, even though sacred, because of the easy transition to profane ones; or, if you desire to represent sacred things, perform them clothed in the sacred habit and with fitting gravity. I shall say it in a few words: we ought to venerate sacred things with the greatest humility of soul and pious meditation; he who converts them into playful representations commits profanation. At Carnival time especially, it is fitting that Regulars offer continual prayers to God and devote diligent labor to holy exercises in that most calamitous season, when crimes of every kind inundate in every direction like a seething torrent. From the pulpit in their churches let them represent the principal Mysteries of the Christian religion. Let them expose the most holy Eucharist to the adoration of the people. Very many Regulars do these things, who, utterly alien to every kind of spectacle, breathe cheerfulness, gladness, and the greatest joy. Let Superiors therefore beware lest, under the appearance of devotion and piety, the abuse of spectacles be introduced into their own monasteries. For certain playful practices are of such a nature that they never stop or plant their foot where they begin, but always proceed farther. Therefore the greatest vigilance is necessary.

Chapter VIII — Some Observations on the Booklet Entitled Saggio Istorico-Canonico, etc., Dedicated to the Regular Orders at Palermo in 1751: How Gross the Errors of This Booklet Are and How Pernicious to Regulars

CHAPTER VIII

Some Observations on the Booklet Entitled *Saggio Istorico-Canonico*, etc., Dedicated to the Regular Orders at Palermo in 1751: How Gross the Errors of This Booklet Are and How Pernicious to Regulars

I. This author was not ashamed to inscribe his booklet to the Regular Orders in order, as he says in the dedicatory letter, to cleanse them of the stain of infamy which the author of the *Letter against the Theaters and Comedies of Regulars*, published at Palermo in 1748, had cast upon them. The anonymous author of this letter is Father Master Presti of the Order of Preachers, most illustrious for doctrine, integrity of morals, and zeal for promoting Regular observance, who published the said letter in order to vindicate the untarnished honor and reputation of the cloistered Orders. But such is the calamity of our most unhappy age that, when men of God raise their voice or sharpen their pen against the most putrid corruptions and abuses raging everywhere, they can scarcely escape the bitterest censures.

Father Master Presti so thoroughly overthrew the aforesaid *Saggio Istorico-Canonico* in another little work entitled *Esame del Saggio Istorico-Canonico*, etc., Palermo, 1751, that almost nothing remains to be added. Therefore I shall add very little, not so much to refute a badly patched-together little work as to render it more detestable and to endeavor, if possible, to recall its author to better conduct. For by the very dedication of his little work he defames the sacred Regular Orders and brings them into contempt and derision both among Catholics and among heretics, as though the Regular Orders approved by their own consent the theaters and comedies which, with sorrow and groaning, they tolerate when they are represented here and there by certain subjects who are transgressors of their own profession. Far be so foul and unworthy a suspicion concerning the Regular Orders.

II. To conclude the matter in a few words, the adversary must be confined within the limits of the proper controversy. He stuffs together and heaps up very many things in order to prove that honest consolations, theaters, and modest representations are lawful to Regulars, as though anyone had ever been found who even brought this into dispute. Wherefore, in a great part of his Letter, he beats the air, and the entire *Saggio Istorico-Canonico* continually vanishes into smoke. The Historical-Canonist contends that all the theaters of Regulars are honorable and modest. For he says at number XXII:

Now, since the theatrical entertainments of the Religious are ALL honorable, strewn with maxims of Christian ethics, and finally confined within the limits granted to them by the more rigorous theologians, the ecclesiastic or Religious may, without any repugnance, mount the stage and represent the person—not of a vile and shameless prostitute, as your author charges him—but of a holy young virgin who sheds her blood for love of her heavenly Spouse; or, at most, of a virtuous woman who anguishes over the danger of her lawful husband.

What modest young virgin is this? What excellent woman is this? Cleopatra, Argenes, Aristea, and so forth. This author misleads, and, beyond what can be said, deceives his readers.

III. The representations which are customarily held in certain cloisters of Regulars at Carnival time I described at the beginning of the Dissertation, and they must again be called before the eyes. Profane theaters are erected within sacred cloisters; stages are opened. The very comedies and tragedies which are recited in public theaters by actors—

—are represented within sacred cloisters. They are committed to memory over an interval of several weeks, and not rarely at the time when the divine praises ought to be celebrated in choir. Lay clothing is procured. The priests of God lay aside the sacred garment. Those who sustain the part of the little female sweethearts put on women's clothing and become lewd wretches and effeminate creatures, to speak with Cyril of Alexandria. Those who must play the parts of the little male lovers cover their heads with artificial hair and are adorned with the most splendid garments of comedians, so that they may appear polished, handsome, and pretty to their sweethearts. They come forth upon the stage to recite profane comedies. Back and forth they plead the cause of mutual love before the spectators, and each strives to carry off the palm in this amorous contest. By every art they endeavor vividly to imitate feminine tenderness and allurements and to express the sweet and soft affections of the heart. They mingle farces, or intermediate acts, filled to overflowing with scurrility and frivolity. In short, priests and priestesses express by voice, gesture, and nods the furtive arts, incitements, and praises of reciprocal love, for stretches of three or four hours, over several weeks. And often they sing, dance, and leap for joy.

IV. Behold a sincere account and true image of the comedies which are recited in certain sacred cloisters. Has anything been exaggerated beyond what is just? Will they deny that those very amorous dramas, published in print and recited by actors in public theaters, are represented in the private theaters of cloistered men? Indeed, the comedies of the more celebrated poets are selected; and the more skilled and learned those poets are, the more dangerous they are, since they thoroughly understand the art of moving the heart, softening the soul, and exciting the affections. Will they deny that cloistered men—some adorned in women's clothing and the other ornaments of women, others dressed in the garments of actors—play out the cause of love? All these things are known to the City and to the world.

V. No one but a fool will deny that these comedies are base, obscene, and most unchaste, and therefore forbidden even to Christians themselves, much more to priests. Consequently, cloistered men who represent and watch them perpetrate sacrilegious crimes, most grave offenses, and most deadly scandals. All these things were set forth more fully in the First Dissertation.

VI. But let the words of the Historical-Canonist transcribed above return before our eyes: *Now, since the theatrical entertainments of the Religious are ALL honorable, strewn with maxims of Christian ethics, the ecclesiastic or Religious may mount the stage and represent the person of a holy young virgin who sheds her blood for love of her heavenly Spouse.* How many contradictions there are here, not to say how many sacrilegious inventions. The shedding of the blood of sacred virgins, then, will be material for the consolation and relaxation of cloistered men; the most holy martyrdom of a virgin is represented in a theater during Carnival. Why? So that the Religious may take consolation from it, be recreated, relaxed, made glad, and leap for joy? When the bloody martyrdoms, torments, and butcheries of sacred virgins are recounted in order to excite devotion, penance, mortification of the flesh, and the virtue of Christian fortitude, the representation is holy; but anyone who converted all these things into material for consolation, relaxation, and vain gladness would be sacrilegious and wicked. Does the Historical-

Canonist suppose that he is addressing Indians or Ethiopians? Iniquity lies to itself, mingles sacred things with profane, and confounds everything from top to bottom in order to cast darkness upon the most splendid truth. There is now no discourse concerning sacred representations of martyrs; the dispute concerns the profane comedies which are in fact represented in certain cloisters.

VII. On page 60, number 16, our Canonist praises the authority of Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Perfect Italian Poetry*, book 1, chapter 4, where it is said: *By tragedies the pride of princes, of the powerful, and of the rich is restrained*, and so forth. That inept invention was rejected in the First Dissertation. But let the adversary hear what Muratori writes against cloister theaters in the work entitled *On Public Happiness*, chapter 26, page 375:

I must now add that there are persons of much judgment in whose eyes it is an ugly sight to see the so widely extended license of not a few cloisters, where tragedies and comedies are represented, also to give entertainment to the people, who compete with one another to attend. Such a custom and liberty have never truly entered the monasteries and convents where a stable modesty and exemplary moral discipline dwell; but in not a few others we may find that one who has renounced the pleasures of the world returns to those same pleasures, and makes no scruple of representing amorous exchanges and tendernesses between the one sex and the other, of appearing in women's clothing upon the stage—which, it must be confessed, is far too indecent for Religious men—and even of peddling forbidden wares in some merry interlude, thus rendering themselves ridiculous and mocked among the secular spectators. The cloister is, or ought to be, a theater of penance and retirement, a mirror of every virtue before the eyes of the people.

Let the newest Historical-Canonist weigh these things seriously and meditate seriously upon the fact that the illustrious Muratori here presents an account and condemnation of the comedies and tragedies which are represented in cloisters.

VIII. On page 82 the author most shamelessly and ignorantly thrusts forward abuses which may be creeping through Rome. Consult the laws which are enacted at Rome for the reformation of morals, not the vices of men flowing there from every quarter. The things he recounts about colleges of youths are either false or vicious. Besides, are the things permitted to lay youths therefore expedient for the priests of God, and indeed for cenobites? On page 121, by an unworthy fraud, he abuses the authority of the most pious Father Paolo Segneri to render cloister theaters honorable. Then, opportunely, on page 122, or the last page, he summons to his patronage the little book of Niccolò Barbieri, saying: *You may read that little book which I gave you, bearing the title The Corrected and Enlarged Petition: A Familiar Discourse by Niccolò Barbieri Called Beltrame, in which book the author, without availing himself of any authority whatever, gracefully and evidently demonstrates the truth by reason alone.*

IX. Niccolò Barbieri, called Beltrame, was a famous actor, and he pleaded his own theatrical cause. Just as the Historical-Canonist adulterated and twisted into perverse senses the Fathers, theologians, and canonists whom he brought forward to confirm his theatrical and erroneous opinion—whether through rare ignorance or less than sincere good faith—so he sincerely and in good faith brings the actor Beltrame forward as his patron. And indeed, who is there who does not strive to defend his own profession and art, whether honorable or base? But let us leave this Historical-Canonist under the patronage of his actor Beltrame. For there is no need to refute more fully the other entirely disparate things which he has frozen together in his little work, since they collapse of themselves. Would that this author might wish to retract his erroneous doctrine and consign his little book to perpetual flames, so that he may take counsel for his eternal salvation. That he may do this more

effectively, I submit to him for meditation what Salvian writes against theaters in book 6 of *On the Government of God*:

In spectacles there is a certain apostasy from the faith and a deadly betrayal of its symbols and heavenly sacraments. For what is the first saving confession of Christians at baptism? What indeed, unless that they profess to renounce the devil, his pomps and spectacles, and his works? Therefore spectacles and pomps, even according to our profession, are works of the devil. How, O Christian, do you follow spectacles after baptism, when you confess that they are works of the devil? ... And what more? You say: I believe in God the Father almighty, and in Jesus Christ his Son. Therefore the devil is first renounced so that God may be believed, because he who does not renounce the devil does not believe God. And therefore he who returns to the devil leaves God; but the devil is in spectacles and in his pomps, and for this reason, when we return to a spectacle, we abandon the faith of Christ. If Salvian wrote these things against Christians who frequent theaters, what would he not have said against cenobites who act male and female mimes?

X. Thanks must nevertheless be rendered to God because a certain most distinguished cenobitic Superior, a defender of sounder doctrine and most adorned with integrity of morals, having seriously weighed the matter on the occasion of the aforesaid booklet, took care that the theater erected within the cloister be entirely demolished and wholly exterminated comic representations from his monastery. By that one deed he defeated the said booklet and other inventions of that kind more forcefully and effectively than could any dissertation or discourse.

Third Dissertation — On Priests in Masks

THIRD DISSERTATION
On Priests in Masks
PREFACE

I have resolved to set forth another proof of divine wrath and vengeance against the human race, all the more deadly and horrible because it concerns priests and clerics initiated into sacred orders. That crimes creep within the sacred body itself is to be lamented, but not greatly wondered at, since the very men consecrated to God consist of flesh stained by the blemish of original guilt, and even in the apostolic college one Judas was found. But that priests—the teachers of the peoples, interpreters of the evangelical law, intercessors between Christ Jesus and the people—should call evil good and good evil, putting darkness for light and light for darkness: this is the most dreadful scourge of heavenly vengeance, expressed by Ezekiel 7:26, who cries: *Disturbance shall come upon disturbance, and report upon report; and they shall seek a vision from the prophet, and the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders.* At the very time of Carnival, when demons exercise their utmost power and fury upon souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, the priests of God—who ought to watch against the roaring lion and take up the shield of faith—assume masks invented by the devil, not by God, go to theaters, and sit at spectacles. And they practice this corruption, which is sacrilegious in them, as though it were an honorable consolation and lawful recreation, without turning it even into the slightest fault for themselves.

That you may perceive how terrible this prodigy of blindness is, hold this beforehand as certain: all the Fathers, the sacred canons, all theologians, and even the more benign casuists condemn priests who go out masked in public as guilty of mortal sin. Is this true? Most true. Below I shall demonstrate so certain a truth by adducing the testimonies of Diana, Bonacina, Trullench, and other casuists of a laxer ethics. And how, you ask, can that be evil which even the priests themselves consider honorable, although by the consent of all the wise it is a crime? Do you marvel? Are you amazed? Read Holy Scripture, and you will discover that this is the dreadful punishment of blindness which I have already indicated. Hear Isaiah, chapter 29: *For the Lord has mingled for you the spirit of a deep sleep; he will close your eyes, your prophets and your leaders who see visions; and the vision of all shall be to you as the words of a sealed book, which, when they give it to one who knows letters, they shall say: Read this; and he shall answer: I cannot.*

Perhaps they will read this book of mine also, but they will laugh at it and despise it as full of monstrous rigor. All these things confirm more clearly what I have said: namely, that the darkness of blindness obscures even the minds of some priests of Christianity. Awake therefore, brethren, and, directing your minds toward the light of truth, weigh seriously what I am about to say for your benefit and for removing the disgrace of the clerical order.

Chapter I — Priests Who, Having Laid Aside Clerical Clothing, Put on the Garments of Laymen and, Their Faces Hidden by a Mask, Run through Streets and Squares, Go to Theaters, and Stand as Spectators of Those Playing and Dancing, Sin Mortally

CHAPTER I

Priests Who, Having Laid Aside Clerical Clothing, Put on the Garments of Laymen and, Their Faces Hidden by a Mask, Run through Streets and Squares, Go to Theaters, and Stand as Spectators of Those Playing and Dancing, Sin Mortally

I. Already in the year 1736 I published a dissertation on Regulars in masks, and a little later I added to *Apostolic Monastic Discipline* an appendix against masked secular clerics. I had touched briefly upon this second matter; therefore I am now pleased to reconsider it a second time and to illustrate the same argument more fully.

II. When the discourse is instituted concerning priests in masks, however, I by no means call into question certain accidental and rare events in which either the necessity of preserving life or another grave and urgent cause can render the use of masks lawful for priests, or at least the brevity of time can excuse it from grave guilt. But this is what we investigate: whether priests and clerics initiated into sacred orders who, with every cause of necessity removed, go about masked, sin mortally.

III. The affirmative conclusion is common and is established by invincible reasons. The first and chief reason is drawn from priestly dignity itself. Father Girolamo dal Portico, of the Congregation of the Mother of God, who learnedly and eruditely illustrated and exhausted this subject in the vernacular, expounds at length the indicated reason inherent in the dignity of the priest; all the other theologians and Fathers likewise inculcate it more deeply.

IV. Even among barbarous nations and those of a superstitious religion, the priesthood has always been held in the highest esteem. Tertullian, in *Scorpiace*, chapter 9, calls the priests of the Christian profession *hereditary disciples and fruits of the apostolic seed*. St. John Chrysostom, in book 3 of *On the Priesthood*, chapter 3, says: *The priesthood is performed upon earth, but must be referred to the order and rank of heavenly things.* Priests are the teachers and fathers of the Christian people. After Christ Jesus himself, they were instituted as mediators between God and men. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5: *He gave us the ministry of reconciliation. For God indeed was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their sins to them, and he placed in us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we discharge an embassy for Christ*.

No power, whether of kings or emperors, can in any way be compared with the sublimity of priests. Indeed, St. Bernard in the *Sermon to Pastors* and St. Chrysostom in book 3 of *On the Priesthood*, chapter 5, have these words: *God has preferred you to kings and emperors; he has preferred you to angels and archangels; he has preferred you to dominations.* In a few words, before the other Fathers, St. Augustine sets forth the incredible excellence and power of the priest in his second discourse on Psalm 37, and asserts that in the hands of priests the Son of God is in a certain manner incarnated: *Truly venerable is the dignity of priests, in whose hands the Son of God is incarnated as though in the womb of the Virgin.* What more? That

power which belongs to God alone—namely, forgiving sins—has been conferred upon priests: *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose you shall retain, they are retained.*

Recognizing this faculty, Chrysostom exclaims in book 3 of *On the Priesthood*, section 4: *What power, I ask, can be greater than this one? The Father gave every kind of power to the Son; but I see that this same power in its entirety was handed by God the Son to priests. The tribunal of God in heaven and that of priests on earth are made, as it were, one.* And just as Christ joined human nature to himself as the instrument of the universal sanctification of sins, so he exalted priests that they might be the peculiar instruments for the remission of crimes and for the sanctification of souls by divine grace. Who can meditate upon such exalted and divine gifts without regarding and venerating the priestly rank with a humble soul?

V. Hence all the Fathers and theologians conclude that the gait, gestures, clothing, and actions of priests ought to correspond to their sublime dignity. *Therefore*, says Salvian in book 2 *To the Catholic Church, all who are raised upon the elevation of the sacred altar ought to excel in merit as much as in rank. For nothing is more shameful than for anyone to be eminent in station and despicable in baseness.* And Pope St. Leo writes in the canon *Omnium*, distinction 32: *So excellent is the election of priests that the things which are not reckoned as guilt in other members of the Church are nevertheless held unlawful in them.* Passing over the innumerable testimonies of other Fathers, the Council of Trent itself says in session 22, chapter 1: *Let them flee even light offenses, which in them appear greatest.*

VI. Who can now restrain himself from exclaiming: A priest—a person so grave, so holy, so excellent—lays aside priestly clothing, conceals his dignity, puts on the garments of laymen, and assumes a mask. Why? So that he may delight in the tricks of Carnival, be present at the tables of gamblers, and watch comedies, dances, and the spectacles of a mad world and of pagan superstition? In the morning, at the sacred altar, he offers to the eternal Father the Son of God himself, whose place he sustains, for the remission of sins, and in order to reconcile men to God and render the infinite clemency of God propitious to them; but in the afternoon, neglecting so divine and excellent a dignity, he assumes the insignia of the world—and, not to say, of the devil—and, masked among laymen and a dissolute populace, sits at spectacles, delighting to look upon women and men conversing and engaging in shameless contests with one another. In the morning he offers his service to God; in the evening, to the pomps of the world and of Satan. Habit and familiarity alone make it possible for such most dreadful monstrosities to be watched without the greatest horror and almost to be praised.

