



his strivings.<sup>115</sup>

The man who is suffering the syndrome of decay is so dangerous, that Fromm suggests beginning a program of research which would employ a projective questionnaire administered to ". . . a stratified and representative sample of the United States population."<sup>116</sup> It would determine the incidence of malignant narcissism, necrophilia, and incestuous symbiosis and study the relation of the syndrome to religion, socio-economic position, education, and geographical origin.<sup>117</sup>

#### FROMM'S THEORY OF REGRESSIVE LEVELS COMPARED WITH FREUD'S

After having given his analysis of the three vicious psychopathological orientations Fromm compares his own position with Freudian theory. He writes:

Freud's thinking was based on an evolutionary scheme of libido development, from the narcissistic to the oral-receptive, oral-aggressive, anal-sadistic, to the phallic-and genital-character orientations. According to Freud the gravest type of mental sickness was that caused by a fixation on (or regression to) the earliest levels of development of the libido. As a consequence, for example, regression to the oral-receptive level would be considered a more severe pathology than regression to the anal-sadistic level.  
...<sup>118</sup>

Fromm contends that his own clinical experience fails to support Freud's position. Actually the anal-orientation leads to more serious regression than the oral-receptive orientation which is "closer to life."<sup>119</sup> Fromm concludes that his theory is almost a reversal of Freud's. In Fromm's view the oral-receptive orientation is not nearly as

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-112.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 112.



archaic as the oral-aggressive and anal-sadistic orientations.<sup>120</sup>

In spite of this reversal, Fromm states:

. . . I believe that the problem cannot be solved by the evolutionary assumption that the earlier orientations are the roots for the more pathological manifestations. As I see it, each orientation in itself has various levels of regression, reaching from normal to the most archaic pathological level. . . .<sup>121</sup>

There are personalities in which the oral-receptive orientation presents no serious problem because the basic character structure is not seriously immature. But it is also quite possible for this orientation to be combined with strong elements of narcissism and incestuous symbiosis which would produce a more disastrous, regressive pathology.<sup>122</sup>

The operation of levels of regression can also be clearly seen in the case of ". . . the almost normal anal-character in comparison with the necrophilic character."<sup>123</sup>

In contrasting his position with Freud's, Fromm states:

. . . I propose therefore to determine pathology not according to the distinction between the various levels in libido development, but according to the degree of regression which can be determined within each such orientation (oral-receptive, oral-aggressive, etc.) It must furthermore be kept in mind that we are dealing not only with the orientation which Freud sees as being rooted in the respective erogenous zones (modes of assimilation), but also with forms of personal relatedness (like love, destructiveness, sadomasochism). . . which have certain affinities to the various modes of assimilation. . . .<sup>124</sup>

In The Heart of Man Fromm is careful to point out that he is dealing primarily in "the realm of relatedness." His concern is with the modes of socialization rather than with modes of assimilation. Narcissism, necrophilia, and incestuous orientations fall into the

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120Ibid.

121Ibid.

122Ibid.

123Ibid.

124Ibid., pp. 112-113.





category of attempts at socialization.<sup>125</sup> However, there is a correlation between these modes of assimilation and modes of socialization such as in the necrophilic interest in feces and things which are "useless for life."<sup>126</sup> There are in Fromm's estimation equally important correlations between the incestuous and the oral receptive, the anal and the destructive orientations.<sup>127</sup>

In summarizing his position Fromm states:

