



History Of Celibacy Tpb

Elizabeth Abbott

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From the divine to the double standard, from Vestal Virgins to the new Power Virgins, a fascinating, wide-ranging historical exploration of celibacy and celibates.

Florence Nightingale was one. So was Sir Isaac Newton. A monk vows to be one. A prisoner is forced to become one. History is full of people who were avowed celibates; contemporary society reflects a renewed interest in celibacy. But what caused and still causes people to give up sex, the very thing that has driven, fascinated, troubled and delighted most other people?

In this timely and lively look at celibacy from both a historical and contemporary perspective, Elizabeth Abbott (who has experience in both single and double beds) lays to rest the commonly held view that celibacy is a predominantly religious concept, of little concern to the lay people of the world. As she explains, celibacy is a "timeless, worldwide phenomenon" that transcends history, culture and religion. Celibacy is also a multi-layered phenomenon full of telling and surprising insights into our sexual desires and drives.

From the Vestal Virgins of Greek mythology who were entombed alive if they broke their vows, to the practice of celibacy in order to conserve semen, from celibacy as a guarantee for marriage, to involuntary celibacy among prisoners, eunuchs, the unemployed and the clinically depressed, *A History of Celibacy* offers an absorbing blend of information and explanation. Abbott puts a human face on celibacy, capturing the anguish of the castrated boy destined for an operatic career, the ecstasy of the woman whose celibacy is rewarded by erotic visions of Christ, and the anger of the bachelor doomed by the surplus of males in contemporary China.

A book that unlocks some fascinating secrets on the state of chastity, *A History of Celibacy* will provoke discussion among men and women everywhere.

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