Therefore St. Augustine cries: *Woe to the sins of men! We are horrified only by those which are unusual; but the customary ones, for the washing away of which the blood of the Son of God was shed—although they are so great that they cause the kingdom of God to be shut entirely against themselves—we are often compelled by seeing everything to tolerate, and by tolerating often even to commit some of them. Enchiridion*, chapter 80. From the supreme and manifest opposition of masks to priestly dignity and holiness, therefore, the gravity of mortal sin is plainly gathered.

VII. What increases the malice of the sin in priests' use of masks is that it exposes the priestly rank and ecclesiastical state to mockery and derision. It was said above that the priestly rank rises above even royal excellence. Yet they differ in this: royal dignity has its splendid insignia visible to the senses—namely, the homage of subjects and the magnificent and resplendent array of ministers and servants. Priestly majesty is spiritual and hidden from the senses. Outwardly it discloses itself solely in gravity of morals, holiness of life, and the exercise of virtues. These are the things which procure

for priests the obedience, reverence, and veneration of the Christian people. On the contrary, if their morals are corrupt, if they mingle themselves with the spectacles and entertainments of the world, then they come into contempt and disdain among the Christian people.

Hence the Council of Trent, session 14, established these things: *Let bishops admonish their clerics that in conduct, speech, and knowledge they go before the people of God, mindful of what is written: Be holy, for I am holy; and, according to the word of the Apostle: Giving no offense to anyone, that our ministry be not blamed; but in all things let them show themselves as ministers of God.* This is the doctrine of St. Paul the Apostle; this is the doctrine of all the Councils and Fathers. For the sake of brevity I shall transcribe only the words of St. Ambrose from book 3 of the letter to Irenaeus: *Faith requires nothing plebeian in priests, nothing popular, nothing in common with the disturbance, practice, and morals of the disorderly multitude. A sober gravity apart from crowds, a serious life, a singular weight: priestly dignity claims these for itself. For how can he be regarded by the people who has nothing secret from the people, nothing different from the multitude? What indeed should they admire in you if they recognize their own things in you? If they perceive nothing in you which they may find beyond themselves? If, in you whom they judge worthy of reverence, they encounter the things at which they blush in themselves? Let us therefore rise above plebeian opinions, withdraw from a certain beaten path of herd-like association and from the worn rut of life, and decline the path of the common way which he runs whose life is lighter than the runner. But let us seek for ourselves a way inaccessible to the words of insolent men, impassable to the works of the ignorant, which no stained man wears down.*

VIII. What if the people were to see priests not only as no holier, but, on the contrary, as imitating the more corrupt morals of the people? What scandal would there then be, what contempt of the ecclesiastical state, what ruin of souls—especially if the teachers, doctors, and spiritual physicians of the peoples, at Carnival time, when the demon and the world directly attack the holiness of the Christian religion and wield their most powerful weapons for disfiguring chastity, mingle themselves with the mad multitude and with laymen of more dissolute life? By whom could the erring then be corrected, by whom could the sick be healed, if the physicians themselves are leprous?

IX. Certain priests whom I myself have heard mutter that the people would suffer grave scandal if they saw priests dressed in clerical clothing either wandering through the squares or attending spectacles, comedies, or theaters. Therefore, in order to avoid the stumbling block, having laid aside the sacred garment, they conceal their state with a mask. What a robust argument this is! The Christian people suffer scandal when they behold priests attending the enumerated entertainments and spectacles. Therefore, by the common judgment of that very crowd and Christian people, those spectacles and consolations are regarded as unlawful and forbidden to priests. Christianity suffers scandal if it sees clerics initiated into sacred orders frequenting theaters and watching comedies, dances, and games? Therefore it receives graver scandal when it sees those same men disguised, commonly called *mascherati*.

But, they add, it would indeed receive scandal if the people discovered this; yet they do not know that the masked men are priests. Is that truly so? Do not the people cry out with one voice: *The priest, the friar in a mask!* Do those men not delude themselves who imagine that these things can be concealed from laymen? Are they unknown to household servants, neighbors, companions, who supply or hire out the clothes? Therefore I judge you from your own mouth. You admit that laymen would receive scandal if they saw priests dressed in clerical clothing, or manifestly masked, go to theaters, to squares in which spectacles are being held, or to houses where games or dances take place. But in

fact the people see priests and know that they go to the aforesaid places in disguise. I conclude that priests who go about masked sin mortally.

X. Marcus Vivaldus replies in the appendix to the *Golden Candlestick*, chapter 78, that in some place no —

scandal is suffered by laymen who behold such things; but at Bologna, he says, where the laymen themselves incite clerics to this, saying—although falsely—that the use of masks was invented chiefly for clerics, there is no scandal. This is a casuistical subtlety. Here is a doctor of the times. Elsewhere, too, this barbarous proverb is circulated: *Masks were instituted for priests and friars.* A writer on moral matters ought to be ashamed to bring forward the erroneous maxims of a corrupt populace in order to spread some veil over error. The use of masks in a priest by its own nature gives rise to scandal because of its supreme opposition to the priestly rank. Whether scandal actually follows here or elsewhere is accidental. Yet on that account the masked priest is free from grave crime.

XI. What has thus far been said is confirmed more clearly. Theologians commonly affirm, and even the more benign casuists themselves, that laymen who go publicly masked in either clerical or monastic clothing sin mortally. This judgment is taught by Sylvester under the word *Habit*, and after him by Comitolus, Ricciullus, Navarrus, Fumus, Corradus, Rodriguez, Corduba, Portellus, Wigandt, Bordonius, Lezana, Barbosa, and Naldus. They all teach: *One who wears the religious habit while disguised or masked—commonly, mascherato—sins mortally.* What more? This doctrine is not only common among theologians and casuists; Emperor Justinian himself, in his celebrated Authentic *On Holy Bishops*, title 15, section 44, decrees these things:

We therefore generally forbid all who live in secular life—and especially those who practice the theatrical arts, as well as prostitutes—to use the appearance of a monk, a nun, an ascetic woman, or any person of this kind, or to imitate such an appearance. Let all who presume either to use such an appearance, to imitate it, or to make mockery of any ecclesiastical discipline know that they will both sustain corporal punishments and be consigned to exile.

XII. But why do laymen who go about masked in religious clothing sin? Because they profane and contemn the sacred and religious habit and expose it to derision and mockery. Why is so great an honor due to religious clothing? Because it is the badge and insignia of the priestly rank. Therefore he perpetrates a graver crime who clothes the priestly person himself in masks and deforms and defames him. The religious garment is sacred and venerable because of the priestly character and rank; therefore the priestly person himself, marked with an indelible character, is more sacred and more worthy of respect. What? Will the garment be worthy of greater honor and veneration than the person who wears the garment? He who assumes the garment as a mask sins mortally; and will he not sin mortally who makes the person himself masked? This most evident argument is common among theologians. I shall transcribe the words of only two.

The celebrated Jesuit Father Paolo Comitolus, *Moral Responses*, book 6, question 28, has these words: *For profane men to go forth masked in the religious habit is a deadly crime, as Sylvester, Angelus, and others teach, because it is a great mockery of God in his saints. Much more, therefore, do both clerics and monks sin when, by a most ridiculous and highly indecorous habit, they inflict a signal insult upon the holiness of the sacred Orders, whose institutes they ought to follow, and upon the glory of God most good and great and of the saints.*

Ricciullus, Bishop of Cosenza, writes similar things in book 4, chapter *On Public Spectacles*: *If a layman cannot without crime put on in jest the clothing of an ecclesiastical person, as the Doctors everywhere affirm, much*

less indeed is it lawful for ecclesiastics themselves to use masks; because where the figure is prohibited, much more is that which is figured judged to be prohibited. Religious garments are insignia of the priestly Order and the religious state. Priests represent the person of the High Priest Jesus Christ, whom in the morning they offer upon the altar to the eternal Father in order to render him propitious to the people. Therefore masked priests sin all the more wickedly, in proportion as the supreme priesthood excels more eminently than sacred garments.

Chapter II — By the Authority of the Sacred Canons It Is Demonstrated That Priests Who Go Forth Masked Sin Mortally

CHAPTER II

By the Authority of the Sacred Canons It Is Demonstrated That Priests Who Go Forth Masked Sin Mortally

I. Before I report the ancient canons, it must be observed that the use of masks, at least among Christians, is not so ancient. For Juan Luis Vives, who wrote at the beginning of the sixteenth century, says in his book *On the Education of a Christian Woman*, under the title *On Dancing*: *Not so long ago a custom was invented by which men and women, masked, go around the whole city dancing through distinguished houses.... And some are so devoted to this pastime that they affirm that nothing is of equal delight to going around the houses in this manner, with the head wrapped about.* Polydore Vergil, in book 3 of *On the Inventors of Things*, chapter 1, testifies that in his time this corruption had not penetrated England: *England alone of all regions has hitherto not seen masked beasts, nor indeed does it wish to see them; since among the English, who in this matter are wiser than the rest, it is law that it be a capital offense if anyone puts on a mask.* Thiers, in *On Games*, chapter 25, relates that this corruption prevailed in France at the end of the sixteenth century. Therefore express prohibitions of masks are not to be expected from the ancient canons. They nevertheless establish principles from which the proscription of so great a corruption is evidently inferred.

II. Martène, book 5, chapter 7; Christian Lupus, in his notes on canon 14 of the Seventh General Council; and Louis Thomassin, part 1, book 2, chapter 37 of *Ancient and New Discipline*, report innumerable canons in which clerics are severely commanded publicly to wear both the tonsure and garments appointed for the ecclesiastical state and distinct from those of laymen. I shall gather a few. In Causa 21, question 4, canon 5, these things are commanded: *We command that bishops as well as clerics strive to please God and men in the state of their mind and the habit of their body, and that they not offend the sight of those whose form and example they ought to be by superfluity, cut, or color of garments, nor in the tonsure; but rather let them display that which befits their holiness. But if, after being admonished by the bishop, they are unwilling to amend themselves, let them be deprived of ecclesiastical benefices.*

III. The Roman Council under Pope Zacharias decrees these things in chapter 8: *If a cleric or monk presumes to let his hair grow long, let him be anathema.*

IV. The Council of Toulouse, celebrated in the year 1119, prescribes similar things: *If anyone distinguished by the title of the ecclesiastical militia—a monk, a canon, or any cleric—making his first faith void, turns back or grows his hair like a layman, let him be deprived of the communion of the Church.*

V. The Council of York, celebrated in the year 1194, inflicts more severe penalties upon clerics who grow their hair, in these words: *Clerics who have received the crown from the bishop shall have the tonsure and crown; if they contemn having it, let them be compelled to it by deprivation of the benefices which they possess.*

VI. By the same law by which the sacred canons forbid the growing of hair, they prohibit putting on lay clothes. The Roman Council celebrated in the year 743 says: *Bishops, priests, and deacons shall not use secular garments.... For just as a woman with her head unveiled dishonors her head, according to the word of the*

Apostle, so a priest without a covering dishonors his priesthood; but if he rashly presumes to act against the statutes, let him be deprived of communion.

VII. The Council of Vienne under Clement V prescribes these things concerning dress: *Since he who, casting aside the garments proper to his Order, presumes without reasonable cause to assume others and wear them in public renders himself unworthy of the prerogative of those professed in that Order, by the present constitution we decree that any cleric who publicly uses striped or divided clothing, unless there is a reasonable cause, if he is beneficed, is by that very fact suspended for six months from the receipt of the fruits of the benefices which he holds. If, however, he is not beneficed, but is constituted in sacred Orders below the priesthood, for the same period he shall by that very fact be rendered incapable of obtaining an ecclesiastical benefice.*

But one holding a dignity, a personatus, or another benefice to which the care of souls is attached, as well as all others constituted in the priesthood and any Religious—who ought, through the propriety of their dress, to exhibit outwardly the outward uprightness of their morals—if, without a reasonable cause, they publicly wear clothing of this kind, or publicly bear a head-band or linen cap upon the head, shall by that very fact be suspended: the beneficed from receipt of the fruits of the benefices which they hold for one year; but the other priests and any Religious shall for the same period be rendered incapable of obtaining any ecclesiastical benefice.

VIII. The Council of Trent, to omit many earlier things, defines these in session 14, chapter 6: *So great today has grown the rashness and contempt of religion of some that, making little account of their own dignity and clerical honor, they even wear lay clothes publicly, planting their feet in different places, the one in divine things, the other in carnal. Therefore all ecclesiastical persons, however exempt, who either are in sacred Orders or possess any ecclesiastical dignities, personatus, offices, or benefices, if, after they have been admonished by their bishop, even by public edict, they do not wear an honorable clerical habit congruent with their Order and dignity and according to the ordinance and command of the bishop himself, can and ought to be coerced by suspension from Orders, office, and benefice, and from the fruits, revenues, and proceeds of such benefices.*

IX. Again the same Council of Trent adds these other things in session 22, chapter 1: *There is nothing which continually instructs others more in piety and the worship of God than the life and example of those who have dedicated themselves to the divine ministry; for since they are seen to have been raised from the things of the world to a higher place, the rest cast their eyes upon them as upon a mirror and take from them what they may imitate. Therefore it is altogether fitting that clerics called to the portion of the Lord so compose their life and morals that in dress, gesture, gait, speech, and all other things they display nothing except what is grave, modest, and full of religion.*

X. The Councils, especially that of Trent, condemn as guilty of grave rashness priests who, neglecting clerical clothing, do not blush to put on lay garments which disclose vanity, pomp, and pride. What guilt, then, will those men incur who do not fear to assume not only the lay clothing of Christians, but the very vain and superstitious forms of dress belonging to pagan shamelessness, and, covered with them, to enter public places? The Councils deprive the beneficed of the fruits of their benefices; they declare deacons incapable of the priesthood when they do not display the insignia of the clerical state as they go forth in public. By what penalty, then, must those men be punished who display the insignia of pagans? If priests who clothe the ecclesiastical state less fittingly tread heaven with one foot and earth with the other, as the Council of Trent says, those surely walk the road to hell with both feet who, concealing the image of the countenance impressed by God the Creator, superimpose upon their own faces masks devised by the demon.

Chapter III — Later Synods Declare That Masked Priests Sin Mortally, Since They Punish Them with the Most Grave Penalty of Excommunication or Suspension

CHAPTER III

Later Synods Declare That Masked Priests Sin Mortally, Since They Punish Them with the Most Grave Penalty of Excommunication or Suspension

I. The more ancient canons and Councils did not mention masks because so great a corruption had not yet become established, as I indicated above. Once the abuse had been introduced, later synods did not cease to restrain masked clerics with the gravest penalties. From the many decrees of synods against priests' masks I shall gather a few.

II. St. Francis de Sales, in his synod, as Baptista Zier reports in his treatise *On Games*, chapter 25, decrees these things against masked clerics, rendered from the French into Latin: *If clerics were so forgetful of their own state that they went forth masked, they would incur excommunication by that very fact, the absolution from which we reserve to ourselves.*

III. The most celebrated Godeau, Bishop of Vence, in his synod, title 1, chapter 4, number 3, imposed the same penalty of excommunication upon masked clerics. He states in French—and this is its Latin meaning: *Ecclesiastics who go about masked will by that very fact be subject to excommunication, the absolution from which we reserve to ourselves alone.*

IV. Giovanni Lucido Cattaneo, Bishop of Mantua, in his synod celebrated in the year 1679, punished masked clerics not only with excommunication but also with a monetary fine: *Any cleric who goes about masked or disguised, in addition to incurring excommunication, shall also be punished with a penalty of twenty gold pieces.*

V. Ildefonso Colonna, Bishop of Barcelona, established the following in the synod held in the year 1600, under the title *On the Life and Uprightness of Clerics*: *No cleric shall henceforth practice leaping or dancing, nor go about masked, under penalty of excommunication.*

VI. Girolamo Giovanelli decreed these things in his Synod of Sora in the year 1641: *To practice dances, to go about masked ... all these things we prohibit to clerics ... under the penalty, for the first offense, of imprisonment for one month; but if, after being admonished again, they do not desist, they shall incur the penalty of excommunication by that very fact.*

VII. Giorgio Bolognetti, in the synod celebrated in the year 1645, under the title *On the Life and Uprightness of Clerics*, imposed these penalties upon masked clerics: *Clerics, of whatever rank and Order they may be, shall not go about masked or disguised, under penalty, for the first offense, of imprisonment for one month; but if, after being admonished again, they do not desist, they shall be punished with other graver penalties, including excommunication, at our discretion.*

VIII. The Ninth Synod of Faenza, celebrated by Cardinal Rossetti, page 4, chapter 1, number 10, has these things: *To go about masked or disguised, and to lead dances with women ... we prohibit to clerics constituted in sacred Orders, under the penalty of suspension reserved to us, to be incurred by that very fact.*

IX. In the Synod of Tortona held by Bishop Carlo Francesco Ceva in the year 1690, in the chapter *On the Life and Uprightness of Clerics*, these things are decreed: *We impose upon clerics constituted in sacred Orders the penalty of suspension reserved to us if they dare to go about with masked face.*

X. In the Synod of Pesaro held in the year 1690 by Bishop Alessandro Avio, in the chapter *On the Life and Uprightness of Clerics*, he punishes masked clerics with the penalty of suspension: *The baseness of Carnival does not relax minds but corrupts them. Therefore clerics, if constituted in sacred Orders, shall not go about masked, under the penalty of suspension reserved to us, to be incurred by that very fact; and if they are in minor Orders, under a penalty of five gold pieces.*

XI. The Synod of Florence in the year 1691 decreed: *No cleric, under any pretext whatever, shall dare to leave his house masked or disguised, under the penalty of suspension to be incurred by that very fact.*

XII. The Synod of Pisa, celebrated in the year 1708 under Bishop Frosini, decreed: *No secular or Regular cleric shall go about disguised, under the penalty of suspension to be incurred by that very fact.*

XIII. The Synod of Ancona, celebrated by Cardinal Ruffi, part 3, chapter 1, decrees these things: *It is base and intolerable for ecclesiastics to go about disguised or to put on a mask at Carnival time; therefore, if anyone is apprehended in these things and convicted by lawful witnesses, he shall be punished with the penalty of formal imprisonment or with other penalties at our discretion.*

XIV. The Synod of Naples, held in the year 1680 by Cardinal Caracciolo, decreed: *Clerics shall not go about disguised—that is, with a mask—at Carnival time, under the penalty of formal imprisonment for two months for the first offense, and other penalties to be inflicted at our discretion.*

XV. The Synod of Pistoia, celebrated by Bishop Carlo Visdomini, decreed: *We command that no clerics go about disguised in any way; but if clerics constituted in sacred Orders dare to go about disguised, by that very fact let them be suspended from divine offices for ten days.*

XVI. The Synod of Ravenna, celebrated by Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, decreed: *Clerics shall not lead dances, nor shall they go about masked or disguised, under the penalty of suspension to be incurred by that very fact.*

XVII. The Synod of Fiesole, held in the year 1720 under Ludovico Maria Strozzi, decreed: *We declare any clerics who go about masked or disguised subject by that very fact to the penalty of suspension.*

XVIII. The Synod of Volterra, which Ludovico Pandolfini held in the year 1724, decreed: *Let clerics remember that they cannot go about masked without deadly guilt; and therefore under a penalty to be determined by us and applied to pious places, we prohibit it altogether.*

XIX. The Synod of Cortona, convened in the year 1731 by Bishop Ludovico Gherardi, decreed: *Clerics shall not go about disguised. Let them remember that they cannot go about masked without deadly guilt.*

XX. It is the common judgment of theologians that penalties so grave, especially excommunication, cannot be imposed for a light fault. All commonly require mortal sin for incurring the penalty of excommunication by that very fact. Several of the praised synods inflict the penalty of excommunication upon masked priests and add other monetary penalties. Other synods impose the penalty of suspension and the punishment of imprisonment. Still others clearly declare that disguised clerics sin mortally. What more is required for a manifest and evident judgment? I could have gathered very many other synods, which I pass over for the sake of brevity.