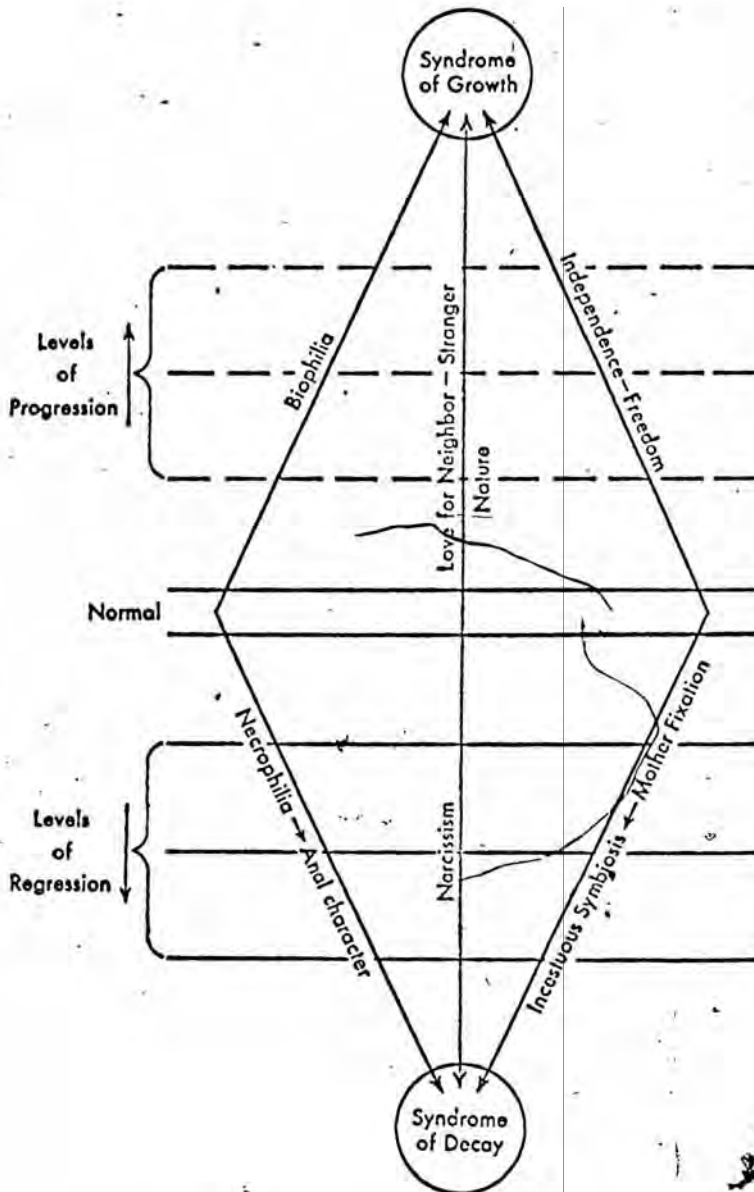
I have tried to show that each of the three orientations described here can occur on various levels of regression. The deeper the regression in each orientation, the more the three tend to converge. In the state of extreme regression they have converged to form what I call the "syndrome of decay." On the other hand, with the person who has reached an optimum of maturity the three opposite orientations also tend to converge. The opposite of necrophilia is biophilia (love of life); the opposite of narcissism is love; the opposite of incestuous symbiosis is independence and freedom. The syndrome of these three attitudes I call the "syndrome of growth. . . ."<sup>128</sup>

In the following diagram Fromm presents his concept in a schematic form.

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125Ibid., p. 113.      126Ibid., p., 54.  
127Ibid.              128Ibid., p. 113.

### Schematic Diagram showing Levels of Progression and Regression



129 Fromm, THOM., p. 111.



## Chapter 3

### INCESTUOUS TIES AND RELIGION

#### MAN'S ANSWER TO HIS EXISTENCE

Fromm defines religion in this way:

. . . I want to make it clear at the outset that I understand by religion any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion.<sup>1</sup>

According to this definition there is no culture in human history past or future which would lack some religious practice.<sup>2</sup>

As previously stated in this paper, Fromm considers as fundamental man's need for a frame of orientation and devotion. His existential situation demands it:

The disharmony of man's existence generates needs which far transcend those of his animal origin. These needs result in an imperative drive to restore a unity and equilibrium between himself and the rest of nature. He makes the attempt to restore this unity and equilibrium in the first place in thought by constructing an all-inclusive mental picture of the world which serves as a frame of reference from which he can derive an answer to the question of where he stands and what he ought to do. But such thought-systems are not sufficient. . . . Man has to strive for the experience of unity and oneness in all spheres of his being in order to find a new equilibrium. Hence any satisfying system of orientation implies not only intellectual elements but elements of feeling and sense to be realized in action in all fields of human endeavor. Devotion to an aim, or an idea, or a power transcending man such as God, is an expression of this need for completeness in the process of living.<sup>3</sup>

Fromm contends that the responses man gives to the basic need varies tremendously. His worship may be directed to trees, animals, idols, or to leaders who are saints or diabolical tyrants. The object of

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<sup>1</sup>Fromm, PAR., p. 21.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Fromm, MFH., p. 55.





his religious loyalty and devotion may include ancestors, soil, class, party, prestige, power, or money.<sup>4</sup> His religion may promote humane sentiments and values or it may foster a destructive pattern of life. Man may identify his system as a specifically religious one, or he may fail to recognize that his ultimate loyalty and devotion is "religious" in any way. "The question," says Fromm, "is not religion or not but which kind of religion, whether it is one furthering man's development, the unfolding of his specifically human powers, or one paralyzing them."<sup>5</sup>

