

THE ATTITUDE OF THE FATHERS TO FEATHER-BEDS

In the eleventh chapter of his letter to Eustochium on virginity (*epist.* 22) Jerome anticipates an objection. His addressee will say she cannot endure a rigorous diet, for she comes of noble stock and is accustomed to feather-beds (*semper in plumis*; for the phrase cf. Caes. Arel. *serm.* 20,3 *nos in plumis*). Such beds seem to have caused Jerome a certain preoccupation. He warns against feather-beds for the young *epist.* 79,7,7. Demetrias is commended for doing without them *epist.* 130,4,4. The penitent should sleep instead on a mat of reeds *tract. in psalm.* 93, 20. Finally he records reproachfully how before her conversion the voluptuous Blesilla found even feather-beds too hard *epist.* 38,4,2.

Others of the Fathers too pronounce upon this topic. Feather-beds debilitate according to ps. Chrysost. *salt. Herodiad.* 1. Already Clement Al. *paed.* 2,9,77,2 had thought them bad for health as well as sybaritic. Avoidance of them became part of any strict regimen. Chrysostom twice reports how ascetically-minded young women abandon feather-beds for the floor: *hom. in Eph.* 13,3 and *stat.* 13,2. Beds of the same type are the occasion for self-castigation at Prudent. *ham.* 328f. and again later at Caes. Arel. *serm.* 20,3. It is not therefore surprising that Orsiesius 46 and Basil *renunt.* 4 both prohibit them.