Chapter IV — By the Common Judgment of the Benign Theologians, Clerics Who Go About Disguised Are Condemned as Guilty of Mortal Sin

CHAPTER IV

By the Common Judgment of the Benign Theologians, Clerics Who Go About Disguised Are Condemned as Guilty of Mortal Sin

I. In the praised appendix published by me long ago, I cited only a few theologians, and even the laxer casuists. I shall now give more, so that I may close every avenue of escape to masked priests. After so many canons and so many decrees of synods, it would indeed be superfluous to invoke the votes of the benign casuists. Yet because those who endeavor to render honorable the morals of our most corrupt age and the new corruptions of living take refuge in the asylum of casuists whom they call benign—entrusting their souls to them more than to the Councils and Fathers—I am pleased to convict them on this side also. For all the laxer casuists condemn priests who go forth masked in public as guilty of mortal sin.

And lest I seem to assert this without proof, I adduce the testimony of Marcus Vidal, who in relaxing Christian ethics carried off the palm even from Father Antonino Diana himself. Father Marcus Vidal testifies in his *Arca Vitali on the Ecclesiastical State*: *Nearly all the Doctors whom I have read who treat this question think and affirm that clerics who go about disguised sin mortally.* That testimony is not only true but also ineluctable. For this Marcus Vidal, who admits that all the Doctors condemn masked priests as guilty of mortal sin, was not ashamed to oppose himself to the torrent of the Doctors and to purge those same priests of this mortal guilt. But he paid penalties worthy of his audacity, since his doctrine was proscribed by the Church because of its excessive laxity. Below I shall reject the most vain and ridiculous sophisms of this casuist; now I shall transcribe the testimonies both of theologians and of casuists.

II. St. Antoninus, part 2, treatise 3, chapter 7, says: *To watch those leading dances, leaping, running for a prize, exercising in the arena, jousting, or engaging in other games does not of itself appear to be mortal, although it is vanity and a loss of time. Yet it could be mortal there accidentally, because of some supervening evil or an evil intention. For clerics and Religious also to watch such things seems a grave sin because of the scandal of the people. Hence it is said in On Consecration, distinction 55: It is not fitting—that is, it is not congruous—for ministers of the altar or any clerics to attend any spectacles; and in the preceding chapter it is said that they are not to consent to wear masks by the art of demons.* The most holy Archbishop judges it a grave sin if priests merely watch those who lead dances and masked persons attending spectacles. He therefore judges it a most grave sin if the priests themselves go about masked and attend theaters.

III. Sylvester Prierias, Master of the Apostolic Palace, writes these things concerning clerics in his *Summa*, under the word *Game*: *Likewise, by reason of clerical uprightness, every game is prohibited to them in which they would make a public spectacle of their own person, such as leaping, dancing, and the like; whence such a thing would be mortal for them. It is otherwise in secret with some members of the household. And masked play is likewise forbidden to them, because they cannot change their habit except for a reasonable cause.*

IV. Giovanni Cagnazzo writes these things in his *Tabiena Summa*, under the word *Game*: *Thirdly, it could be mortal by reason of the place or person.... Masks are called deformities of men, whether by the application of skins*

or of colors, and in the vernacular they are called maschere; and such games ought not to be performed ... by clerics anywhere. Indeed, the canon says that a cleric ought not to attend these games; rather, if an actor or buffoon comes while a cleric is at table, the cleric ought to rise from the table and withdraw rather than see or hear these things, as in the canon Non oportet, On Consecration, distinction 5. Cagnazzo dedicated this *Summa* to Cajetan, whose words I shall give below. This author therefore wrote before the Council of Trent, when discipline had collapsed to the utmost. And nevertheless clerics initiated into sacred Orders who merely attended spectacles, masked games, and dances were judged guilty of mortal sin.

V. The most celebrated Jesuit Paolo Comitolus, a vigorous opponent of laxer ethics, has these things in book 6 of his *Moral Responses*, question 8: *Always, both in my public schools and—*

in my private responses, I have professed that all clerics who have been initiated into sacred Orders, and all professed members of an approved Religious institute, who convert the sacred habit which they ought to protect into that foul habit which belongs to stage players, mimes, and Luperci, contract guilt worthy of eternal punishment, and that professed Religious become bound by the censure of excommunication.... To afflict both the ecclesiastical Order and divine worship with signal injury and disgrace is a deadly crime. All who disgrace their sacred head and sacred person with that infamous mask and most base clothing do this. Therefore they commit a deadly crime.

VI. Martin Navarrus teaches these things in chapter 25 of his *Manual*: *Thirty-thirdly, a cleric in sacred Orders, a beneficed cleric, or a monk sins mortally if he does not wear the habit and the tonsure, or puts on clothes unbecoming to him.*

VII. Bartolomé de Salón, in his commentary on question 5, article 6, conclusion 2, of the *Second Part of the Second Part* of St. Thomas, has these things at the end: *Clerics should be admonished, according to Angelus under the word Game, that the masked game practiced by disguised persons, whom in Spanish we call máscaras, is forbidden to clerics under mortal sin.*

VIII. Antonio Ricciullus, Archbishop of Cosenza, writes many things against masks in *On the Law of Persons Existing in a Reprobate State*, and among them the following: *This license for acting mad extends only to laymen and does not assist ecclesiastical persons, lest clerical uprightness be deformed by the baseness of masks. For this reason, since bishops above all are bound to be an example to others, Emperor Justinian rightly pronounced that for a bishop to use masks, even for the sake of jest, or to attend theatrical and popular spectacles, is a thing beyond common belief and incredible. And therefore Cajetan, Armilla, and Sebastianus Medices maintain that a bishop sins mortally in all the aforesaid things. I think the same must be said of priests and others constituted in sacred Orders. For although so great a deformity cannot be considered in them as is considered in a bishop covering himself with masks, nevertheless the use of masks is specially forbidden to them also.*

IX. But, passing over many other theologians, let Father Antonino Diana lead the chorus of the benign casuists. In volume 7, treatise 5, resolution 6, page 225, he teaches: *I do not think that one should depart from the common opinion of the Doctors, namely that secular and Regular clerics who go about disguised during Carnival commit mortal sin.* Let venerable priests consider these things seriously. That Diana who, as Caramuel writes in the letter prefixed to his *Fundamental Theology*, is deservedly called *the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world*, could not find in his most ample dispensary of benignity, or laxity, so much as one little distinction by which to exempt disguised clerics from mortal sin; rather, he candidly testifies that the common judgment of the Doctors declares them guilty of mortal sin.

X. Father Antoninus Cortonius, book 3 of the *Controversies*, chapter 7, number 146: *A doubt arises whether a cleric who goes about masked through the city sins mortally. I respond affirmatively with Diana, not only because of the scandal but also because of the injury done to the clerical state; for even apart from scandal, to go about masked is immodest.*

XI. Father Candido Brognolo says in treatise 3, chapter 6, of *On the State and Life of Regulars*: *Although the laying aside of the habit, considered in itself, is not at least a mortal sin—indeed, sometimes no sin at all, as I said in resolution 5—nevertheless it is sometimes a mortal sin: namely, when it is done with scandal to others, from a base cause of committing fornication, stealing, leading dances, or using masks outside the cloister. From these and similar circumstances mortal sin is deduced, as all the cited Doctors teach.*

XII. Cassianus of St. Elijah, in the *Tree of Opinions* under the word *Mask*: *That clerics who use masks, even without an evil end or scandal, sin mortally—even prescinding from scandal and from every evil circumstance—is by far the more probable opinion, especially if they are in sacred Orders or are beneficed. The reason is that the nature of such an act is specially repugnant to the clerical state.*

XIII. Nicola Baldelli, book 3 of *On Life and Sins*, disputation 32, number 9, teaches that masked clerics sin mortally even prescinding from scandal, an evil end, and any other evil circumstance, adding: *The superfluity of play arising from inept joy or levity of mind is venial in clerics only when the nature of the act which they assume is not specially repugnant to the clerical state, as Cajetan notes in the Second Part of the Second Part, question 168, article 4, in the reply to the third objection; yet it is repugnant in this manner if they take up arms and masks. The same Cajetan also supports the same judgment in his Summa under the words Use of Masks, where he says that it is rendered illicit not only by an evil end and by an incongruous time, place, and manner, but also that the condition of the person must be weighed especially: for it is a license of youth to assume masks during the season in which it is permitted, as it were, to act mad; and this is judged very alien to grave men, such as ecclesiastics, especially prelates. Armilla has the same thing under the word Mask; and Sylvester and Angelus may be added under the word Game, where they teach that masked play is forbidden to clerics because they cannot change their habit.*

For if, according to the Council of Trent, session 14, chapter 6, it is rashness and contempt of religion and of their own dignity and honor that clerics do not always wear clothes congruent with their Order, but sometimes publicly wear lay clothes—and this must be punished by suspension from Order, office, and benefice—how much more so if they assume masks and go about publicly masked?

This reasoning is decisive. Priests sin mortally if, with tonsure and clerical clothing neglected, they go about publicly clothed in the garments of laymen, as is established by the Council of Trent. Therefore they sin more gravely when they assume masks, which are the insignia of mad youth, of a dissolute people, and of worldly folly.

XIV. Father Theophilus Alarius, book 2, under the word *Cleric*, number 38: *For a cleric to go about disguised and to practice masked play is mortal sin.*

XV. Father Octavius of St. Joseph, question 1501: *Does a cleric or Religious who goes about disguised or masked—commonly, mascherato—sin mortally? He sins mortally, and thus Sylvester and others teach.*

XVI. Andrea Bertone, in the book *On Negligence and Remission*, part 2, article 17: *It is altogether unlawful for the clerical habit to be put on by masked persons in jest, because the holiness of the habit is excessively dishonored; much more so if the person of a priest puts on the mask itself.*

XVII. Martino Bonacina, disputation 3 *On Restitution*, question 3, point 1, number 17: *You will ask whether clerics can perform masked games. I respond negatively. For it is unbecoming to an ecclesiastical person to represent a fictitious person in this manner. Therefore Angelus condemns them as guilty of mortal sin; nor would I myself excuse them from mortal sin unless perhaps they did this rarely, for a brief time, and without scandal. But in this place I would call one hour a brief time.*

XVIII. Francesco Monarelli, in his *Formulary*, book 1, title 5, formula 11, annotation 7: *Clerics ought not to go about with a mask, because he who does this is guilty of deadly sin.* Likewise in book 2, title 15, annotation 2: *Among other occupations unbecoming to clerics and prohibited to them by law, the following things also fall under censure, namely, if they go about disguised during Carnival. The Congregation of the Council, in the Mantuan case on 10 April 1645, declared that the penalty of excommunication could be imposed by bishops against those who do these things.*

XIX. Jerónimo García, treatise 1, distinction 2, doubt 2, number 5, teaches these things, here rendered from Spanish into Latin: *As regards masks, Armilla and Sylvester maintain that a disguised cleric sins mortally unless he does this to avert some harm. This opinion rests upon the chapter Cum decorem and is drawn from the Clementine constitution, where the cleric who lays aside his own habit in order to assume a mask is condemned. And this is clear, because this act results in grave disgrace to the priestly Order.... No one excuses a disguised cleric from mortal sin.*

XX. Egidio Trullench, book 7, chapter 27: *Finally, a cleric who goes about masked after the manner of laymen sins mortally; for it is unbecoming to an ecclesiastical person to represent a fictitious person in this manner. Therefore Bonacina does not excuse them from mortal sin.*

XXI. Father Tomás Sánchez, book 1 of the *Counsels*, chapter 8, doubt 28, number 11, teaches: *Note that play with weapons is forbidden to clerics, and much more to Religious, as was contained in the chapter On Homicide.... And generally, by reason of clerical uprightness, every game is forbidden in which they would make a public spectacle of their own person, such as leaping, dancing, and masked play, because they cannot change their habit without a just cause.*

XXII. Father Adam Burgaber, Century 2, number 59, says: *Case. Narses, a beneficed cleric, went about masked through the city during the recent Carnival and, joining other disguised laymen, after various jests had been performed, finally stirred up a quarrel with one of them and was severely beaten by him, although unknown. It is asked, first, whether Narses sinned mortally by going about masked through the city; second, whether the man who struck Narses incurred excommunication. To the first I respond that Narses sinned mortally. Thus Jerónimo García, Barbosa, and others.*

XXIII. Martin Wigandt, treatise 6, examination 4, number 52, recounting the sins of clerics, says: *They sin, fourthly, by practicing secular offices, as that of advocate in a civil forum, procurator, physician, merchant, or actor; by engaging in games and dances; and by wearing masks.* Again in treatise 15, examination 2, he assigns the reason: *The principal cause for which the laws command clerics to wear clerical clothing is the dignity and excellence of the sacraments, so that their ministers may go about becomingly, separated from common people and laymen by their dress, and so that laymen may know that they should honor them above others. Therefore, if clerics without a just cause and from a merely quasi-lay craving do not wear clerical clothing, so far as lies in them they inflict a grave injury upon the sacraments by violating their dignity; therefore they sin mortally.*

XXIV. Gregory Sayrus, book 3, chapter 12: *To these I add, from Angelus under the word Game and from Salón, that masked play practiced by disguised persons is forbidden to all clerics under mortal sin.*

XXV. I could cite very many other moralists, were not the truth itself most manifest. Let it be permitted to add to the Catholic writers one testimony from a heretical author, so that those Catholic priests who were not ashamed to go about masked may recognize their transgression more evidently and detest it with sincere tears of repentance. Thus Christoph Heinrich von Berger, in his commentary *On Persons*, chapter 4, section 18, gathers many things against disguised clerics, some of which I shall transcribe here.

XXVI. For he says: *As regards clerics, it is fitting that those who are dedicated to divine offices be alien to every clamor. If they display an honorable life, reprehensible in no respect, such as the admonitions of the Apostles require, and instruct the people with becoming diligence, so that the people, attending to the uprightness of those men, abstain from many sins, it is certain that the eternal salvation of men will be better established and fitting clemency will be bestowed upon us by the most high God and our Savior Jesus Christ, as Justinian says.*

For this reason Justinian by the same law prohibited clerics from handling dice, or tesserae, from watching those who play with them, from polluting their hands, eyes, and ears with prohibited games, from inviting others to those amusements, from becoming spectators of scenic or thymelic games, or of the combats of beasts which take place in theaters. Such a prohibition also stands in Novel 123, chapter 10, and was made before Justinian by the emperors Honorius and Theodosius.

Indeed, the sacred laws so abhor the infamy of masks that they will a cleric who is sitting at a banquet, when an actor arrives, to rise from the table and leave rather than see his motions and gestures or hear him. Thus the Third Council of Toledo. To the same purpose belongs the constitution of Innocent III: Clerics shall not attend to mimes, jesters, and actors. From all these things it appears sufficiently and abundantly that by both laws, canon and civil, as also by divine law, the use of masks is prohibited to clerics, if not expressly, nevertheless by a good and sufficiently necessary consequence.

For if a cleric ought to avoid every mark of reproach and sinister suspicion; if he ought to abstain from games, dances, dogs, and spectacles; if it is not lawful for him to go about except in becoming clothing congruent with his Order—who would wish to doubt that a cleric is excluded from jests and amusements of this kind involving masks? Indeed, Innocent III expressly prohibits clerics from using mask-monstrosities on solemn occasions; and thence Zabarella and Barbosa rightly conclude that masks are altogether forbidden to clerics and that they cannot go about disguised. Lambertini, Belletus, and Father Gabriel of St. Vincent judge the same.

Furthermore, Paciuchelli, following Fructuosus, teaches that clerics—and much more those professing the Regular life—who have become accustomed to jesting and to appearing upon the stage for the sake of a fee or gain are to be held infamous. And Father Gabriel of St. Vincent concludes that a bishop or sacred prelate cannot in any manner give license to cover oneself with masks, since it is evil in itself and unworthy of the state of clerics and Religious; likewise, that Religious who walk about disguised most gravely offend God and incur excommunication because they lay aside their habit.

Section 19. Although laws so salutary are available, and although in this way nothing is detracted from religion itself, nevertheless everyone who has lived in lands which venerate the Roman Pontiff as the head of the Churches—especially Italy and France—or has spoken with persons coming from those regions, knows sufficiently that all these things are little regarded there, and that almost all clerics think of nothing less than observing those rules. Of this Philibert Bugnon long ago complained.

Section 20. Among Protestants the use of masks is rarer. But even if these pleasures are admitted in the courts of evangelical princes, this disgrace can hardly be justly objected to our clerics and ministers of the divine word, that

they go about disguised or are found among masked persons. For they understand very well what befits this venerable Order and how much they profit or harm by their example.

XXVII. I wished to transcribe these things at greater length from a Lutheran. Would that at least the natural instinct for defending the honor of their own religion might recall Catholic clerics from those most empty fables and corruptions which even heretics themselves detest as hostile to the clerical state. All those to whom the true Catholic religion is dear cannot but be deeply moved, covered with shame, and distressed with sadness when they read such things in heretics. For from this they learn that nothing more powerfully delays the conversion of heretics than the worst morals of Catholics, and especially of clerics. Their vices confirm in error men who have strayed from the true religion, although no evil can thereby befall the truth of that religion from the malice of those who profess it.

XXVIII. Let the Lutherans therefore awaken at last, who, because of the crimes of Catholics—and especially of priests, would that they were few—snarl against the truth of our Catholic and most holy religion. If we wished to repay them in kind, we would not have to labor greatly to set before their eyes the obscenities, sacrileges, drunken excesses, and other enormous crimes which their lawgiver Luther perpetrated, in the place of miracles, for the confirmation of the new anti-evangelical religion; nor would worse examples among his followers be lacking. But we know that the truth of a religion must be drawn from another source than the morals of those who profess it.

We therefore candidly confess and execrate, with tears and groans from anguish of spirit, the lapses and crimes of certain persons among our people, both secular and ecclesiastical. Would that the Lutherans imitated our sincerity, who more often calumniate our religion by attributing to it the vices of certain Catholics. Berger supplies us in the argument now under discussion with an example of this occasion for defaming Catholics. He falsely charges our summists with approving the masks of clerics and brands the most learned Cajetan with madness. *The summists*—says the courteous and modest Lutheran—*especially Cajetan under the word Masks and Vivaldus in chapter 15, were carried to such madness that they approve the custom said to exist in Lombardy, whereby at Carnival time, as they call it, clerics may go about disguised.*

How stale and unworthy of an honest man this calumny is, at least so far as Cajetan is concerned—for I do not now have so much leisure as to examine the summists one by one—is evident from the reading of Cajetan alone. He has the following.