As Fromm sees it then ". . . religion is the formalized and elaborate answer to man's existence. . . ." <sup>6</sup> When religion is a conscious group activity involving ritual and worship it fosters a sense of security and stability because it is an approved and shared fellowship with others who believe the same thing and have similar objectives. But there are instances in which man's real religion is not a shared experience because his "answer" to the challenges of existence is composed of regressive strivings which, if known, would be in opposition to the approved conscious standards in an existing culture. This Fromm calls man's secret, private "religion," and in this sense it is a neurosis with which man lives and operates his life.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding man's "answer" to his existence Fromm writes:

In order to understand the individual patient--or any human being--one must know what his answer to the question of existence is, or, to put it differently, what his secret, individual religion is, to which all his efforts and passions are devoted. Most of what one considers to be "psychological problems" are only secondary consequences of his basic "answer," and hence it is rather useless to try to "cure" them before this basic answer--that is, his secret,

<sup>4</sup>Fromm, PAR., p. 26.      <sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Fromm, ZBAP., p. 91.      <sup>7</sup>Ibid.

private religion has been understood.<sup>8</sup>

#### THE REGRESSIVE ANSWER.

Man is always driven to find unity and harmony in life.

According to Fromm he can give only two answers to this challenge posed by his existence. One is to overcome the anxiety of his separateness and aloneness ". . . by regression to the state of unity which existed before awareness ever arose, that is before man was born."<sup>9</sup>

The evolution of religion tells a great deal about man's emerging identify and self-awareness. With the development of man's selfhood and self-consciousness he came to a realization of his aloneness, and in panic over his lostness, he attempted to return to a oneness with nature. This pattern has been repeated for hundreds of thousands of years.<sup>10</sup> In his desperation he sought to escape the heavy burden of being a human being by attempting to achieve a reunion with nature, once more identifying with and acting like an animal.<sup>11</sup> This can be seen in primitive religious rites in which animal masks were worn, and a totem animal or animal gods were objects of worship.<sup>12</sup> However, man did not concentrate completely on animals, he also included in his worship trees, rivers, and the forces of nature.<sup>13</sup>

The emergence of the human race from its tenacious ties to

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>10</sup>Erich Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 157. (The title of this book is hereafter referred to as BCOI.)

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Fromm, TAOL, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup>Fromm, BCOI, p. 157.



nature or the primary bonds did not occur with great ease, because each step forward increased man's anxiety, since it required that he find new ways to deal with his fear of separateness.<sup>14</sup>

In different types of orgiastic states man used drugs, intoxicants, and sexual orgies in an effort to nullify his humanness. A deep experience of fusion with the other members of the tribe or group gave relief to those who sought to forget their individual struggles with existence.<sup>15</sup> In time man made another attempt to escape his humanness by making idols ". . . into whom he projected all he had. . . ,"<sup>16</sup> sacrificing animals and children in an effort to lose part of himself in the idol and paradoxically to gain strength back through this symbiotic arrangement.<sup>17</sup>

Fromm believes that human progress and development depends upon man's breaking the primary ties or bonds. He writes:

The easiest and most frequent form of man's relatedness is his "primary ties" to where he comes from--to blood, soil, clan, to mother and father, or, in a more complex society, to his nation, religion or class. These ties are not primarily of a sexual nature, but they fulfill the longing of man who has not grown up to become himself, to overcome the sense of unbearable separation. This solution of the problem of human separateness by continuing what I call "primary ties"--which are natural and necessary for the infant in his relationship to his mother--is obvious when we study the primitive cults of the worship of soil, of lakes, of mountains, of animals, often accompanied by the individual's symbolic identification with these animals (totem animals). We see it in the matriarchal religions in which the Great Mother and goddesses of fertility and of the soil are worshipped. . . .<sup>18</sup>

Man's primary ties to the people and sources of his birth, to

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<sup>14</sup>Fromm, TAOL., p. 11.      <sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Fromm, BCOI., p. 157.      <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>18</sup>Fromm, TROH., p. 68.





mother, clan, blood, and soil, are then, by Fromm's definition, also "incestuous." In describing the nature of human evolution Fromm states: "Its essence lies in man's emergence from incestuous ties to blood and soil. . . ,"<sup>19</sup> and he adds: "By 'incestuous' I mean not primarily a sexual but essentially an affective tie to mother and nature."<sup>20</sup>