XXIX. *The use of masks is rendered illicit by some circumstance and is not illicit in itself, as is evident from the fact that it is lawful in representations. Nor is it rendered illicit only by an evil end and by an incongruous time, place, and manner; rather, it must be weighed especially according to the condition of the person.... For when masks are assumed during the season in which it is permitted, as it were, to act mad, this is a license of youth, and it is therefore judged alien to grave men.*

And although magnates, including ecclesiastics, say in excuse of excuses in sins that it especially befits them to go about masked, so that they may roam freely while unknown where it would not be becoming for them to do so openly, nevertheless they are not excused. First, because such men have no need of this on account of their grave occupations throughout the whole year. Second, because they act not to recreate the mind but for superfluous pleasure. Third, because they do not care to be unknown; indeed, many of them wish to be known. Fourth, because the little ones are scandalized, especially by ecclesiastical prelates who are masked. And rightly so, because they assume the characters

of frivolous men and behave after the manner of youths. And this must be weighed greatly, for it is written: Whoever shall scandalize one of these little ones, it is expedient for him that a millstone be suspended from his neck.

XXX. Where in these words is there even one word by which Cajetan permits the custom of masks to the clerics of Lombardy as lawful? Or, because he inveighs principally against magnates and prelates, does he therefore favor clerics, when he expressly affirms that the little ones are offended especially by the masks of prelates, thereby indicating absolutely that the people suffer scandal from ecclesiastics, although especially from masked prelates? This is confirmed by the fact that at the beginning he establishes that the use of masks becomes illicit chiefly from the condition of the person.

What is more, he writes in express words in the same *Summa*, under the word *Cleric*, that masked play is forbidden to clerics: *The special sins of clerics arising from transgression of positive law are so many that they can scarcely be numbered. For as regards their habit, they are bound to wear the shaving, that is, the clerical crown, and the tonsure ... to wear clerical clothing closed above, not notable for excessive shortness or length, and so forth.*

As regards trades: the trades of slaughterers or butchers, tavern-keepers, jesters or actors, goliards and buffoons, and surgeons are taken away from them.... As regards actions: to carry arms; to enter a tavern except while on a journey; to follow birds and dogs for hunting; to keep hawks and dogs for hunting; to lease fields from laymen; to play at dice or knucklebones; and to attend games of this kind, and so forth, are forbidden to clerics. If Cajetan writes that hunting itself, which by its own nature bears no baseness, is forbidden to clerics, how much more masked play? But argument is unnecessary if he teaches in express words that even to attend games is unlawful to clerics. But more than enough on this matter.

Chapter V — Certain Sophisms Are Exploded

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Certain Sophisms Are Exploded

I. They object, first: masked play is not evil by its own nature; otherwise it would not be lawful even for laymen. It is therefore honorable, since it was instituted to cheer the mind and is prescribed by eutrapelia. Thus Marcus Vidal argues in his condemned *Arca Vitali*, where among other things he spews forth these words in the place cited: *Clerics, by practicing masked games, do not sin mortally according to the act itself; nor even if they use such play licentiously and immodestly, provided grave scandal and every evil end are removed.* Can these things be reported without indignation and detestation? Nor was he ashamed to adulterate the doctrine of St. Thomas in order to confirm so great an error.

II. Whether or not masked play, considered absolutely in its own nature, is indifferent, I do not now wish to institute a disputation. This is certain to me: during Carnival time such play can scarcely be practiced even by laymen without some fault. For games of this kind are, as it were, condiments of Carnival dissolutions. Carnival, however, as Ménage, Polydore Vergil, Ferrari, and authors commonly teach, is a carnal feast like the Saturnalia, or a remnant of pagan superstition.

The Calvinist Dallaeus inveighs against Catholics because by these pagan and superstitious follies they prepare themselves for Christian fasts. But the acute Calvinist ought not to have been ignorant that these things are condemned by us as the ravings of a mad populace. Let him hear even one venerable servant of God, Cardinal Bellarmine, who far excels six hundred theologians of a lower rank. He writes these things: *Sermon—*

21, for Quinquagesima. Does not nearly the whole Christian world act madly during these days, so that we are not undeservedly made a mockery to the Mohammedans and Hagarenes? Behold, they say, what the nation of the Christians is like. Now they fill themselves up to the jaws, the belly, and the stomach; now they torture themselves with fasting. Today, as though mad, they lead dances, put on masks, and revel through the cities; after two days they will sprinkle ashes upon their heads and most religiously frequent the churches and altars. Nor do they mock Christians alone, but Christ also. And what sort of God, they say, do the Christians have, whom they call an excellent Lawgiver, who either commands or permits these things?

Vivaldus, Lessius, and Vidal consider the nature of masks abstracted from circumstances, but they all depart from the state of the question. For the use of masks must be considered as it actually occurs and as joined to the season and to other corruptions. Therefore I would not permit the use of masks even to laymen when it is employed for this end, that they may be able to indulge more freely in the corruptions of Carnival.

III. Moreover, whether or not the use of masks is lawful for laymen, what follows from that? Is it therefore permitted to priests? Marriage is lawful, and indeed meritorious, for laymen. Is it therefore lawful also for priests? It has already been shown above that the use of masks conflicts with the priestly rank and dignity. It would therefore be superfluous to explode so slight an objection with more words.

IV. They object, second, the mask of custom. In several cities, they say, especially in Italy, priests have the custom of going about disguised without this being imputed to them as a vice. Will you dare to

condemn so many priests, and even bishops, as guilty of mortal sin? I respond: it is not I, but the priestly dignity and state, the decrees of so many synods, and commonly all even the more benign probabilists who condemn disguised priests as guilty of mortal sin and bishops who appear in public disguised as guilty of a most grave crime. The specter of custom which is thrust upon us is a most foul corruption. Can any custom destroy the priestly dignity and majesty? If I were to ask those men what custom is and what qualities it must have in order to be able to abrogate laws, what would they respond? Certainly, for a custom to prevail over a law, it must regard a greater good than the law itself, or at least not be repugnant to the common good. Does the use of masks contribute to the common good of the Church? Does it promote the honor, splendor, and esteem of the ecclesiastical rank? One ought to be utterly ashamed to fashion the semblance of custom for a pagan and most inhuman corruption which opens the broadest road to innumerable crimes, acts of baseness, and scandals.

Let no one, says Augustine in book 3 of *On Baptism,* chapter 6, *prefer custom to reason and truth, because reason and truth always exclude custom.* And again, in book 3 of *Against the Letter of Parmenian,* chapter 2: *Whatever crime intoxicates a multitude loses the truth of examination.*

V. They object, third: princes and the pontiffs themselves permit the use of masks; therefore it is not evil. I respond: this consequence is vain and futile. Princes permit many evils, as has been said elsewhere, in order to avert graver ones. But however this may be, do pontiffs and bishops permit or approve the use of masks among priests? Are the pontiffs ignorant that innumerable diocesan synods inflict the gravest penalties upon clerics initiated into sacred Orders who go about disguised? If the use of masks were lawful, it would belong to the pontiff to disapprove the aforesaid synods, which punish disguised clerics with the penalty of excommunication. For snares would be prepared for the souls of priests if they were subjected to excommunication incurred by the very fact because of an indifferent use.

Moreover, so far are the Supreme Pontiffs from a permission of this kind that they restrain clerics from such corruption by innumerable edicts. St. Pius V, in his constitution *On the Reformation of the Roman Clergy,* which Barbosa reports in the book *On Ecclesiastical Law,* chapter 50, forbids clerics to assume masks in these words: *Let them not bear arms, nor go about disguised. Whoever shall offend in any of these things, besides the loss of his clothing and other things, shall be fined twenty-five gold pieces, to be applied to pious places at our discretion, and shall also be punished by imprisonment, deprivation of benefices, and greater penalties, according to the kind of offense and persons, at our discretion.*

What is more, Antonio Ricciullus, Vicar of Rome under Urban VIII, declares most explicitly in the license which is customarily granted at Rome during the last days of Carnival that clerics are not included, saying: *This license, however, extends only to laymen and does not assist ecclesiastical persons, lest clerical uprightness be deformed by the baseness of masks.* Let those things which Benedict XIII established for the life and uprightness of clerics, annexed to the Roman Council, be read.

Chapter VI — A Rebuke of Disguised Clerics, of the Confessors Who Absolve Them, and of Their Celebrating Sacrifice

CHAPTER VI

A Rebuke of Disguised Clerics, of the Confessors Who Absolve Them, and of Their Celebrating Sacrifice. The Doctrine of Father Paolo Oliva against Benignist Confessors. Alms for the Celebration of Sacrifices Are Not to Be Given to Disguised Priests Who Attend Theaters

I. Not long ago I was rebuking a priest because he had the custom of going about masked. By way of excuse he alleged that clerics commonly went forth masked after dinner in that city. I objected to him the decrees of synods, the dignity of his state, and the testimony of theologians and of the laxer casuists. But, bewitched by the charms of corruption, he could scarcely be drawn away from his depraved intention. To every force of the reasons which I adduced, he replied that they were not—

evident demonstrations. 'You therefore seek a luminous demonstration?' he replied. 'I shall give it to you immediately,' I added. Not far from our conversation there stood a fisherman wearing a cap, a simple and well-mannered man. I called him and addressed him in the presence of the priest in this manner: 'Tell me: if you were to receive the most holy Communion tomorrow, Sunday, would you go forth masked today? Would you go to the theaters, to dances, and to behold spectacles? Explain what you think.' 'Alas, Father!' replied the fisherman. 'Masked today and to receive Communion tomorrow? Today in the theater among mimes and singing girls, and tomorrow at the altar to receive the Body of Christ? Far from me so enormous a crime.'

Thus he spoke. Then I said to the priest who was standing by: 'Have you heard, you who wander disguised through the city every day after dinner, watch comedies, and every morning approach the altar to celebrate the unbloody sacrifice?' Covered with shame and disgrace, the priest fell silent. The testimony of the simple fisherman had more weight than all the reasons adduced by me.

Priests accustomed to depraved corruptions scarcely admit the remedy of correction. For the most part they embraced that state not by the divine Spirit but through the enticement of worldly cupidity and advantages. Therefore, destitute of the grace of vocation, they are more obstinate in evil than laymen. With St. Bernard in *On Conversion to the Clergy*, chapter 20, I shall say: *We do not accuse the whole body, but neither can we excuse the whole body. The Lord has left for himself many thousands. Otherwise, unless their righteousness excused us and the Lord of hosts had left us that seed of holiness, we would long ago have been overthrown like Sodom and would likewise have perished like Gomorrah.*

The Church indeed appears to have been enlarged; the most sacred Order of the clergy itself, the number of the brethren, has been multiplied beyond number. But although you have multiplied the nation, O Lord, you have not magnified its joy, since it appears that no less merit has departed than number has increased. Men run everywhere to sacred Orders, and without reverence, without consideration, seize ministries venerable even to the angelic spirits themselves.

II. For this reason St. John Chrysostom rightly pronounced in homily 3 on chapter 1 of the Acts that judgment which must be impressed more deeply upon the mind: *I do not speak rashly, but as I am affected and as I judge. I do not think that among priests there are many who are saved, but rather more who perish. For many are called to the priesthood, but few are chosen.*

But so that it may shine forth more clearly how worthy of most grave rebuke and abomination are priests who go about disguised, let us delineate in a few words the most foul image of Carnival. For about two months, and in some places more, before Lent, very many Christians are accustomed to act madly no differently from pagans. Disguised men and women run about together and carry the insignia of luxury as though in triumph. They perpetrate six hundred crimes every day. They loosen the reins to gluttony, feasting, and dancing. Women cover the face and display their swelling breasts and bare shoulders, so that they may kindle lust more violently. They sing shameless songs, belch forth maxims of lust, and by musical instruments, gesture, tongue, and nods move the senses; and they leave no stone unturned so that they may mutually provoke and strengthen one another to multiply crimes against God. Squares, roads, theaters, and houses emit the smoke of gluttonies, lusts, and dissolutions. These things are public and known to all.

III. Furthermore, while so great a flood of crimes inundates all things, while the house of God burns from its four corners, and while the holiness of the Catholic religion is everywhere assailed and rent, one thing is added to complete the heap of all evils: the priests themselves at this same time enter into a covenant with the transgressing people, act madly themselves, become exultant spectators of the burning house of God, and supply wood to the sulfurous flames.

Priests are distinguished by the priestly character so that they may be secondary mediators and intercessors before God for the people. If ever they ought to pray and exercise themselves in works of piety, the utmost necessity certainly presses during this season of Carnival, both to appease the divine fury and to go before the people by example, so that they may be recalled from so great a frenzy of malice; so that those who stand may be strengthened, lest they fall and be swept away by the torrent of the multitude. But when the priests themselves assume masks, they confirm, instigate, and animate the raving people all the more. They are savage and cruel physicians who aggravate the wounds of the sick. They are rapacious wolves who snatch the flock from the Lord and offer it to be devoured by the Devil.

IV. They have fallen into such blindness that, although all the casuists, even the more benign themselves, condemn them as guilty of mortal sin, as has been said, nevertheless they do not impute to themselves even the slightest fault for performing sacred rites in the morning and going about disguised in the evening. They fear neither the penalties of excommunication nor of suspension; they dread no scandals. And, what is horrible beyond what can be expressed, confessors are found who absolve clerics of this kind who go about disguised, without their promising to renounce the depraved corruption and actually break it off.

For, they say, if we deny absolution during Carnival to disguised priests, who will celebrate Masses? Who will come to our churches? Our temples would become deserted if we wished to heal the wounds of penitents with rigid doctrines. From this gather how true is what St. Bernardine of Siena writes in volume 3, sermon 35, *On the Love of Contrition*: *It happens in confession as among merchants; for just as the merchant who sells at a lower price has a greater crowd, so those who give lesser penances have a greater crowd. And thus a trade is made of penances.*

V. The Most Reverend Father Paolo Oliva, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, inveighs against these excuses of confessors in the following words, in volume 2 of the Venice edition, part 10, sermon 91, page 615, number 47:

Whoever wishes sinners to be reformed, let him be serious in his judgments, severe in his counsels, cautious in his doctrines, and effective in his remedies. If the incontinent man does not tear the profane picture to pieces, does not consign the lascivious book to the flames, does not avoid the dangerous street, and does not deny payment to the one who bewitches him, let him not be absolved.

What I say of confessors I intimate much more to the interpreters of the Gospel. Let him who preaches thunder. Let him who speaks from the pulpit hurl lightning. Let him who explains the Scriptures set the rich glutton in the flames before their eyes. Let there be in public discourses no period which does not terrify, no text which does not convince, no argument which does not overthrow.

You will say: where things are done in this manner in our times, no one will listen to us speaking; no one will ask from us either counsel for living or absolution for rising again. The corruption of the age demands sweetness of antidotes in the hearer and pleasantness of eloquence in the speaker. If we do not entice popular hearers to our pulpits with flowered garlands of eloquence, we shall preach to the walls and benches of our churches. The same will happen if we are not indulgent with those who confess, if we do not enlarge the heart of him who seeks counsel with an abundance of honeyed judgments and without the harshness of rigorous theology.

Therefore let us accommodate ourselves to the frailty of the times; and, lest we drive away those who would come to us, let us cast the wine of rigor into the mud and pour into the wounds of the wicked only the oil of ready mercy and sweetened liquors. I do not deny that matters proceed thus in many places in the age. Yet for that reason I shall never approve that, to one who asks for poison as food and opium as drink, either a lethargy be caused so that he may sleep in his sins, or poison be given so that he may die to grace.

If they abhor the Gospel interpreted with seriousness, let that be upon them, who hate salvation. We certainly shall not offer a sword to one who in his fury wishes to kill himself; and we shall offer medicinal drugs to one who in a fever desires foreign wines which bring death.... Let whoever wishes to damn himself depart from our doors; let him not ask for our aphorisms, because we have from Christ the keys indeed of heaven, to save with secure opinions those who are instructed by us, but not the keys of hell, to send there with reprobate counsels the man who would wish either the desires of his rapacity or the filth of his concupiscence to be approved by us.

However much they may exclaim, 'If you do not broaden for me the path of eternal glory, despairing of being saved I shall enter upon the triumphal highway of the reprobate,' we, deaf to such bestial clamors, faithfully refuse to betray the truth and to cooperate in the perdition of one who prefers earth to heaven and pleasure to salvation.... Swords which wound, and not alabaster jars which perfume; doctrines of the Gospel which prohibit feasts, and not flatteries of Epicurus which spread tables. Kill. If the hydra does not die beneath the severities of our correction, it will never become a little sheep of Christ by changing the poison of malice into the milk of goodness. Kill.

VI. I render these things into Latin as follows:

Whoever wishes sinners to be reformed, let him be mature in deliberation, severe in counsel, cautious in doctrine, and effective in remedies. Unless the incontinent man has broken the profane picture, given the shameless book to the flames, avoided the dangerous road, and denied payment to the one who bewitches him, let him not be absolved.

What I say to confessors I announce far more strongly to the interpreters of the Gospel. Let him who preaches thunder forth; let him who speaks from the pulpit hurl lightning; let him who expounds the Scriptures represent the rich gluttons in the flames. In public sermons let there be no period which does not terrify, no text which does not convince, no argument which does not beat down.

You will reply: where this manner of acting prevails in our churches, no one will seek from us either counsel for living rightly or absolution for rising again. The corruption of the age requires sweetness of antidotes in the hearer and pleasantness of eloquence in the preacher. Unless we entice the people to our pulpits with the exquisite allurements of popular eloquence, we shall preach to the walls and benches of our churches. The same will happen unless we are indulgent with our penitents; unless we enlarge the hearts of those who seek counsels from us with the laxity of honeyed opinions, the harshness of rigid theology having been repelled.

Therefore let us accommodate our doctrines to the condition of the times; and, lest we put to flight those who approach us, let us cast the wine of rigor into the mud, and let pure oil of ready mercy and flatteries be poured into the wounds of the wicked. I do not deny that in fact the custom of the age prevails thus in several places. Yet for that reason I shall never permit either poison for food and opium for drink to be offered to one who seeks them, or an enchantment by which he may be cherished in his errors, or poison by which he may die to grace.

If they have abominated the Gospel maturely expounded, let it fall upon their own heads, who hold salvation in hatred. We certainly shall not give a sword to those who in their fury wish to kill themselves; nor shall we give spices to those subject to fever who desire foreign wines which bring death. Let those who wish to perish eternally depart from our doors, and let them not seek our maxims. For we have the keys of heaven from Christ, so that by secure opinions we may save those who are instructed by us; not, however, the keys of hell, so that by wicked counsels we may direct others who would wish the crimes either of their robberies or of their abominable lust to be approved by us.

Let them exclaim as much as they wish: 'Unless you broaden the path of eternal glory, having cast away hope of salvation we shall enter upon the triumphal road of the reprobate.' We, deaf to such deadly clamors, must strenuously resist both the betrayal of truth and—

consent to the perdition of those who prefer earth to heaven and pleasure to salvation. Swords which wound, not flatteries which caress; evangelical teachings which prohibit gluttony, not the enticements of Epicurus which prepare feasts. Kill. Unless the hydra dies beneath the rigor of our correction, the soul will never become a sheep of Christ, transforming the poison of depravity into the milk of goodness. Kill.

VII. I thought it worthwhile to transcribe here the testimony of the most learned Jesuit, both so that anyone may understand that the wiser theologians of the illustrious Society stand with me, and that I hold them in great esteem; and so that I might make plain that in several places, as the most celebrated Father Oliva says, the corruption of lax opinions rages, by which the doctrine of Christ is accommodated to the morals of penitents.

VIII. And, so that the discourse may return to the point from which, opportunely in my judgment, it departed: priests who run about disguised through crossroads and squares, attend theaters, and at the same time approach the altars every day to celebrate find confessors who absolve them, lest the churches become deserted and the attendance of the people be lost. To this at last has the benignity of present-day opinions come: that confessionals are surrounded by crowds of matrons, magnates, and priests.

By the voice of all the casuists, disguised priests sin mortally; and nevertheless, for two months before Lent, many put on masks almost every day. Every day, therefore, they perpetrate horrible sacrileges. Sacred synods and bishops endeavor to restrain them from so great a corruption by penalties of suspension, imprisonment, monetary fine, and excommunication; but all things are in vain.

IX. I would venture to propose another remedy. What is it? Let the faithful offer no alms to these masked priests for the celebration of Masses. Will you therefore drive away the celebration of Masses? Far be it. Rather, I advise that the faithful give alms, and indeed abundant ones, but to priests of the best morals, who by their sacrifices appease the vengeance of God, render his mercy propitious, and by the example of good works draw sinners away from the path of iniquity.

But let them deny offerings to disguised priests who by their daily sacrileges kindle the fury of God, and by their public scandals either urge the people to sin or cherish and harden them in the mire of crimes. Perhaps the efficacy of this remedy will recall more of them to better fruit. I am not ignorant that the sacrifice even of sacrilegious priests is of infinite value; but it is similarly true that even one sacrilege of an unworthy priest who celebrates inflicts an infinite injury upon God.

Besides, it is to be feared that these disguised priests receive very many offerings without celebrating the exact number of Masses. Will those who do not dread perpetrating horrible crimes of sacrilege every day shrink from retaining stipends granted for the celebration of Masses? They need much money so that they may obtain splendid clothes, prepare banquets, and soothe with little gifts the female companions whom they are accustomed to take with them while disguised. No alms, therefore, are to be given to these men for the celebration of Masses.

If in civil commerce each man strives to enter into a contract with a man of upright faith and moral conscience, why is the same care not employed in the sacred and greatest of all transactions? Why are priests who are true servants of God not sought out for the celebration of Masses? Dissolute priests devoted to worldly spectacles will blaze with anger because I have advised that this bridle, most apt for restraining their license, be applied. But they must blame themselves, because by their public stumbling blocks they drive the Christian people into perdition. And let these things suffice for the present.

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Modern Archbishop of Valencia. He demolished the theater and converted it into a hospital. 154.

Valentinian I, Emperor. He enacted many things against theaters and scenic performers. 7.

Valerius Maximus. He traced Roman ruin to the theaters. 10. He praises the people of Marseilles because they prohibited mimes from the theaters. 236.

Hunts in the amphitheater. They are condemned by the Holy Fathers. 11.

Baseness of words and things. It is defined and divided. 50.

Clothing. A man feigning himself a woman, or a woman a man, by clothing are abominable to God and liable to sin, apart from the cause of necessity. 52, 53 and following; 56; Ibid.; 57; 239 and following. Especially if they appear upon the stage. 189, 190. For clerical clothing to be assumed by laymen, or lay clothing by ecclesiastics, is criminal. 288, 298. See Clerics; Habit; Mask; Monks; Priests.

Marcus Vidal. In relaxing Christian ethics he carried off the palm from Diana. 294. His doctrine was deservedly proscribed. Ibid. He admits that nearly all the Doctors condemn a disguised cleric as guilty of mortal sin, yet he dared to depart from them. Ibid., 303.

Man feigning himself a woman in clothing. See Clothing.

Polydore Vergil. He testifies that in his time it was a capital offense in England to go about masked. 289.

Vitellius, Emperor. He pursued theaters with excessive desire. 5.

Vivaldus. By a proverb of the common people he strives in vain to spread a fraudulent veil over the scandal of masked clerics. 288.

Ludovico Vives. He mentions the invention of masks among Christians. 289.

De Voisin. He vindicated the treatise of the Prince de Conti against comedies. 39. He routed the author of the *Italian Theater*. 147, 149, 151.

Voltaire. The buffoon impudently attacks the work of the illustrious Father Le Brun against spectacles. 41.

Pleasures. Those which cannot be referred to the glory of God are forbidden and are the pomp of the Devil. 13. It is easier to abstain from them completely than, once they have been conceded, to be contained within honorable limits. 144. No one attains pleasures in both the present and future age. 218. See Joys; Delights; Consolations.

Vopiscus. He reproves Carinus for relaxing the reins of the stage. 6.

Urban VIII, Supreme Pontiff. How vigorously he opposed spectacles. 42.

Wigandt, Martin. He shows that clerics sin mortally by practicing secular offices, acting, dancing, and using masks. 299.

Vulpius, Antonio. He declares the wickedness and destruction of comedies. 47. Especially of those which are covered by the appearance of beauty, elegance, and charm. 48.

Z

Father Zech. He fell into a gross error because he understood the city called that of St. Dominic to mean the Dominican Order. 138. With a vain attempt he censures the author's ethics. 139.

Zeno, the Apostle. When he became older, he endeavored to repair whatever harm he might previously have caused to souls by his dramas. 40. He is commended. Ibid.

THE END

St. Charles Borromeo — On Dances and Spectacles Not to Be Exhibited on Feast Days

ST. CHARLES BORROMEO
Archbishop of Milan and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church
A SHORT WORK
ON DANCES AND SPECTACLES
NOT TO BE EXHIBITED ON FEAST DAYS
TO WHICH IS ADDED
A COLLECTION OF SELECTED STATEMENTS OF THE SAME AUTHOR AGAINST DANCES AND SPECTACLES
From His Statutes, Edicts, Institutes, and Homilies

St. Charles Borromeo — To the Christian Reader

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

Since the very learned and most lucid little work *On Dances and Spectacles Not to Be Exhibited on Feast Days*, composed through the zeal of St. Charles, Archbishop of Milan and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, in the juridical style of the Roman Curia, was published at Toulouse in the year 1662 from a copy transcribed by the most illustrious François Bosquet, Bishop of Montpellier and a most distinguished man, from a manuscript codex in the library of the Most Eminent Cardinal Francesco Barberini, under the auspices of Armand de Bourbon, a prince more distinguished by singular piety and learning than by royal ancestors and deeds performed at home and abroad, and since it has become so rare that in Rome I could scarcely find one copy of it, in the library of the Most Eminent Cardinal Passionei, which, if you regard its most sumptuous store of printed books, is easily to be numbered among the richer libraries not only of the City but of the world, but if you regard its abundance of rarer books, is perhaps second to none, I therefore formed the plan of revising that work according to the authority of the aforesaid manuscript codex, preserved as number 257 in the Barberini Library, and of publishing it again, all the more because it seems especially opportune for this time, when the pleasure of spectacles not only does not lack an excuse, but does not even lack a defense.

In the Barberini codex there is prefixed an epistle of Antonio, Bishop of Anagni, to Paul V, Supreme Pontiff, which in the Toulouse edition is placed at the end of the book. It was dated at Anagni on the fifteenth day before the Kalends of June in the year 1614, in defense of a synodal decree by which he too, as was proper, had forbidden profane spectacles to be presented on feast days. Since this epistle contains only certain commonly known observations about spectacles and about the right of bishops to protect feast days from their vanity, I shall not reproduce it in full; but I think that its testimony concerning this little work of our St. Charles must by no means be omitted:

> Since I have been constituted by Your Holiness not only as guardian of my own life but also as provider for the salvation of others, desiring to provide a remedy by synodal decree for this evil, namely, the presentation of profane spectacles on feast days, I decreed that Sundays and feast days were to be celebrated religiously, piously, and holily, and thenceforth were not to be profaned by dances, banquets, wrestling contests, and other theatrical spectacles, with a censure proposed, though not one to be incurred by the act itself. I would easily have attained this according to my desire had there not stood in the way the example of a certain concession, contrary to another pious decree, granted to Alatri, a city neighboring mine, without Your Holiness's knowledge, as is believed. By force of this concession that people trusts that it may celebrate the feast of St. Sixtus, Pontiff and Martyr, its patron, with dances and other customary spectacles.
>
> Although that people is not free from fault, since superiors unwillingly concede what they permit, because, as Chrysostom says, they cannot completely prohibit the evil wills of men, yet my people here, supported by that example, has declared that it would have recourse to Your Holiness, to whom I have dared to write these few things. It also seemed good to send the LITTLE WORK composed through the zeal of St. Charles upon this kind of subject, by which

> Gregory XIII, the predecessor of Your Holiness, dealt with this cause of God with the Milanese people and put an end to the controversy by his apostolic letters. And, as is also read in the life of St. Charles, he then forbade masks and spectacles from being held at Rome on feast days and on Fridays. The observance of this is now so strong that that people, without another enactment, ought long before to have followed the example of the City of Rome.

Thus, Reader, you have here a little work commended not only by the name of its author, nor only by the exquisite learning with which the subject proposed in it is luminously treated, but also rendered venerable by the approval of Gregory XIII, a Pontiff of most praiseworthy memory. To this approval, although it is sufficiently weighty in itself, a new and indeed the greatest weight has now accrued from the most authoritative judgment of Benedict XIV.

For Benedict XIV, speaking of the false mark of novelty that is sometimes branded upon synodal constitutions, in that most learned and useful work entitled *On the Diocesan Synod*, after treating copiously in book 7, chapter 54, of the constitutions issued by St. Charles for the Milanese Church, and especially of the constitution by which that holy man forbade any profane spectacles and games to be publicly presented on feast days, and after establishing and illustrating the equity of those constitutions by selected and weighty reasons, also composed the celebrated history of the embassy of the Milanese citizens sent to Gregory XIII. Their supplicatory petition, full of complaints, may be seen in Vatican manuscript codex 6210, folio 302. Finally he adds as follows:

> The Pontiff, having heard the envoys, entrusted the examination of the matter to a congregation of several cardinals, by whom some theologians and canonists were summoned to counsel. We have had their votes before our eyes, and from them we discovered that most had opposed the decrees of St. Charles for this single reason, that they ran contrary to the long-established customs of the Diocese of Milan. But with better judgment Gregory compared the edicts of Charles not with present-day corruptions, but with the ancient institutions of the Church and the sacred canons, in which he was thoroughly versed; and seeing that they agreed with these exactly, he rejected the contrary votes of the theologians and confirmed them by his apostolic letters. The Milanese envoys, who were called by the Romans in jest THE ORATORS OF THE BACCHANALS, because they had gone there chiefly to protect and enlarge the rights of Carnival, returned to their country with the matter unaccomplished.

Nor did Benedict XIV merely follow with praises and wishes the zeal of St. Charles and the supreme prudence of Gregory XIII joined with supreme authority; he also emulated them in deeds. By a decretal epistle dated January 1, 1748, he enacted a law that throughout the entire temporal dominion of the Apostolic See no profane spectacles should be presented either on Friday or on feast days. This was already observed in more than one place, and especially at Rome, from the time of Gregory XIII, although for a long time Friday has been observed much more religiously, which is altogether astonishing, than feast days sacred by their native sanctity. For in the evening hours of feast days paid performances of scenic games are customarily given, something considered unlawful on Friday. Yet, to pass over in silence the fact that the preparation necessary for evening theatrical spectacles, both for presenting and for viewing them, laborious for many and certainly profane for all, necessarily takes away much time even from the daytime hours, it is altogether beyond doubt that among us the command to observe feast days extends to all the hours that pass from midnight to the following midnight.

But perhaps this crept in gradually with the passage of time and, so to speak, without anyone's awareness, just as the paid theatrical spectacles themselves, which now seem to be civic institutions, crept into the City long after the age of Gregory XIII, whose sanctity they long dreaded. Hence that discourse of Giovanni Paolo Oliva, formerly Superior General of the Society of Jesus and preacher of sacred sermons before the Apostolic See, to Clement IX, Supreme Pontiff, and the Sacred College of Cardinals: *When I was transferred to Rome, and yet I did not arrive there in the times either of Celestine I or of Agatho ... not even for a single day was a pass granted to mercenary actors.*

But truly Benedict XIV, that Pontiff most learned in ecclesiastical disciplines who now fills the Roman Chair, and may he happily fill it for very many years, most excellently and wisely professed in explicit words in the same epistle that there are many things that move and disturb his mind while he considers the things that must be endured, and furthermore that the Church has always tolerated unwillingly every profane pleasure, at whatever time it occurs and under whatever right, so that no one should flatter himself that whatever is public may easily be regarded as lawful. Most beautiful are the words of St. Augustine from the books *Against Faustus* that he employs for this purpose at Stapleton's suggestion: *What we teach is one thing; what we endure is another; what we are commanded to correct is another; and, until we correct it, what we are compelled to tolerate is another.*

ON DANCES AND SPECTACLES
NOT TO BE EXHIBITED ON FEAST DAYS

Chapter I — Dances Are Not Evil in Themselves

CHAPTER I

Dances Are Not Evil in Themselves

FIRST CONCLUSION

Since dances are nothing other than assemblies of people who, with music employed and likewise with bodily movement, give certain signs of gladness, nothing prevents us from laying down, according to the opinion of all the Doctors: dances are not evil in themselves, because they can even be good. This is clear, because both music and bodily motion regulated according to rhythm can be employed honorably and piously, as is apparent from the example of David, of whom it is said in 2 Kings, chapter 6: *David played before the Lord upon all manner of instruments made of wood, and upon harps, and lyres, and timbrels.... And David danced with all his strength before God.* Miriam also, the sister of Aaron, singing with the other women and beating a timbrel, rejoiced and gave thanks to the Lord for the drowning of Pharaoh, Exodus 15. The same can be said of the daughter of Jephthah, when she went out with a dance and a timbrel to meet her victorious father as he arrived, as is related in Judges 11.

But certainly examples of this kind seem by no means suited to our subject. In those instances music and dancing were employed for the honor of God and for rendering thanks piously; but our dances are held for obtaining a certain bodily pleasure or for practicing vices. Nor do we read that there was an assembly of men and women, as among us. Therefore such sacred examples must not be produced to excuse profane things of this kind, if not shameful ones, lest, as St. Cyprian says in the book *On Spectacles, we seem to vindicate our vices from the Sacred Scriptures, which is most unworthy.*

Chapter II — One Kind of Dance Is Good, Another Evil

CHAPTER II

One Kind of Dance Is Good, Another Evil

But in order to distinguish these matters better, it will not be irrelevant to consider that two kinds of dances seem to be signified in the Scriptures. The first, examples of which we have just produced, is good and pertains to divine worship. The other is signified in Ecclesiastes, chapter 9, where it is commanded that a female dancer be avoided; in Tobit 3, in the words of Sarah, the daughter of Raguel; and in Job 21 and Isaiah 3. In these places a kind of play that is evil and joined with grave offense against God is indicated. That a custom of this kind existed among the Jews is shown by the words of St. Basil on chapter 3 of Isaiah: *Indeed, even to the present day one may see Jews playing with their feet with their own harlots.* And likewise those words of St. Augustine in the book *On the Ten Chords*: *It would be better for the women of the Jews to work wool on the Sabbath than to dance shamelessly all day in their new-moon festivals.* The words of law 5 of the Theodosian Code, *On Spectacles*, seem to regard the same thing: *If any even now are held by the madness of Jewish impiety or by the error and insanity of foolish paganism, let them know that one time is for supplications and another for pleasures.* In this law the observance of feast days is prescribed.

The Gentiles seem to have imitated these kinds of dances, for they are said both to have employed them under a false religion for the worship of their gods and to have practiced them also for obtaining pleasure. On this matter see Caelius Rhodiginus, book 5, chapter 3, and others. For the devil is accustomed, in order to deceive men, to imitate the true worship of God by adulterating it.

The faithful can be said to use the first kind only when singing is performed with the voice and musical instruments in sacred buildings, especially on feast days, with clerics and laymen assembled in a fitting manner. Hence that part of the church where clerics remain singing is also called the choir. They also use it in part when they conduct processions, in which there is bodily movement, though a greater movement, and one according to rhythm, in certain parts of the church.

But the other kind, which is evil, is now used too frequently and viciously, as we are about to say. Christians seem to have received it not only from the Jews but partly also from the pagans, as St. Augustine signifies in sermon 215, and likewise the law 5 just cited. And this profane kind of dances, which flowed from the corrupt morals of the Hebrews and the vain rites of the Gentiles to unwary Christians, to speak mildly, can, if its use is considered, be called purely or absolutely evil according to the jurist, for in this discipline what usually happens is regarded, laws 3 and 4 of the Digest, *On Laws*. Nevertheless, because it cannot be denied that some recreation of mind can be obtained without vice through musical measures and movements, a matter also treated by the philosophers, as is found in Plato, book 3 of *The Laws*, the first conclusion, I say, will remain consonant with the opinion of the Doctors: dances are not evil in themselves.

Chapter III — Dances Are Forbidden to Ecclesiastical Men

CHAPTER III
Dances Are Forbidden to Ecclesiastical Men
SECOND CONCLUSION

We must now see from what conditions dances are rendered evil. The conclusion, therefore, will concern the condition of persons: dances cannot be led by clerics and other ecclesiastical persons and, so far as they are concerned, are forbidden. St. Thomas on chapter 3 of Isaiah; St. Bonaventure on book 4 of the *Sentences*, distinction 16; St. Antoninus, part 2, title 6, chapter 6; Angelus, Sylvester, the author Rosella, and other Summists under the word *Dance*, from Alexander in book 4, question 11. These authors cite the chapter *Clericum*, distinction 46, and the chapter *Nullus Presbyterorum*, *On Consecration*, distinction 5. In the first, buffoonery and the jesting use of shameful words are prohibited. In the second, drunkenness, immoderate laughter, empty tales, and games performed with a bear, female tumblers, or masks are prohibited, because, as the text says, *it is diabolical and prohibited by the sacred canons*.

More properly cited is the chapter *Presbyteri*, distinction 34, canon 16, by which clerics are prohibited from attending wedding banquets and mingling in those gatherings *where amorous and shameful things are sung, or obscene movements of bodies are performed in dances and dancing, lest hearing and sight, appointed to the sacred ministries, be polluted by the contagion of shameful spectacles and words.* These are the words of the canon. Add the chapter *Non oportet*, *On Consecration*, distinction 5, and the chapter *Cum decorem*, *On the Life and Honesty of Clerics*. Hence, Sylvester and Angelus say, for those persons to do these things *seems to be a deadly sin, by reason of the prohibition and the scandal, unless perhaps the quality and smallness of the act should excuse it, as if they should be done secretly and but little, which is regarded as almost nothing.* Thus he.