This tendency to resist breaking the tie to the mothering person or to her surrogates--blood, family, tribe--is not rare because the wish to remain attached ". . . is inherent in all men and women."<sup>21</sup> The move to break loose and to achieve individuation is successful with those whose development is normal.<sup>22</sup> But the person whose development has been seriously disturbed will inevitably ". . . revert to primitive and irrational systems. . ." which only serve to deepen his fear, dependence, and further his personality disintegration.<sup>23</sup> In the case where development has been seriously blocked, ". . . the regressive tendency for symbiotic union wins, and it results in the person's more or less total incapacitation."<sup>24</sup>

Whether the incestuous fixation is transferred to family, tribe, nation, state, or church, even when it is not terribly severe, it has seriously impeded man's growth and has been ". . . one of the most important factors working against human solidarity, and one of the deepest sources of hate, destructiveness and irrationality. . . ."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, (New York: Fawcett Premier Books, 1966), p. 57. (The title of this book hereafter is referred to as YSBAG.)

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Fromm, SCMV., p. 77.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Fromm, MFH., p. 58.

<sup>24</sup>Fromm, SCMV., p.77.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.



## MATRIARCHAL AND PATRIARCHAL STRUGGLES IN RELIGION

In the evolution of religion and human self awareness man fashioned his gods as human beings. In this anthropomorphic phase there is a rising concern for the female and male nature of the gods.<sup>26</sup>

In an analysis of ancient Greek and Roman religious writings J. J. Bachofen concluded that matriarchal orders of society dominated an earlier state of mankind's development, and patriarchates later arose to contest female rule. From the Greek documents he found strong indications of the existence of a matriarchal order in which all-powerful mother deities controlled the family and goals of society. Bachofen postulated that the establishment of the reign of the Olympian gods in Greece occurred only after a long struggle in which ". . . men defeated women, subdued them, and succeeded in making themselves the rulers of a social hierarchy."<sup>27</sup>

In the matriarchal phase of religion, which was dominant before the patriarchs took over, the goddess reigned supreme in the religious realm, and mother-love was the very essence of this cult. Mother's love is extremely attractive and gratifying to man because of the great generosity of its expression. It is unconditional, all-protecting, and all-encompassing. And because it is not given on a bargaining basis it cannot be manipulated. Of mother's love Fromm states: "Its presence gives the loved person a sense of bliss; its absence produces a sense of lostness and bitter despair."<sup>28</sup> A mother's love is not based on obs-

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<sup>26</sup>Fromm, TAOL., p. 64.    <sup>27</sup>Fromm, TFL., p. 205.

<sup>28</sup>Fromm, TAOL., p. 65.





dience, or given because her children fulfill her expectations. It is freely expressed without strings attached--a love for children because they are her children. Such love sees all children as equals because they are the offspring of the Mother Earth.<sup>29</sup>

There is much evidence, in Fromm's estimation, which supports the theories of J. J. Bachofen. In Greece and India, in the time before the great northern invasion, matriarchal cultures were in existence. The number and importance given to mother goddesses cannot be ignored. Fromm points to the importance of: Venus of Willendorf, Mother Goddess at Mohengo-Daró, Isis Istar, Rhea, Cybele, Hathor, the Serpent Goddess at Nippur, the Akkadian Water Goddess Ai, Demeter and the Indian Goddess Kali.<sup>30</sup> The last remnants of a matriarchal order can still be found in primitive cultures today, but what is more important, says Fromm, is that ". . . we can find many examples of the matriarchal kind of relatedness to mother, blood and soil, even where the social forms are not matriarchal any more."<sup>31</sup>

In the next stages of human and religious evolution mother-rule was defeated, and the father became the Supreme Being in religion and the social order.<sup>32</sup> Once the patriarchs had taken over the rule of society they structured cultural patterns which were quite unlike those devised by the matriarchs. The father does not go through the experience of having a new life created within him. He is not involved in pregnancy, birthing, nursing, and care of children, and therefore, he is not as intimately related to the ebb and flow of life in nature as a

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid. <sup>30</sup>Fromm, TSS., p. 48.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. <sup>32</sup>Fromm, TAOL., p. 65.



woman is. "Because he is less rooted in nature, he is forced to develop his reason, to build up a man-made world of ideas, principles and man-made things which replace nature as a ground of existence and security."<sup>33</sup>

There is a difference in the male's approach to a child because, standing outside of the experience of conception and birth, he knows little of the feelings inherent in the mothering process. In addition, the father must deal with personal, masculine social pressures and objectives. His sons must successfully protect patriarchal interests and property. Rewards are given to those who are fiercely competitive and unyieldingly devoted to the father. The father's love, unlike the mother's, cannot be unconditional, accepting of behavior which might not be supportive of the head of the family or clan. Thus, in patriarchal societies a father is intent on molding a son to fit his needs. The son is forced to be submissive, but he continues to have rebellious feelings because he is held in a submissive position.<sup>34</sup>