But lest anyone be deceived by that condition of secrecy: whether it is done secretly or publicly, it is always forbidden, and the basis for this is expressly found in the aforesaid chapter *Presbyteri*. Besides this, the matter does not seem able to be sufficiently secret in a dance; and if anyone availed himself of secrecy, he would then sin under another title also.

But if someone should say that the canon guards only against shameful things, and therefore dances and games that are not shameful are not forbidden even to clerics, the answer is that the canon must be understood not of shamefulness that contains mortal sin, but of that which is committed in certain freer acts that are not becoming to the modesty and holiness of the sons of God. Nor do I doubt that the dances of our time, which are thought not at all shameful, are shameful according to the meaning of the canon. Secondly, the answer is that something is rightly called shameful for a certain class of men which cannot be called shameful absolutely; and that the canon intended entirely and without distinction to forbid all spectacles of this kind to clerics is apparent from the aforesaid chapter *Non oportet*, where ministers of the altar are forbidden without qualification.

Ministers of the altar, or any clerics whatsoever, ought not to attend any spectacles that are exhibited either at weddings or upon stages. *On Consecration*, distinction 5.

Chapter IV — Dances Are Forbidden in Sacred Places

CHAPTER IV

Dances Are Forbidden in Sacred Places

THIRD CONCLUSION

Dances cannot be held in a church or another sacred place without mortal sin. St. Antoninus and Sylvester. In the same places the chapter *Decet, On Ecclesiastical Immunity,* in the *Sixth Book,* is cited in support, and the chapter *Cum decorem, On the Life and Honesty of Clerics,* can rightly be added, where it is commanded that shamefulness of this kind and the corruption of games be driven far from the Church.

Chapter V — Those Who Approach Dances with an Evil Intention Sin

CHAPTER V

Those Who Approach Dances with an Evil Intention Sin

FOURTH CONCLUSION

He who approaches a dance for the sake of lust, or for another cause that involves mortal sin, sins mortally. For if that which is regarded or intended is a mortal sin, the act itself will also be one. Chapter *Militare*, 23, question 1; St. Thomas; St. Bonaventure; Albert the Great; Alexander; St. Antoninus; Angelus; the author Rosella; Sylvester; Zabarella; and others in the places cited.

Chapter VI — He Who Fears, or Ought to Fear, Danger to His Soul Sins If He Does Not Abstain

CHAPTER VI

He Who Fears, or Ought to Fear, Danger to His Soul Sins If He Does Not Abstain

FIFTH CONCLUSION

He who fears for himself the danger of mortal sin from a dance, if he approaches it, sins mortally, because *he who loves danger shall perish in it*, Ecclesiasticus 3. Angelus and Sylvester in the place cited. Say the same if he reasonably ought to fear it, for the cases are equal, and no pardon is granted to the rashness or blindness by which someone approaches danger to his salvation.

Chapter VII — Those Who Fear, or Ought to Fear, That Others May Fall

CHAPTER VII

Those Who Fear, or Ought to Fear, That Others May Fall

SIXTH CONCLUSION

He who fears, or reasonably ought to fear, that others may fall into mortal sin because of a dance that he arranges is bound to abstain; otherwise he will be guilty of deadly sin. Sylvester, in the place cited, mentions this conclusion twice.

And indeed, if someone probably believes that a certain person will sin because of a dance, it is conceded that he is bound to omit the dance. For we are bound to omit not only such things, but all those things that are not necessary for salvation, lest our neighbor sin, when, that is, he is not going to sin from malice and a depraved will, according to the things taught by St. Thomas, II-II, question 43, article 7. Navarrus treats this more distinctly in the *Manual*, chapter 14, number 31, at the words *I said sixth*. The same must be said if someone probably knows that some persons in general will sin because of a dance, as commonly happens, but does not know any certain person.

And indeed the doctrine seems true to me which Angelus, and likewise Sylvester from Raymundus and others under the word *Art*, numbers 3 and 5, also assert: if someone does a thing that is not evil in itself, and indeed can be useful to all, yet because of the condition of the times and corrupt morals notices, or ought to notice, that it is commonly a cause of evil, he is bound to abstain. He is therefore bound to abstain from celebrating any dance when its customary practice is such that mortal sins are commonly committed in it, although no certain person is known.

Chapter VIII — Dances Are Wrongly Permitted at the Discretion of Private Persons and on Any Occasion

CHAPTER VIII

Dances Are Wrongly Permitted at the Discretion of Private Persons and on Any Occasion

SEVENTH CONCLUSION

For dances to be held on every occasion and at the discretion of private persons is alien to sound governance of the commonwealth. This follows also from the opinion of our authors, who permit them to be held only for certain causes, such as a victory, weddings, and similar occasions: St. Thomas on the aforesaid chapter 3 of Isaiah; St. Antoninus in part 2, as above; the author Rosella; Sylvester; Zabarella; and others in the same places. They judge them evil outside such causes, and rightly so. For unless a measure and rule is prescribed for obtaining pleasure, it corrupts morals and easily, as Cicero says, adulterates the nature of the good by deceitfully imitating it, as even the outcome of these dances teaches. Indeed, those to whom the care of peoples is entrusted act wrongly when they permit dances in this manner.

Chapter IX — Immoderate Movements Are Wrongly Employed in Dances

CHAPTER IX

Immoderate Movements Are Wrongly Employed in Dances

EIGHTH CONCLUSION

Those who dance wildly with immoderate movements of the body depart from right reason. St. Thomas, II-II, question 168, article 1, and Plato teach the same; Plato requires a moderate manner in dances, unless perhaps the activity is rather an exercise suited to military training. But if a movement containing shamefulness were employed, and lust were sought in it, it would be a mortal sin. St. Thomas, II-II, question 168, article 3; St. Bonaventure on book 4 of the *Sentences*, distinction 16; Angelus under the word *Dance*, at the third and fourth passages; Rosella in the same place; Sylvester likewise in the same place before number 3; and before all these, Alexander of Hales, part 4, question 11, member 2, article 2.

Chapter X — The Frequent Practice of Dances Is Vicious

CHAPTER X

The Frequent Practice of Dances Is Vicious

NINTH CONCLUSION

To celebrate dances frequently is vicious. For although some recreation may be conceded to weary minds, if moderation is not observed it will no longer be honorable recreation, but effeminacy. Indeed, according to Rosella and Angelus, those who habitually lead dances sin mortally, although this is not approved by Sylvester, because frequency alone cannot make what is otherwise not mortal become mortal. Nevertheless, he retains the opinion of Rosella for this reason: those who employ such frequency and are so delighted by dances almost always fall into some one of the things that introduce mortal sin into a dance, things which, if they were absent, mere habit would not produce that effect.

It must be noted that this opinion concerning habit flowed from Alexander of Hales, who in the place cited above places in mortal sin those who frequently practice dances. He speaks, however, of those dances which are suited to provoking lust; he says that one who approaches them at any time, perhaps even in some measure unwillingly, does not excuse himself from mortal sin, although Alexander does not condemn him absolutely.

But if such an immoderate use of dances does not contain mortal sin absolutely, it will contain it only insofar as through such frequent pleasure someone is disposed to omit the precepts of God or of the Church and to do with indulgence what at first he did only with a certain pleasure, just as a venial sin is said to dispose toward a mortal one. St. Thomas, I-II, question 88, article 3.

Chapter XI — Dances Are Forbidden and Evil by Reason of Sacred Time

CHAPTER XI

Dances Are Forbidden and Evil by Reason of Sacred Time

TENTH CONCLUSION

Those who employ dances during a time given by the Church for penance or especially for the exercise of piety sin mortally. Thus Rosella, and likewise Sylvester from Alexander. As examples they report the time extending from Advent to Epiphany, from Septuagesima to Easter, and Sundays. Sylvester wishes this to be understood, although he indeed seems to have been eager to relax discipline in this kind of matter, unless dances are held because of some unusual and honorable gladness, such as on account of a victory, and unless they are held secretly.

But these exceptions are understood of a time that is not prohibited, as we touched upon above in the seventh conclusion. Besides, if dances were held secretly, perhaps the reason of scandal would indeed be satisfied, but not the reason of penance or spiritual exercise that the Church requires of us.

Sylvester also excepts the custom of a place upon some principal feast. But neither, I think, will one who knows the rites of Holy Church in solemnities accept this exception; nor do the signs of joy that feast days demand have anything in common with these profane dances. There are ecclesiastical choirs, hymns, and processions. The Church has admitted these; she has judged those dances shameful, as appears from the canons cited above. For if our dances accorded with sacred and spiritual gladness, there would be no reason to disapprove them because of the quality of the persons, the place, or their frequency.

That exception concerning some distinguished cause, such as a victory, ought likewise not to be accepted. For other signs of joy, in no way prohibited and customary, are not lacking, and can be exhibited at sacred times of this kind if the matter should seem so important that it ought not to be deferred. And certainly the sons of God have by no means been accustomed to render thanks for victories in this manner. For we have already shown that those dances of the ancients, such as that of Miriam, Aaron's sister, over the drowned army of Pharaoh, were instituted for the honor of God and the celebration of divine praises and are very unlike ours.

What has been said concerning a time of penance is confirmed by chapter 1, *On Penance*, distinction 5, with Torquemada there, and by the Master in book 4 of the *Sentences*, distinction 16, where it is said that a penitent ought to abstain from games and spectacles. At such a time the days of litanies must also be reckoned, and likewise the four Ember seasons, indeed all times of fasting, for the same reason demanded by the same law.

What was said concerning a time especially of devotion and concerning Sundays must also be understood of all feast days that the Church commands to be observed, for the Doctors judge them to have the same law as Sundays.

But as regards feast days, there were some writers of Summas who introduced certain limitations by which dances and spectacles were not entirely excluded from feast days. Angelus attempted to permit them provided they were not held during the Divine Offices and the greater part of the day was not

consumed in them. Sylvester afterward wished to restrict this very condition to the Office of Mass, which alone is of precept; and thus the use of dances was gradually enlarged.

NOTE

They would have acted much more rightly if they had endeavored instead to defend the doctrine of the ancients and at the same time restrain the license of morals. Concerning a time of penance, let the opinion of the Doctors stand: dances are unlawful then because they oppose the constitution of the Church, which assigns that time to penance, not to pleasure; and *music in mourning is like an untimely tale*, Ecclesiasticus 22.

Chapter XII — On Sundays and Feast Days

CHAPTER XII

On Sundays and Feast Days

Sundays and the other feast days must now be considered. First, however, we shall set forth some things concerning the purpose of feast days and the occupation suited to them, so that it may appear whether the practice of dances accords with the observance of feasts, yet referring all things to those in whose hands the power of laws resides. The purpose of feast days, therefore, was that the memory of the Lord's resting after the work of six days might be renewed, as is expressed in Exodus 20. Hence on those days one must devote oneself to God and divine things; and this is to sanctify the day, as is said in the same chapter 20. Thus it is provided in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, book 7, chapters 31 and 37, and book 8, chapter 32, according to the edition of the most learned Turrianus.

In these it is also expressed that feast days pertain to the worship of God, so that we may remember him who for us was born, died, and rose again. The feast days of the saints also pertain to his worship, since he is their head and made them saints. Moreover, by the feasts of the saints we are aroused to imitate their lives, as St. Paul says in Hebrews 13: *Remember your prelates, who have spoken the word of God to you; considering the outcome of their manner of life, imitate their faith.* Theodoret says that in this place the Apostle speaks of the dead, such as James the brother of the Lord and James the brother of John, who had already been slain. St. Basil also speaks thus on this matter in the sermon on Gordius the Martyr: *Therefore, since the feast is only for our sake, it will suffice to celebrate their memory; for they do not need to be adorned by our praises, but we need the history and commemoration of their lives for the sake of imitation.* These are the occupations of feast days. But let us add others.

Pope Nicholas I says in his response to the Bulgarians, chapter 11: *Indeed, it must be known that worldly work is therefore to cease on feast days, so that a Christian may more freely go to the churches, attend to psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, devote himself to prayer, offer oblations, participate in the commemorations of the saints, rise to their imitation, attend to the divine utterances, and send alms to the needy.* Likewise Alexander III, in the chapter *Licet*, in the *Decretals, On Feasts*, calls the Lord's Day and the other feast days appointed to the Most High Majesty days to be observed also by the constitution of the Church.

The beautiful words of the Council of Friuli, chapter 3, also seem not to be passed over: *One must abstain on feast days from every sin and from every carnal work, even from one's own spouse, and from every earthly carnal work; and one ought to devote oneself to nothing other than prayer and to assemble at the church with the highest devotion of mind.*

Likewise, in the Council of Mâcon these words are found: *All Christians who are not falsely called by this name, but who accommodate their hearing to our admonition, knowing that it belongs to our authority to provide for your welfare and to restrain you from evil works, observe the Lord's Day, which begot us anew and freed us from all sins.* And below: *Be all intent in mind and body upon hymns and praises of God. If any of you has a church nearby, let him hasten to it, and there on the Lord's Day let him afflict himself with prayers and tears. Let your eyes and hands be stretched out to God throughout that whole day, for it is the perpetual day of rest; it is known to us in the Law and the Prophets through the shadow of the seventh day. It is therefore just that we celebrate with one accord this day through which we were made what we were not.* And below: *If, therefore, any of you makes light of*

this salutary exhortation or treats it with contempt, let him know that he will first be punished by God according to the measure of his offense, and afterward will also inexorably lie under priestly wrath, and so forth.

Eusebius also writes in book 4 of the *Life of Constantine*, chapter 18, according to Christopherson's translation, that Constantine enacted many things concerning the Lord's Day and the feast days of the holy martyrs, which were to be celebrated piously in the Church with other occupations omitted and leisure given to all so that they might frequent the Church of God. We shall adduce similar enactments of his and of other emperors a little later. From these it appears how alien it is from reason and from divine and human ordinance to give days dedicated to God to pleasures and not to divine things.

Therefore the most weighty Doctor Alexander of Hales, in the aforesaid part 4, question 11, member 2, article 2, judged that those who lead dances on feast days act against the precept of celebrating the feast, at least by consequence, and that those who dance and sing on such a day violate the feast day more than if they gave themselves to working wool, according to the saying of St. Gregory: *It is better to dig and plow on the Lord's Day than to lead dances*. This is similar to what St. Thomas, II-II, question 122, article 4, reply 3, brings forward from St. Augustine: *A Jew would do better to perform some useful work in a field than to remain seditious in a theater, and their women would do better to work wool on the Sabbath than to dance shamelessly all day in their new-moon festivals*.

Chapter XIII — Dances and Spectacles Are Prohibited on Feast Days by Civil Laws

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Dances and Spectacles Are Prohibited on Feast Days by Civil Laws

NOTE

Thus far we have spoken as though of a thing prohibited because it is evil, although meanwhile we are not ignorant of the several grounds from which the School derives a violation of a feast. Now the evil because it is prohibited must be discussed. We shall therefore see whether dances are expressly prohibited on feast days; for if they are prohibited by law, according to the opinion of the Summists they will pertain to a violation of the feast.

First I adduce the words of law 2 of the Theodosian Code, *On Spectacles*, book 15, title 5, which bears the names of Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius: *We also admonish this, lest anyone transgress our law which we enacted long ago: let no one present a spectacle to the people on the Day of the Sun, nor confound divine veneration by a solemnity that has been performed.* Thus it seems that the passage should be read, since it is read somewhat differently in the book that I used.

Likewise law 5 of the same title, bearing the name of Valentinian alone: *On the Lord's Day, which is the first day of the week, and on the days of the Nativity and Epiphany of Christ, and also of Easter and Pentecost, so long as the garments imitating the heavenly brightness of the laver testify to the new light of holy Baptism, and at the time when*, for so I emend it both from reason and from the law *Omnes*, Code, *On Feasts*, *the commemoration of the Apostolic Passion, the teacher of all Christianity, is rightly celebrated by all, all pleasure of theaters and circuses being denied to the peoples throughout all their cities, the minds of Christians and of the faithful are to be occupied by the worship of God.*

If any even now are held by the madness of Jewish impiety or by the error and insanity of foolish paganism, let them know that one time is for supplications and another for pleasures. And lest anyone suppose that, in honor of our divinity, he is compelled as though by some greater necessity of imperial duty, and that unless, with divine religion contemned, he gives his attention to spectacles, he must perhaps incur the displeasure of our Serenity if he should display less devotion toward us than he was accustomed, let no one doubt that then especially is deference rendered by the human race to our clemency, when the obedience of the whole world is expended upon the worship and merits of Almighty God.

To the law just cited I add the law *Omnes*, Code, *On Feasts*, of Valentinian, Theodosius, and Arcadius, in which, after other feast days, this is added: *Likewise the sacred days of Easter, which either precede or follow by the number seven, and also the days of the Nativity and Epiphany of Christ, and the time when the commemoration of the Apostolic Passion, the teacher of all Christianity, is rightly celebrated by all, among which aforesaid most holy days we permit no opportunity for spectacles, we number in the same observance; and likewise the Days of the Sun, which the ancients rightly called the greater Lord's Days, which return upon themselves in a repeated reckoning, and on which it is necessary to have equal reverence.*

Let us add the law of Leo and Anthemius, which is the final law of the same title: *We will that feast days dedicated to the Most High Majesty be occupied by no pleasures and profaned by no vexations of exactions. Therefore we decree the Lord's Day always so honorable and venerable that it be free from all executions*, and so

forth. And below: *Yet, while relaxing the leisure of this religious day, we do not permit anyone to be detained by obscene pleasures.*

Let the theatrical stage claim nothing for itself on that same day, nor a contest of the circus, nor the tearful spectacles of wild beasts. And if a solemnity celebrating our accession or our birthday should fall upon it, let it be deferred. He shall sustain loss of military rank and proscription of his patrimony if anyone should ever believe that on this feast day the statutes of this law may be violated by attending spectacles, or if any attendant of any judge should so believe under the pretext of public or private business.

These things good princes enacted concerning the observance of the worship of feast days and of sacred times, and concerning the removal from them of spectacles and pleasures, so that they might be occupied only by divine worship, with the gravest penalties also proposed. Among these, besides the days and times which we numbered above as to be observed according to the opinion of the Doctors, it is also possible to note that Eastertide is to be observed.

Chapter XIV — Dances and Spectacles Are Prohibited on Feast Days by the Canons

CHAPTER XIV

Dances and Spectacles Are Prohibited on Feast Days by the Canons

Let us see, however, whether any ecclesiastical sanctions of the same kind are found. There is the chapter *Qui die, On Consecration,* distinction 1: *He who on a solemn day, having neglected the assembly of the Church, goes to spectacles, is to be excommunicated.* This canon is found in the Fourth Council of Carthage, number 88, and is said to have been celebrated at about the same time as the cited laws of Valentinian and the others were enacted.

There is also the chapter *Irreligiosa, On Consecration,* distinction 3. This canon is found in the Third Council of Toledo, final chapter, in these words: *The irreligious custom which the common people have been accustomed to practice during the solemnities of the saints must be entirely exterminated. The peoples who ought to attend the Divine Offices give their attention to dances and shameful songs, not only harming themselves but also making a clamor over the offices of the Religious. That this may be driven from all Spain,* in the Decree it reads *from all provinces, is entrusted by the Council to the holy care of priests and judges.*

But the interpretation of these canons must be discussed, and the origin of the common opinion of the Summists disclosed. Because in these canons mention is made of the assembly of the Church and the Divine Offices, some took from this an occasion to say that spectacles are indeed prohibited, but only in consideration of the Divine Offices, so that unless they are held during the time of those offices they seem to be permitted. Angelus held this opinion. Sylvester, considering the matter after him, understood it in such a way that he judged Angelus even too severe, because Angelus included vespers and the sacred sermon within that time of the Offices and did not excuse those who devoted a notable space, such as the greater part of the day, to matters of this kind. To me, however, Angelus seems so far from severe in this matter that I affirm he was even excessively bold in limiting those canons in this way. But writers of this kind considered only their own times.

I say, however, that the Divine Offices were expressly mentioned in the canon because on the same day it did not seem possible to give attention both to them and to games. For although in later times, as piety grew cold, Christians began to devote little attention to the Divine Offices on feast days, yet among the ancients there seems to be no doubt that only a small part of the day was free from divine things, since solemn Masses were attended and the faithful were occupied in sacred readings and sermons in the church, as is learned from reading the Fathers. The canon of Mâcon cited above also indicates this: *Let your eyes and hands be stretched out to God throughout that whole day.* We see this come into practice even today where zeal for restoring divine worship is strong; for the solemnities of Masses, sermons, the canonical hours, and Christian Doctrine prescribed by the Council of Trent consume the whole day. But even if the Divine Offices did not occupy the whole day, they did not therefore intend to permit games or dances on a feast day.

For there is one reason for the canon, namely, that the day be sanctified according to the divine law brought forward above from Exodus. This is indeed accomplished properly and rightly through

ecclesiastical assemblies. But even if such assemblies should perhaps cease in some part, the faithful would nevertheless be bound to sanctify the day.

The same was the reason for establishing that we should abstain from human work. Pope Nicholas expressed this excellently in the place cited above: *Worldly work is therefore to cease on feast days, so that a Christian may more freely go to the churches, attend to psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, and devote himself wholly to prayer.* From his words we see the reason for the prohibitions that were made for the observance of feast days; this reason rightly agrees with the other authorities from divine and human law cited by us in the same place.

I confirm this opinion from the laws of the emperors which we cited. Since they expressed that the reason for their prohibition was divine worship, or the sanctification of a feast day, on which they judged it unlawful to serve pleasures, as is apparent from those words, *all pleasure of theaters and circuses being denied to the peoples, the minds of all Christians and of the faithful are occupied by the worship of God*; and from these, *let them know that one time is for supplications and another for pleasures*; and from others, *we will that feast days dedicated to the Most High Majesty be occupied by no pleasures*; since, I say, the emperors prohibited games and pleasures so absolutely and expressed such a reason, it is not credible that priests intended to prohibit the same things more lightly, especially since they always, as will be shown below, greatly detested games and spectacles.

I add that royal letters are appended to the Council of Toledo, from which the chapter *Irreligiosa* was taken, and in them the constitutions of the council itself are enumerated. Among them it is said without qualification: *Dances and shameful songs are to be prohibited from the solemnities of the saints.* And in the same manner, in the enumeration of the chapters of that council, in these words: *That dances be prohibited on the birthdays of the saints.*

From these things it appears that spectacles, games, and dances are prohibited simply and absolutely on feast days, and that the limitation concerning the time of the Divine Offices must be rejected. Although in some of the places cited only spectacles seem to be prohibited, we must not therefore doubt that dances also are included, because the name *spectacle* is general for all kinds of pleasures of this sort, as is gathered from the laws cited above and from the title of the Theodosian Code, *On Spectacles*. Moreover, the reason of the said laws indicates the same, because one time is for pleasures and another for supplications. This reason certainly pertains to dances, besides the fact that the aforesaid chapter *Irreligiosa* expressly mentions dances, or *ballimachiae*. Indeed, the Doctors also understand these things in the same way, as may be seen from their interpretation of the said canons *Qui die* and *Irreligiosa*.

Thus let it have been shown in this conclusion: first, how greatly the occupation of dances conflicts with the observance of feast days; second, that dances, just like every kind of games or spectacles, are prohibited on feast days by both ecclesiastical and civil sanctions. From this it follows, according to the opinion of all, that those who give themselves to them at such a time sin mortally, unless perhaps ignorance, or the authority of those who govern, or of those who treat sacred matters by writing or administering them, excuses some persons.

Chapter XV — Application of Our Dances to the Conclusions Set Forth

CHAPTER XV

Application of Our Dances to the Conclusions Set Forth

This application is easy. The dances of our time first fall under the seventh conclusion, since they depend entirely upon the discretion of any private person. Hence they are exposed to the evils which we touched upon there. They also fall under the eighth because of immoderate movements, as is evident, not only because they are more excited than propriety permits, but because they are also always obscene, as when limbs are displayed or certain acts pertaining to lust are represented. This happens especially in certain foreign dances that have been introduced and are commonly called ballets. Therefore I have very grave reason to doubt whether dances, even for this reason alone, are not often practiced with deadly guilt.

They fall under the tenth conclusion, and under the danger which we discussed there, because of their frequency. For they are held publicly on almost every feast day in the countryside, and commonly in cities also, in the country, everywhere, and as often as any private person pleases; but with intolerable frequency during the sacred season extending from the Nativity to Lent.

Chapter XVI — The Dangers Arising from the Sight of Women, from Quarrels, and from Other Circumstances

CHAPTER XVI

The Dangers Arising from the Sight of Women, from Quarrels, and from Other Circumstances

Very many fall under the fifth conclusion, since nearly all who approach dances follow a somewhat laxer life and the corruptions of the world. To demonstrate this I first lay down that no one ought to expose himself to danger and that everyone ought to avoid all evil occasions, according to the Gospel saying: *If your eye scandalizes you*, and so forth. Second, I likewise consider that Gospel saying: *Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*. I then consider that men and women sit together at dances and that all are there prepared to take pleasure. I consider their mutual looks and prolonged stay, and likewise the movements of the body, in which curious eyes find many incitements to lust. I add the sweetness of music, which has the greatest power in whatever kind of activity a person is engaged, whether good or evil. I add the conversations that often intervene. I add touch. I also consider that all approach as ornamented as possible, commonly also with full stomachs, and likewise the heat aroused by movement.

Having considered all these things, I do not see why, I will not say men of a laxer life, as I said, but even those who are most continent ought to trust themselves in danger of this kind. And when we were students and laymen, I remember that a certain most weighty philosopher, though in some measure unwilling, was brought by us to a place of dances. When he had contemplated that kind of amusement, he was struck by great astonishment and exclaimed that it was a singular invention for corrupting morals.

But the Holy Spirit teaches us how diligently we must avoid danger even from sight alone, much more from touch and conversation: *Do not look upon a virgin, lest perhaps you be scandalized by her beauty*, Ecclesiasticus 9; and: *Turn your face away from an adorned woman, and do not gaze upon another's beauty; because of the beauty of a woman many have perished, and from this concupiscence burns like fire.* To these may be added the old saying: Love is born from sight. Let us add the example of David, who from that sight fell into the gravest sins, and the example of Shechem, who, when he had seen Dinah and therefore burned with lust, brought so many evils upon his own people from that event. Therefore David said: *Turn away my eyes, lest they behold vanity.* And Job 31: *I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not even think upon a virgin.* Add St. Augustine's saying that it is not lawful to look upon what it is not lawful to desire. Add even pagan examples. When Sophocles said of a boy passing by, *O beautiful boy!*, Pericles said: *It is fitting for a magistrate to have not only abstinent hands, but abstinent eyes also.*

This indeed pertains to all who ought to be chaste. Alexander of Macedon refused to see the daughters of Darius, lest, after he had conquered others, he himself should be conquered by women. But Christians dedicated to the purest discipline voluntarily prepare a thousand snares for themselves and approach the gravest dangers, making no account of the warnings of the Holy Spirit, the honor of God, or their own salvation. Hence in such corruption and danger we ought not to seem too severe if we do not dare to excuse these devotees of dances from mortal sin, since the most approved author Alexander of Hales, in the cited part 4, said that he did not dare to excuse from

mortal sin even those who approached dances unwillingly or by chance where enticements of lust were present.

NOTE

Nor should this seem marvelous to anyone who considers how easily worldly persons fall into sins of the heart and how negligently they advert to them. Among these you will find many who make little account of shameful thoughts confirmed by any assent of the mind.

Nor can we make an exception for the simplicity of country people. Although they are less inclined to these sins than city dwellers, especially the idle, nevertheless we are treating of a natural affection which is very easily aroused both in uncultivated persons and in brute animals. I also affirm that prudent men endowed with much experience, whom I questioned, judged nothing in the opinion described by us alien from a danger of this kind.

There is not only the danger of lust in a dance, but another danger, neither remote nor slight: that of quarrels, from which deadly enmities, homicides, and very many evils proceed, as daily experience teaches. For when one person attempts to anticipate another either in going forward into the dance, in occupying a place, or in inviting a woman to dance, or because one invites the other's mistress, they come to arms. Therefore I find the devotees of dances always heavily armed.

Those who arrange dances fall under the sixth conclusion, given the danger which we treated above, a danger which undoubtedly occurs in the greater part of dances. For although we may perhaps concede that an honorable dance can be held among friends and relatives, nevertheless the greater part of them is contrary to propriety. Indeed, almost no one can hold an honorable dance of this kind because of the evil custom by which young people are accustomed to break into houses where dances are held and, if the door is closed, to knock insolently and injure the master of the house.

In the same manner musicians sin because they assist an evil of this kind, and their art, insofar as it pertains to dances, is employed for things which commonly contain sin. Sylvester treats of them specifically under the word *Sunday*, number 7.

In the same manner those who administer the commonwealth sin when they see these things and do not provide for the salvation of those whose care is entrusted to them, according to the things written by Richard on book 4, distinction 15, question 4; chapter *Error*, distinction 83; and chapter *Ita plane*, 23, question 4.

Let those who approach dances for the sake of seeing, touching, or speaking with a mistress consider the fourth conclusion. Likewise those who arrange dances for the same cause, either for their own sake or for that of others, as frequently happens. Likewise those who offer dances to princes as though a market of women, so that they may select the one who pleases them most and lie in wait for her chastity.

Concerning the tenth conclusion, by which dances are excluded from feast days and sacred seasons, there is no need to infer anything, since the corruption is sufficiently manifest by which on those days and seasons, especially from Quinquagesima to Lent, people give themselves most unworthily, not to say impiously, to dances and spectacles and games of every kind, with no account taken of divine law, by which sanctification of the days is commanded, of canonical sanctions, ecclesiastical rites, and human laws.

Chapter XVII — The Authorities by Which Dances Are Condemned, and Certain Vices of Urban Dances

CHAPTER XVII

The Authorities by Which Dances Are Condemned, and Certain Vices of Urban Dances

From all these grounds we have shown the evils of our dances, adapting our treatment to the reasoning of the Doctors. Let us now see whether anything of the same kind can be had from Sacred Scripture and the Fathers.

First may be adduced Ecclesiasticus 9: *Do not be continually with a female dancer, nor listen to her, lest perhaps you perish through her influence.* Nothing seems to prevent this saying from being applied to all women devoted to dancing.

Likewise those words of Sarah, daughter of Raguel, Tobit 3: *You know, Lord, that I have never desired a man and have kept my soul clean from every concupiscence; I have never mingled with players nor with those who walk in levity.*

Likewise Job 21, speaking of the wicked: *Their little ones go out like flocks, and their children leap in play; they take the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in good things, and in a moment they descend into hell.*

Let us add the notable place in Isaiah 3: *Because the daughters of Zion are lifted up and have walked with outstretched necks, and went with winking eyes, clapped and walked with measured step, the Lord shall make them bald.*

On this passage St. Basil, after saying some things against female dancing and wantonness, adds, as Godefroy translates: *Indeed, even to the present day one may repeatedly see Jewish women, each playing with their feet, not reverencing even in the least the sentence of the Prophet. Or have not the daughters of the Church also been unjustly provoked by the same things? For very many of them, as though in a numerous multitude, on feast days, when they come to hear the word of God, through their ignorance of spiritual gladness, give themselves to dishonorable practices.* Thus Basil.

St. Augustine also says in sermon 215, *On Time*: *Continually admonish your neighbors and those near you that they always strive to speak what is good and honorable, lest perhaps by detracting, speaking evil, leading dances on holy festivals, and uttering luxurious and shameful songs, they seem from their tongue, from which they ought to praise God, to inflict wounds upon themselves. For these unhappy and wretched persons who neither fear nor blush to practice dances and leaping before the very basilicas of the saints, although they came to the church as Christians, return from the church as pagans, because that custom of dancing remains from pagan observance,* and so forth. The holy man condemned dances as they existed in his time, but he judged them altogether a pleasure of pagans, not of Christians.

Concerning spectacles in general, however, one finds very many things among the Fathers by which they are condemned as contrary to Christian discipline. Neither reason nor the intention of the writers in any way permits you to exclude dances from them. Accordingly some were silent about this kind of spectacle because it was not then in use, or rather was not in use in those places.

There exists Tertullian's little book against spectacles, all of which he condemns as insane, shameless, and diabolical; he does the same in the *Apology*, chapters 15 and 58.

St. Cyprian likewise, in the book *On Spectacles* and in epistle 2 of book 2, complains most gravely of the misery or madness of Christians who follow inventions of demons and imitate the morals of the Gentiles, and, what he considers graver, attempt to defend them by the authority of Sacred Scripture, affirming that David danced before the ark and that nabla, drums, lyres, and dances are read of in Sacred Scripture, as though, for the defense of shameful things, it were pertinent to bring forward those things which were done for the worship of God.

St. Augustine treats the same things in the book *On Catechizing the Uninstructed*, chapter 16; book 2, *On the Creed*, chapter 2; book 3 of the *Confessions*, chapter 2; and book 1, *On the Harmony of the Gospels*, chapter 33.

St. John Chrysostom does so very frequently and gravely in almost all his homilies, calling it now the pestilence of the city, now the fountain of all evils, now the chair of pestilence, the gymnasium of incontinence, the workshop of luxury, and the Babylonian furnace.

St. Epiphanius also, at the end of the book *Against Heresies*, and the Sixth Synod, canon 51, prohibit them to Christians, as do other councils.

Likewise Bishop Salvian condemns these same things with the highest piety and eloquence in book 6, *On Providence*, referring them likewise to the morals of the Gentiles, and therefore calling those Christians apostates who, after the renunciation of the devil and his works, return to them again. *The devil*, he says, *is in spectacles and in his pomps, and through this, when we return to a spectacle, we abandon the faith of Christ. In this manner, therefore, the sacraments of the Creed are dissolved, and all that follows in the Creed is weakened and changed; for nothing that follows stands if the principal thing does not stand.* Thus he, and very many things against spectacles and all games.

Here indeed it is permissible to apply our conclusion, since he calls amusements of this kind shameful and diabolical. You will find many things of the same kind among the ancient writers.

Arnobius, *Against the Nations*, book 4, and Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, book 6, chapter 20: *All spectacles must be avoided, not only lest something vicious settle in hearts, which ought to be tranquil and peaceful, but lest the custom of any pleasure hold us and turn us from God and from good works.*

Alexander of Hales also, in the place cited, truly seems to treat dances as a certain evil game suited to arousing lust.

Likewise John Gerson, in part 4, in the sermon for the First Sunday of Advent against luxury, says: *I do not know what further I should say, except that in dances all sins dance.*

St. Bernardino of Siena, a man of great sanctity and learning, says in sermon 10, *On the Observance of the Sabbath*: *It is execrable to give feast days to dances, where through sight, hearing, gesture, and touch the minds of those present are ensnared and contaminated*; and he cites the chapter *Irreligiosa* recited above by us, adding: *Those who are the effective cause of so many evils through lascivious sounds will render an account before the just Judge for all the evils that happen on the occasion of their playing. For he who gives the occasion of harm seems to have caused the harm*, chapter *Si culpa*, *On Injuries and Damages*. Thus he, and similar things.

St. Antoninus, in the cited title *On Dances*, says that almost all hold dances for the purpose of provoking lust. Cardinal Torquemada follows him from Albertinus, chapter 1, *On Penance*, distinction 5, section *Cohibeat*, number 3. St. Antoninus indeed inveighs at greater length against dances and expounds broadly against them, applying that saying of Psalm 11, *The wicked walk round about*; and that saying of the Psalm, *He shall inflame his enemies round about*; likewise Apocalypse 9: *From the smoke of the pit locusts ascended upon the earth.* And a little later: *And the likenesses of the locusts were like horses prepared for battle, and upon their heads were as it were crowns like gold.* Bringing forward many things from Sacred Scripture, he says that pomp, lasciviousness, pride, and vain glory are found in dances, and that through them the devil therefore captures wretched souls. Indeed, he condemns dances so far as to attempt to prove at length that through them offenses are committed against all God's commandments and against all the Sacraments.

Peter de Palude, on book 4 of the *Sentences*, distinction 16, simply condemns dances as evil, since, he says, Barnabas cursed men playing with women. And certainly a gathering of men and women, especially one assembled for the sake of taking pleasure, contains a great danger, as is stated in gloss 1 on the chapter *Mulieris, On Judgments*, in the Sixth Book.

Let us add also the authority of other pious men whose entire sermons against this evil are extant. All of them are greatly moved by the sins that proceed from dances through sight, touch, and conversation, and regard dances as a game of the devil in which most people sin gravely; and they judge no one to be so alien from lust, for any reason whatsoever, that he ought to expose himself to their danger. They are Friar Cherubino of Spoleto, Friar Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, and Friar Gabriel Barletta.

Jacobus de Vitry also reports that when, in a certain village of Saxony, many persons, admonished by a priest on certain feast days, refused to leave a dance, they were punished by God in a certain marvelous manner.

Most recently Conrad Aing, in his *Catholic Catechism*, book 4, chapter 12, says: *A worldly dance has this definition: it is a circle whose center is the devil and whose circumference is his angels standing round about; and therefore it is rarely or never without sin. Satan ordained such a dance after the adoration of the calf,* and so forth. Thus he. He then proceeds to show that all sins are engaged in dances and that no one, though continent and holy, departs from them without sin; and he enumerates many other evils proceeding from them.

What of the fact that many grave men have condemned them by civil prudence alone? Cicero said that almost no one dances sober. And that Alfonso, King of Naples, said concerning the French, who are so devoted to dancing that even old men do not abstain from it: they lose their judgment in old age.