The triumph of patriarchal power can be seen in Indian, Egyptian, and Greek cultures, as well as in Jewish-Christian or Islamic religions. Fromm states ". . . we are in the middle of a patriarchal world, with its male gods, over whom one chief god reigns, or where all gods have been eliminated with the exception of the One, the God."<sup>35</sup> The yearning for mother-love cannot be fully suppressed or eradicated from the heart of man. The figure of the loving mother has not been driven from the pantheon. She returns in insidious form: in Jewish mysticism, in the

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<sup>33</sup>Fromm, TSS., p. 49.      <sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Fromm, TAOL., p. 66.





Protestant Reformation's resurrection of the God's freely given love as Grace, and more obviously in the rise of Mariolatry in the religion of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>36</sup>

#### THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE MATRIARCHAL AND PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES

Freud saw only the negative, psychopathogenic aspects of attachment to the mother. J. J. Bachofen saw the negative and the positive aspects in relation to the mother figure. Fromm sees that ". . . the positive aspect is a sense of affirmation of life, freedom, and equality, which pervades the matriarchal structure."<sup>37</sup> However, as already noted, one of the ways in which man finds some measure of unity in life as he confronts the question of emergence or regression, is by returning to mother, holding on to her, or her surrogates, remaining bound by primary ties.<sup>38</sup> This is the negative aspect of the matriarchal structure which finds classic expression in the worship of the Great Mother and goddesses of fertility. Such a psychic arrangement represents the continuation of primary ties which Fromm considers extremely pathological and dangerously regressive.<sup>39</sup>

There is a submission to the father by the son in patriarchal societies, but it is quite different from mother fixation. Submission to the father involves an acquiescence to a man-made but artificial power of law and order. What the father offers psychologically is less enticing than the unconditional love and care given by the mother. He

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.    <sup>37</sup>Fromm, TSS., p. 48.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.    <sup>39</sup>Fromm, TROH., p. 68.



is not an extension of nature as the mother is, but what he does provide in terms of reason, conscience, and individualism are the positive elements of the patriarchal structure.<sup>40</sup>

The negative aspects of the patriarchal structure are hierarchy, oppression, inequality, and the use of force to obtain obedient submission.<sup>41</sup> Many men, in order to escape from their solitary loneliness and fear, bind themselves to a strong father's domination and authority.<sup>42</sup> In such an obedient relationship man finds again the father who protects, praises, and punishes.<sup>43</sup> The authoritarian character structure is one in which an individual derives his sense of strength and identity by subordinating himself to a strong authority figure. By submitting to the greater authority, he thereby becomes a part of that power and authority. This in reality is a symbiotic arrangement whereby a man is inflated by attaching himself to the greater source of strength. He then may dominate those others who must submit to his control; however, apart from the initial relationship the symbiotic individual shrinks into nothingness.<sup>44</sup>

In his book, Escape From Freedom, Fromm attempts to show that the theological positions which Luther and Calvin adopted reflected the position of middle-class man in the era of the Reformation who, having freed himself temporarily from the domination of the Church, was threatened by the rise of a powerful new form of capitalism. Once again man panicked over his individual insignificance and powerlessness and, in

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<sup>40</sup>Fromm, TSS., p. 50.      <sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Suzuki, Fromm, De Martino, ZBAP., p. 89.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Fromm, SCMV., p. 80.





his desire for help and protection, adopted the self-effacing, masochistic solution of submission which was offered to him by Reformation divines.<sup>45</sup>

The doctrines of Luther and Calvin, says Fromm, have the same theological and psychological spirit. While both stood in opposition to blind acceptance of the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church, religion still had to begin with the full realization of human powerlessness.<sup>46</sup> This stress on human helplessness is the leitmotif of the reformers, and the heart of masochistic philosophy.<sup>47</sup>

The patriarchal equivalent of mother fixation involves submission and obedience to the father,<sup>48</sup> but the individual who is subject to this psychic arrangement does not experience the sense of unity that characterizes mother fixation, nor does he enter into the deeper extremes of regression.<sup>49</sup>

SOCIAL REPRESSION AS A FACTOR IN MOTHER FIXATION  
INDIVIDUALLY, AND IN THE FORMATION OF  
REGRESSIVE DOGMA

Erich Fromm indicates that man is constantly under pressure to make a decision to emerge from or to regress to his original ties with mother and nature.<sup>50</sup> In The Dogma of Christ and Social Character In A Mexican Village Fromm seems to say that under severe, externally repressive conditions man who has been hemmed in, beaten, and enslaved

<sup>45</sup>Fromm, EFE., pp. 99-100.      <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>48</sup>Fromm, SCMV., p. 77.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>50</sup>Suzuki, Fromm, De Martino, ZBAP., p. 87.

by external circumstances tends to regress also.<sup>51</sup> Fromm writes:

. . . Man, in fact, is one of the most pliable natural forces; he can be made to serve almost any purpose; he can be made to hate or to co-operate, to submit or to stand up, to enjoy suffering or happiness.

While all this is true, it is also true that man can solve the problem of his existence only by the full unfolding of his human powers. The more crippled a society makes man the sicker he becomes even though consciously he may be satisfied with his lot.<sup>52</sup>

In The Dogma of Christ Fromm speaks of the crippled condition of the Catholic masses in the fourth century. The hope for the defeat of oppressive rule and for the establishment of their own class had been suppressed and therefore abandoned. Any attitude other than submission to the overlord would have been suicide.<sup>53</sup>

"But the aggressive impulses could not have disappeared. Nor could they even have diminished, for their real cause, the oppression by the rulers, was neither removed nor reduced."<sup>54</sup> What had happened to these aggressive, hostile impulses? Fromm states that the impulses were turned away from the original offenders, the oppressive authorities, and were turned inward or transferred to the individual self--an object of aggression that was perfectly acceptable to the ruling social authorities.<sup>55</sup> Thus the oppressed masses took responsibility for their hostility and the guilt which it incurred. Fromm writes that

. . . only through constant expiation, only through personal

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<sup>51</sup>Erich Fromm, The Dogma of Christ, and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 67, (The title of this book is hereafter referred to as DOC.), and Erich Fromm, SCMV., pp. 115-116.

<sup>52</sup>Erich Fromm (ed.), Socialist Humanism (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), p. 234.

<sup>53</sup>Fromm, DOC., p. 67. <sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-68.





suffering could they atone for their guilt and win the love and pardon of God and of his earthly representatives. By suffering and castrating oneself, one finds an escape from the oppressive guilt feeling and has a chance to receive pardon and love.<sup>56</sup>

The ruling authorities of the Catholic Church, who were in league with the oppressive authorities of the state, quickly sensed their opportunity and even doubled their efforts to make the masses feel guilty. There was then a ". . . transformation of christological dogma, as well as that of the whole Christian religion. . . ." <sup>57</sup> This transformation can be seen in the development of the Homocousian doctrine.<sup>58</sup> In regard to this new doctrinal formation Fromm writes:

. . . Analytic experience leads us to expect that behind the logical contradiction of the formula, namely, that two are equal to one, must be hidden a specific unconscious meaning to which the dogma owes its significance and its fascination. The deepest, unconscious meaning of the Homocousian doctrine becomes clear when we recall a simple fact: There is one actual situation in which this formula makes sense, ~~the situation of the child in its mother's womb.~~ Mother and child are then two beings and at the same time are one.<sup>59</sup>

The doctrinal image of Jesus in the Early Church, in which Christianity was the religion of the oppressed but rebellious masses, was adoptionistic. It reflected ". . . the belief that a man . . . elevated to a god was an expression of the unconscious impulse of hostility to the father that was present in these masses."<sup>60</sup> By the fourth century, as previously noted, the psychic situation of the Catholic masses had changed greatly, and the revolutionary attitudes had turned destructively:

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<sup>56</sup>Fromm, DOC., p. 68. <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>58</sup>Bernhard Lohse defines "homocousia" as the key word in the Nicene confession expressing the equality of being and substance of the Father and Son within the Godhead. A Short History of Christian Doctrine, trans. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 55.

<sup>59</sup>Fromm, DOC., p. 70. <sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 51.



inward. The doctrinal image of Jesus changed, and the God image also.

Fromm says:

. . . The strong, powerful father has become the sheltering and protecting mother; the once rebellious, then suffering and passive son has become the small child. Under the guise of the fatherly God of the Jews, who in the struggle with the Near Eastern motherly divinities had gained dominance, the divine figure of the Great Mother emerges again, and becomes the dominating figure of medieval Christianity.<sup>61</sup>

From the fourth century the Church begins to play a different role than it had in the early centuries of Christianity. It was deeply affected by the development of the great psychic interest in the mother divinity. The Church came to be seen as the Great Mother, the mediator of salvation to her helpless but believing children, through whom man can hope to achieve security and salvation.<sup>62</sup>

The rise to prominence of the cult of Mary is, in Fromm's estimation, clearly a revival of the mother divinity who had been known in many forms and shapes in the evolution of religion.<sup>63</sup> In this development, however,

. . . Mary represents that motherly divinity grown independent by separating itself from the father-god. In her, the motherly qualities, which had always unconsciously been a part of God the Father, were now consciously and clearly experienced and symbolically represented.<sup>64</sup>

According to Fromm, The New Testament does not give Mary an exalted position, but as the historical human Jesus faded amidst the developments of Christology and the image of the pre-existent Son of God emerged, Mary rose from the ranks of ordinary human beings and ascended the throne of heaven. Mary came to be seen not only as the mother of

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. .