Nor today is there anyone of even a little prudence who does not detest dances and keep them from his house as far as he can; and all good men desire this depraved custom to be exterminated, and deservedly so. For besides certain common evils which ordinarily occur and of which we treated above, we could also relate many others almost peculiar to urban dances, which religious ears could not endure. Alas, that such license is tolerated in the Church of God, so that a public school of luxury is maintained, and a marketplace of fornications and adulteries; and this especially on the most

sacred days of the Lord's Nativity and during the sacred season of Septuagesima and thereafter, when the Church invites us to render thanks and to lament our sins.

Chapter XVIII — Refutation of a Certain Excuse

CHAPTER XVIII

Refutation of a Certain Excuse

The defenders of dances say that for this reason many marriages are contracted which otherwise would not be contracted. O sacraments entered into with the aid of lust! As though it were to be feared that marriages would be lost unless they were contracted through vices, or as though matters were accustomed to turn out prosperously from such foul beginnings. But why do they not also report the foul counsels concerning fornications and adulteries? Why do they not report the stains of minds which those who perhaps brought them pure to dances carry back polluted by evil thoughts and desires? For men converse freely with women; they hold one another by the hands, and for a sufficiently long time; and while the hall is filled with a multitude of persons through that kind of dance which they commonly call the *Tocca*, not only shameful words but very frequent touches also occur. Let them say why they exclude unmarried women from urban dances of this kind, unless because they are full of shamefulness, as though those who are placed in marriage could freely cross the bounds of modesty. And truly in these things the argument from marriages ceases.

Here now we shall set a limit to our disputation concerning dances, praying God, the Best and Greatest, that he may grant the rulers of peoples to establish that which he himself knows to be most suited to his honor and to the salvation of the faithful.

Chapter XIX — Whether a Bishop Can Prohibit Dances on Feast Days, and Whether at All Times

CHAPTER XIX

Whether a Bishop Can Prohibit Dances on Feast Days, and Whether at All Times

Finally it is asked whether a bishop, where these corruptions of dances prevail, as stated in the eleventh conclusion, can prohibit them. First it is asked whether he can prohibit them on feast days and in sacred seasons. The answer is that he can. First, because, as we have already shown, we have canons and laws concerning this. A bishop, however, can, in aid of the common law, make a statute with the penalty of excommunication or another penalty. An example is brought from the chapter *Animarum*, *On Burials*, in the Sixth Book; the gloss teaches this in the Clementine constitution *Ne Romani*, *On Election*, section 1, under the word *Tolli*; the Abbot in chapter *Innotuit*, number 2, *On One Who Has Received Orders by Stealth*; and the Doctors on the said Clementine constitution at the gloss cited. Henry Bohic, who gathers very many things to prove this, does so in the treatise *On an Episcopal Synod*, part 3, article 1, conclusion 13. Since, moreover, the law adds the penalty of excommunication in the aforesaid chapter *Qui die*, *On Consecration*, distinction 1, together with the doctrine of the Doctors, especially Torquemada on the aforesaid chapter *Irreligiosa*, in the same title, distinction 3, the bishop will be able to augment it, as occurs in the case of a *latae sententiae* penalty, as the same Henry proves in the cited place, number 114.

Indeed, even if the common law had not so expressly established this, the bishop could supply what is lacking and prohibit it altogether for the correction of the faithful, according to the excellent doctrine of Hostiensis in the final chapter, *On the Office of the Archpriest*. John Andrew follows him in the same chapter in these words, and Butrius likewise in the same place. The same Henry cites some others also in conclusion 17. Second, he can prohibit it because a bishop has jurisdiction by reason of the time, as Franciscus says in the chapter *Ea quae*, at the end, *On Rules of Law*, in the Sixth Book. The same Henry follows him in the place cited, conclusion 17, number 26.

It is asked secondly whether he can prohibit dances altogether at any time, although the law has made no provision concerning this. The answer is that he can. For a bishop has the power to make constitutions beyond the law for the correction of morals, the removal of sins, and the preservation of piety, matters which pertain to an ecclesiastical judge: chapter *Novit*, *On Judgments*; chapter 1, *On Buying and Selling*, with gloss 2; and Hostiensis, who also affirms that a contrary custom is invalid, since it is contrary to the correction of sin.

For this reason there have also been those who answered as a matter of law that a bishop can punish those who mix bean flour with wax offered for sale, as in the Abbot on the aforesaid chapter 1, *On Buying and Selling*, number 6; Romanus, singular 528, chapter *Fui interrogatus*. Innocent also says in the same chapter that in a notorious crime a bishop can impose the penalty of excommunication, and the Abbot follows him in the same place. The aforesaid chapter 1 and law 1 of the Code, *On Episcopal Hearings*, support this, as Baldus understands that law and as the better copies have it. I add chapter 1, *On Ravishers*, where ravishers are excommunicated by the prelate of the place; and Franciscus on the chapter *Ea quae*, *On Rules of Law*, in the Sixth Book, where, after discussing several things, he

concludes at the end that a bishop can make statutes without distinction in those matters which pertain to the morals of laymen, for the preservation of propriety and the avoidance of sin.

Moreover, a bishop can make a statute in such a case on another ground also, namely, because of the negligence of the secular magistrate, who sees the evil and does not attend to it, according to the doctrine of the gloss on the final chapter, *On Excommunication*, in the Sixth Book, and Firmanus in the treatise *On Bishops*, part 2, book 5, number 7.

END

St. Charles Borromeo — Selected Statements against Dances and Spectacles

APPENDIX
OR
A COLLECTION OF SELECT STATEMENTS
OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO
CARDINAL OF THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH AND ARCHBISHOP OF MILAN
AGAINST DANCES AND SPECTACLES
FROM HIS STATUTES, EDICTS, INSTRUCTIONS, AND HOMILIES

I. Bishops ought to apply the greatest diligence and zeal to this, that feast days be piously and holily observed by all. For since they were instituted in a salutary manner chiefly for celebrating the praises of God and of the saints, diligent care must also be taken lest anyone abuse those very days to the offense of God and the ruin of his own soul. Let them therefore prohibit ... equestrian games, contests, or other playful and vain spectacles from being employed. Let no dances or saltations be held in cities, suburbs, towns, villages, or anywhere at all.

Decree issued in the First Provincial Council of Milan, celebrated in the year of salvation 1565, title *On the Observance of Feast Days*.

II. Clerics shall not go about in disguise; they shall not hold or watch private or public dances. They shall not attend plays, comedies, tournaments, or other profane and empty spectacles, lest their ears and eyes, which are dedicated to sacred duties, be distracted and polluted by playful and impure actions and speech.

Decree issued in the same First Provincial Council of Milan, title *On Arms, Games, Spectacles, and Things of This Kind to Be Avoided by a Cleric*.

III. We have also judged that princes and magistrates must be admonished concerning these things, so that they expel actors, mimes, other mountebanks, and worthless men of that kind from their territories, and severely punish innkeepers and any others who receive them.

Decree issued in the same First Provincial Council of Milan, title *On Actors*.

IV. In buildings of churches appointed for the use and dwelling of the rector, in which both he and laymen, having obtained permission, reside, there shall be no dancing even on account of weddings, nor shall comedies or spectacles be performed.

Decree issued in the year of salvation 1569 in the Second Provincial Council of Milan, title 2, decree 34.

V. Because it has now been learned too well by experience in this province that, in these corrupt times and morals, people scarcely ever assemble for dances, leaping, saltations, and other things of that kind without many and indeed most grave offenses against God, both because base thoughts, obscene words, dishonorable actions, corruptions of morals, and pernicious enticements toward all the works of the flesh are continually joined to them, and because murders, quarrels, dissensions, fornications, adulteries, and very many other evils most frequently follow from them; and because a place is given to these seedbeds of so many offenses and sins especially on those days which are days of propitiation; and on those very days most of the faithful, enticed by these wicked blandishments of

Satan, are drawn away from the Divine Offices, religious supplications, and sacred readings, the unlearned are turned from receiving the rudiments of the faith, and others are withdrawn and removed from other duties of Christian piety to which they ought religiously to apply themselves at that time; this is certainly most grave in the sight of God and of the Church.

Therefore on those feast days, at least during the hours in which the Divine Offices are celebrated, we forbid dances, leaping, and saltations to be led or held. Likewise, let no comedies, scenic or theatrical games, tournaments, or spectacles of any kind be performed.... Against those who do not obey, let the bishop proceed with penalties and likewise with other remedies at his discretion....

Let the bishop diligently prohibit, and altogether bring it about, that not only are there no saltations and dances, but also that no spectacles in honor of the saints, or other profane amusements alien to the worship proper to their feast days and places, be publicly held on those very days in any manner, even under their pretext or on their occasion.

Let the bishop also strive that, at the time when in the weeks of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima Mother Church, by the rite of the Offices and by hymns, excites the minds of the faithful to sorrow and penance, and by every preparation both of vestments and of other things instructs the people of God and prepares them so many days beforehand to recall in a holy manner the Passion and Cross of Christ the Lord, the faithful committed to his care should especially at that time altogether flee spectacles, scenic games, and other things which display the appearance of paganism and which were then introduced by the corruptions of morals, as things abhorrent from the most holy institutions of the Church; and, every worldly activity being put aside, they should be more attentive to the duties of Christian piety and to prayer.

Decrees issued in the year of salvation 1573 in the Third Provincial Council of Milan, title *On the Observance of Feast Days*.

VI. Let the preacher continually reprove the enticements of public sins which men, deceived by the error of depraved custom, regard as nothing, and let him endeavor to bring them into the greatest hatred. He shall show how gravely they offend God, how many evils and even public calamities, and what infinite losses arise from them. He shall continually detest and execrate spectacles, games, and playful things of this kind which derive their origin from the morals of the pagans and are opposed to Christian discipline. He shall demonstrate the disadvantages and the public miseries that flow from them upon the Christian people. He shall strongly confirm the people in this opinion by the arguments which those most weighty men Tertullian, Cyprian the Martyr, Salvian, and Chrysostom bring forward; and in this kind of argument he shall omit nothing else by which so great a corruption may be rooted out.

He shall often gravely reprove and assail from the pulpit dances, saltations, and leaping, from which deadly desires are aroused. With the greatest religious earnestness of which he is capable, he shall act so that scenic and masked performances, from which, as from a certain seedbed, the seeds of almost all evil deeds and crimes arise, may be exterminated from the Christian people by every office, as things alien to the duties of Christian discipline, closely agreeing with the institutions of the pagans, and inventions of the devil.

Instructions for the Preaching of the Word of God, issued by decree of the Third Provincial Council of Milan in the year 1573.

VII. These were the exercises and occupations of the Church and of all the faithful in these seasons - he is speaking of the days which begin from Septuagesima Sunday - namely weeping, tears, penance, reconciliation, and other similar works for reconciling ourselves with God and thus being disposed for the Lenten fast. In place of these the devil has prevailed so greatly that quarrels, enmities, games, dances, comedies, spectacles, banquets, gluttonies, and every kind of dissoluteness and offense against God have been introduced.

Is this the remembrance, dearly beloved, of the admonitions of our most holy father Ambrose? Does he not say: *It is the portion of the idol to intoxicate the mind with wine, to distend the belly with food, to twist the limbs in dances, and so to be occupied in depraved actions that you are compelled to be ignorant that God exists?* Does he not say in this connection with the Apostle St. Paul: *What fellowship has justice with iniquity? Or what society has light with darkness? Or what part has the faithful with the infidel? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?* Does it appear to you that these are the works of children of the Church? They certainly do not deserve that name.

Children truly ungrateful toward their mother! She weeps; they laugh. The Church groans over their sins; they triumph with spectacles, by which the devil triumphs over them. In her Offices the Church applies herself solicitously to appeasing the wrath of God, and they unite with every kind of sin to provoke it still more. The Church seeks with every effort to remove every profanity and pagan practice, and they renew the customs of the pagans, invented by Satan from the beginning of the world, when, masking himself in the form of a serpent, he deceived our first parents. And just as with that mask he caused the miserable fall of the whole human race, so now with the vanity and falsity of masks he strives to cast the world into the same ruin.

Pastoral letter dated February 8 in the year of salvation 1574.

VIII. Keep far from games, spectacles, the tricks of mountebanks, and of worthless men of that kind.... Thus, finally, strengthen your heart so that it does not desire vain spectacles and abhors the amusements and follies of the world.

Admonitions issued both in the Fourth Diocesan Synod of Milan, celebrated in the year 1574, and in the Fourth Provincial Council of Milan, celebrated in the year of salvation 1576.

IX. Flee resorts, taverns and gambling houses, banquets, dances, feasts, masks, and vain spectacles where God is offended; and guard yourself not only from taking part in them in another way, but also from being present at them.

From the booklet of St. Charles entitled *Admonitions for Christian Living for Every State of Persons*, and so forth, issued in the year of salvation 1577.

X. And because the monstrous insanities of spectacles, games, and your past carnivals have had no small part in provoking God to scourge us with the plague, and if you do not at last detach yourselves from these and other such things unworthy of Christian piety, a much greater punishment is to be feared, we have wished, besides what has been said to you by us concerning this matter, to add to this Memorial of ours the treatise of an ancient Father, a most learned man, Salvian, Bishop of Marseilles. He makes you touch with your hand that from such vanities and dissolutions, which have their origin in paganism, come grave scourges and very often the entire ruin of cities and Christian peoples; for just as in such things, which are full of filth, there is found much food for Satan, so great offenses against God are ordinarily joined to them everywhere....

What a thing truly fitted to move everyone in whom any Christian piety remains: to see the world give itself to amusements, games, profane spectacles, and dissolute joys when the voices of God call it more particularly to weeping, tears, mourning, sackcloth, and ashes!

Consider then, Milan, on the other hand, the great providence of God, who has willed that the memory of the benefit which you have miraculously received in the extinction of the plague should extinguish, bury, and utterly cast down the past memories of the games, spectacles, masks, and filth of Carnival; indeed, that its very name, the buffooneries of the world, and every other thing joined with the works and dissoluteness of Carnival should be extinguished.

Every reason requires, blessed children, that in gratitude for the grace received you withdraw yourselves totally from them, forget them altogether forever, and abandon them. Thus precisely at this time your father and protector St. Ambrose still reminds you by his sermon, in which he tells you plainly that, since you have experienced the benefit of God, you must cease to pursue desires for profane things. The ancient pagans, while the pestilence was raging, began to introduce such games and spectacles. Do you wish, in a certain imitation of them, upon the extinction of the plague, which is entirely the grace of God, to retain a similar custom of things so execrable and so displeasing to his divine goodness? Do not do it, children, do not do it. Restore at last to God and to his honor this season of Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima: a season consecrated to the service of his Divine Majesty, a mysterious season which the devil with his inventions and the world with its enticements have already so tyrannically usurped.

Hear, hear, Milan, the voices of God. Restore to me, God says, those sacred days which were so impiously turned to being spent against me, to making war upon my kingdom, to dissipating the souls of my faithful, and to giving so many causes of weeping to my Church.

Among all the consolations that you can give me, my children, for all the labors, dangers, and anxieties that I have ever sustained for you, especially during the plague, let that consolation be the one which I desire supremely for your salvation: that we now see utterly extinguished the profane memories of paganism, which the devil has used to occupy these seasons and, so to speak, to enchant the hearts of men and make them so insane that not even those who are wisest according to the world are ashamed to make a public profession of Carnival madness.

Let masks now be perpetually banished. By them men seem to strive not only to transform themselves but in a certain manner to erase the figure which God has given them. Indeed, some advance so far in this foul madness that they represent those ancient metamorphoses by transforming themselves into beasts.

Cursed and execrable masks, besides every other consideration, also because they represent to us the memory of our ancient ruin, which the devil procured for us when he masked himself as a serpent.

Abominable masks, under which men make it lawful for themselves to speak dishonorable and filthy words and to make gestures and actions full of shamelessness. Wicked masks, assailants of honesty, enemies of gravity, and the ruin of every custody which the soul of a good Christian ought to have within and without.

Let masks now go perpetually into exile together with the comedies, fables of the world, and profane spectacles by which this people, particularly during this season, has so profaned the holy feast days,

removing itself so far from the purpose for which they were religiously instituted.

Let those delightful and pernicious dances be banished, dances so hostile to the chastity of Christian morals, which are the roots and causes of quarrels, disputes, hatreds, injuries, insolences, wounds, and deaths; which are seedbeds of lasciviousness; and, moreover, from dances proceed perpetual ruin of bodies, reputation, and property, and the misfortune of every Christian discipline.

Let dances therefore be exterminated; let so many other corruptions go into dispersion together with them, by which, especially during this season, the devil is accustomed to extend his tyranny beyond all measure in the hearts of men.

Memorial book issued by St. Charles in the year 1579.

XI. There are very many who, like fanatical men, after the manner of the pagans and with a certain sportive license introduced at the instigation of Satan, rage and revel while clothed in masks, lead dances, perform leaping, and present profane spectacles. They become so insane in evil actions of this kind that amid so great a flood of sins arising from them, they do not even recognize guilt.

From the address delivered in the Sixth Provincial Council of Milan, celebrated in the year of salvation 1582.

XII. Let an innkeeper not allow pimps, prostitutes, actors, mimes, other persons of evil condition, or buffoons to lodge with him for too long.

Decree of the Sixth Provincial Council of Milan, title *Things Pertaining to Marriage*.

XIII. If you knew how shameful it is for a most noble man, formed in the likeness of God, delivered from a thousand dangers, and destined to be heir of the heavenly homeland if only he wills, to dance after the manner of the vilest beasts, to devote himself to leaping, and to lead dances, you would not pollute the earth with your dancing, but would rather wear away the church with your knees.

If very many young men of these times, and perhaps even old men - which is more shameful - knew how dangerous the spectacles of comedies are, what hiding places of infernal serpents they are, what nets of demons by which they ensnare unwary souls and draw them wherever they please, with their most delightful liberty entirely taken away, they would certainly flee stages more than gibbets, comedies more than the demons themselves; and the hours which they give to hearing and watching those diabolical inventions they would give to divine conversations and prayers.

Homily delivered on the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost in the year of salvation 1583.

XIV. Let the parish priest and confessor ... pursue more diligently certain sins which are more common and which cause the greatest harm and scandal to the faithful people: contracts in which concealed usury inheres, as in exchanges and in many sales; the crime of false testimony; dances and spectacles, and so forth.

The *Ambrosian Sacramentary*, in which are contained instructions for the administration of all the Sacraments, issued by St. Charles in the year of salvation 1584, title *On the Sacrament of Penance*, section *What the Parish Priest and Confessor Is to Observe in the Administration of the Sacrament of Penance*.

XV. Upon those who confess the pomps of the world, dances, and other works of Satan, he shall impose this penance: that on certain mornings during the week - something which blessed Chrysostom most gravely admonishes should be done even on every single day - after setting a holy meditation before themselves, they renew, while praying to God intimately, that solemn promise

which through their godparents they made in a holy manner at baptism. In that prayer let them resolve with a firm and stable purpose of mind that they adhere to Christ the Lord and renounce again and again the pomps of the age, the works of darkness, and especially the devil, to whom they have professed themselves to be adversaries, and that they will continue so perpetually.

In the same work, section *On the Manner of Imposing Penance*.

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