<sup>63</sup>Fromm, TSS., p. 48.

<sup>64</sup>Fromm, DOC., p. 71.





the earthly Jesus, but as the mother of God, and by the end of the fourth century worship of the Virgin had begun, altars were erected especially to her, and the plastic arts were concentrating on her great popularity. Great Mother Mary with the nursing infant Jesus became the symbol of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.<sup>65</sup>

The suffering masses found relief by identification with two aspects of Jesus' life. In their interiorization of their aggression they saw psychic meaning in the suffering crucified Jesus in which ". . . pardon is obtained by a passive, self-castrating submission to the father."<sup>66</sup> In their identification with the child Jesus they returned defeated and broken to the pacifying Great Mother who granted pardon and expiation.

This fantasy of the great pardoning mother is the optimal gratification which Catholic Christianity had to offer. The more the masses suffered, the more their real situation resembled the suffering Jesus, and the more the figure of the happy, suckling babe could, and must appear alongside the figure of the suffering Jesus. But this meant also that men had to regress to a passive, infantile attitude. This position precluded active revolt. . . .<sup>67</sup>

In his book, Social Character In a Mexican Village, coauthored with Michael Maccoby, Erich Fromm states that although Mexico has the appearance of being a strictly father-centered society, in reality the father principle has been undermined and is ". . . at war with the mother principle."<sup>68</sup> The socio-psychological investigations of Fromm and Maccoby have led them to this conclusion:

. . . . As our data show, there are differences in degree of

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-72.      <sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 74.      <sup>68</sup>Fromm, SCMV., p. 114.



attachment (to the mother) but there are relatively few instances in which a son or daughter is more attached to father than to mother. The majority is more attached to the mother. . . .<sup>69</sup>

This attachment to mother is also manifested in the religious structure of Mexican Roman Catholicism. Fromm observes:

. . . While its theology is, of course, not different from that of the Church in general, the emphasis and accent is heavily on the matriarchal side. The religious world is governed by the Virgin, the all-helping, all-forgiving merciful mother, while God and even the martyred Christ take a second place in the experience of the people. It is no exaggeration to say that for the Mexican peasant, the Virgin of Guadalupe (and many other Virgins of local significance) is at the center of religious belief.<sup>70</sup>

If the Virgin is at the heart of worship in the Catholic Church in Mexico it is probably related to the deterioration of the patriarchal system in Mexican society. "Many Mexican men feel insecure, afraid of their wives, and instead of being in command they depend on women."<sup>71</sup> The Mexican mother appears to be socially and psychologically more stable than the drinking, drifting father, who is known for abandoning his family. There is great antagonism between the sexes caused by male inefficiencies and weaknesses. Instead of achieving a desirable blend of patriarchal and matriarchal values in the social order there is a clash between the two principles.<sup>72</sup> As a result of male ineptitude and female stability there is a growing contempt by the women for the men, particularly masochistic women, who want to submit to tough, authoritarian men.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, says Fromm:

. . . Mother fixation is part of the social character so much so

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 155.





that we consider the village<sup>74</sup> (and the central plateau of Mexico) to be a society which in appearance is strictly father centered or patriarchal, but which in fact is emotionally centered in the mother.<sup>75</sup>

There are important probable historical reasons for this development in Mexico which should be considered. Fromm sees an inter-relationship between Mexico's restrictive, paternalistic hacienda system, the matriarchal principle, and the formation of the receptive character type in present times, all of which had its historical origin in the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. The Spaniards had ruthlessly destroyed the patriarchal structure of Aztec society which left the Indian men powerless to defend their women. The Spanish simply took the Indian women, and the children of these liaisons were mestizos. The dependent Indian and mestizo in the feudal type hacienda continued to be unable to protect the women from hacienda overlords. The mestizo had no real patriarchal authority of his own.<sup>76</sup> Fromm declares that:

. . . A man in this state of powerlessness is deeply affected. It gives him a sense of castration, or unmanliness, and deep shame. Clearly, a patriarchal system collapses if the men in it are totally or partly affected by this type of impotence, which is not the physiological one of not functioning sexually, but rather impotence in the larger sense of the traditional male role, i. e., that the male is not capable of defending his woman. . . .<sup>77</sup>

Such a situation brings humiliation to the man causing him to be submissive to his women in order to meet her contempt. The sons of the peon father will not attempt to maintain the illusory patriarchal facade of their fathers because they tend to see the mother as the real source

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<sup>74</sup>A village in the state of Morelos in Mexico was selected for socio-psychological research which is described and reported by Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby in Social Character In a Mexican Village, p. ix.

<sup>75</sup>Fromm, SCMV., p. 111. <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-116.



of strength and stability in life.<sup>78</sup>

. . . In a situation where men have felt impotent to fulfill the male role, the image of the mother is strengthened as the one and only person who loves unconditionally, and who will always give the feeling of being powerful, at least as long as the son remains emotionally a child.<sup>79</sup>

In The Dogma of Christ and in Social Character In a Mexican Village Fromm shows how harshly repressive social circumstances can so emasculate man that he is forced to return to mother as the only source of strength and life. Under these conditions man is beaten into a degrading dependency and forced into a fixation which he would not have chosen if he could have done otherwise.<sup>80</sup>

#### WORSHIP OF THE STATE

As we have seen, Fromm's research in Mexico shows that a forceful matriarchal structure lies beneath a deceptively patriarchal facade.<sup>81</sup> However, the positive and negative aspects of the matriarchal complex have ". . . by no means disappeared from the modern Western scene."<sup>82</sup>

The positive aspects are still to be found in matriarchal values such as human equality, the sacredness of life, the right of all men to share in the provisions of nature, and the brotherhood of all men who have come from the womb of the same great mother.<sup>83</sup> "By the mastery over nature as it manifests itself in industrial production," Fromm contends, "man frees himself from his fixation to the bonds of blood and soil, he

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Fromm, DOC., p. 51; and Fromm, SCMV., pp. 115-116.

<sup>81</sup>Fromm, SCMV., p. 114. <sup>82</sup>Fromm, TSS., p. 58.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 59.



humanizes nature and naturalizes himself."<sup>84</sup>

The negative, incestuous aspects of the matriarchal complex have not disappeared. In European developments can be seen ". . . the persistence of, or even further, regression to its negative aspects-- the fixation to blood and soil."<sup>85</sup>

Man, who had broken the shackles of the medieval community, became quickly ". . . afraid of the new freedom which transformed him into an isolated atom . . ."<sup>86</sup> and found relief and escape in a new worship and idolatry of blood and soil. Nationalism and racism came to be the objects of this new worship. Stalinism, Fascism, and Nazism were the names given to ". . . this blend of state and clan worship, both principles embodied in the figure of a 'Fuehrer.'"<sup>87</sup>

If after the collapse of the supernatural world of Roman Catholicism of the Middle Ages, the spiritual leaders who attempted a reconstruction had followed the lead of humanist thinkers of the Renaissance, a higher form of "catholicism" would have been achieved, reaching the heights of human universalism. Such a positive development would have marked the end of an idolatrous worship of the clan. Fromm points to the fact that even though the developments of science and technology had made such a move possible ". . . the Western world fell back into new forms of clan idolatry, that very orientation which The Old Testament prophets and early Christianity tried to uproot."<sup>88</sup>

Although nationalism originally held the prospect of being a

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid.    <sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.    <sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.



progressive movement it soon became as enslaving to man as feudalism and absolutism. "The average man today obtains his sense of identity from his belonging to a nation, rather than from his being a 'son of man.'"<sup>89</sup> Because of his strong incestuous attachments and narcissistic group orientation he looks with suspicion at the stranger who is not like himself. Fromm states that "nationalism is our form of incest, is our idolatry, is our insanity. 'Patriotism' is its cult."<sup>90</sup> This kind of fixation puts the national, narcissistic interests above all else. Even truth and justice suffer greatly at the expense of nationalistic interests. Such an orientation does not contain a loving concern for the spiritual or material welfare of the nation. The nationalist is concerned with achieving a place of power and pre-eminence over other countries. "Just as love for one individual which excludes the love for others is not love, love for one's country which is not part of one's love for humanity is not love, but idolatrous worship."<sup>91</sup>

The great European revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries failed to release man and give him the freedom he had fought to achieve. Instead he reverted to bondage, to nationalism and state worship, which was a different type of religious loyalty, devotion, and worship, but one which fully represented . . . the symptoms of regression to incestuous fixation."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid. <sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

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