

Priests, Celibacy, and Pedophilia

It is no secret that the liberal media have been intent on eliminating the Judeo-Christian influence from our society. The current scandal in the Catholic Church has put them in a feeding-frenzy. All of us, not just the Catholic Church, are adversely affected by it. Even those who oppose their way of religion can gain no satisfaction from anything that besmirches the Christian religion in general. We know that no group is exempt from shame brought by misconduct of some of its number but, when authorities and leaders in the church tolerate and participate in the immorality, it becomes indefensible

Especially in my radio teaching in earlier years, I opposed the teachings of Catholicism. I still reject their claims of Biblical authenticity. At the same time I have had friends and neighbors of highest integrity and devotion who were Catholic. I have always tried to avoid making doctrinal differences into personal issues. In the present scandal, I can feel with the sincere Catholics who are shocked, embarrassed, and dismayed by the conduct of many of their priests. I can feel with those who were abused through their confidence in the priests --- and the families both of the victims and the priests. I am saddened that men of dedication have erred so grievously.

As communities serving Christ, our first intention toward offenders is their restoration through repentance and forgiveness. Church people generally do not advertise the shameful actions of their wayward flock for they do not wish to bring the cause of Christ into disrepute. We can see how such honorable intention can grow into undue tolerance and hypocritical posturing. Also, leaders can be intimidated because of their own guilt remembering that Jesus said, "*Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.*" So, due to lack of exposure and strong discipline, homosexual practice and pedophilia have been allowed to become an insidious infestation of both sin and crime associated not just with individual priests, but also with policy of the Catholic Church.

At this point, we ask why celibacy was required of priests. The Gnostic philosophy was a great spiritual threat to the early church. There were many aspects to the Gnostic teachings, but the key proposition was that matter, the flesh, and all that pertains to either are evil and that spirit, the opposing reality, is good. To the Gnostic, sin is not what man has done, but the nature of man in the body, and redemption is man's effort to secure emancipation from the flesh.

Since the flesh was considered to be evil, to accommodate the flesh with pleasure would be contamination, but to destroy the flesh through privation, pain, and discipline would be purifying. As the ascetic life was considered as a way of purifying, some advocated that a holier way of life.

Some of the devout separated themselves from society in this ascetic life, becoming hermits. In more organized form, this developed into monasticism, a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience secluded from society. Not only were

people separated physically in monasteries, but also a system of holy orders separated many of the pious into special groups. In holy orders they were thought to have a more sure reach of heaven because they deprived themselves of physical and social pleasures, including marriage with its sexual fulfillment.

Since sexual fulfillment was considered a part of the evil nature of the flesh, celibacy came to be considered as the higher road to holiness, particularly through the holy orders. From this grew the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, for they thought it would have been profane to think of the "Mother of God" as having been sullied by the taint of sin -- even through motherhood as a wife! (See "Free To Speak," Ch. 22.)

There is neither a directive in Scripture for a special priesthood nor a requirement of celibacy for any disciple. Jesus' remarks about eunuchs (Matt. 19:12) cannot be twisted to suggest a law of celibacy. In view of the stressful time approaching in AD 70, Paul offered personal advice favoring the unmarried state, but he left that as a voluntary option, and he was speaking generally of men and women rather than to a clergy class (1 Cor. 7: 25-38).

Although there had long been advocates for celibacy as the higher road of spirituality for both men and women, that is not the reason that celibacy was decreed for the clergy in 1074. It was a part of the development of the claim for papal supremacy over both the church and secular rulers. It was finalized by Hildebrand as Pope Gregory VII through the Lateran Council of 1074.

The development of papal authority is a long story stretching through centuries. It was a major part of the contest between Rome and Constantinople which resulted in the division of the church between East and West in 1054. Over time the church was brought under control of the clergy by the development of the sacramental system and the clergy was controlled by the papal powers of ordination. But still there was the major contest between the papacy and civil rulers. Emperors and kings claimed authority over the church and the appointment of popes and bishops.

A man of great influence, Hildebrand was able to remove the election of the pope from the people and give it to the college of Cardinals. Through his diligent work he was able to take the power from secular rulers in Spain, then England, and finally Germany. He was then elected to the papacy as Pope Gregory VII and contended that both the church and secular powers of the world should be in subjection to the pope as God's representative on earth.

These points of history are being gleaned from "*The Eternal Kingdom*," by Dr. F. W. Mattox (Gospel Light Publishing Co., Delight, Arkansas; 1961; Ch. 16). Some of the finalizing devices ensuring papal supremacy were excommunication and interdiction, through which the pope could deprive individuals and nations of the sacraments, and celibacy of the clergy. Here I copy from Dr. Mattox:

“Hildebrand as Pope Gregory VII caused the Lateran Council of 1074 to decree that celibacy of the clergy must be enforced. Although it had been talked about for years, up until this time nearly all of the priests had maintained wives or concubines. In many places the priestly office had been transferred from father to son. This decree would eliminate the hereditary principle of holding church offices and strengthen the authority of the pope over the clergy by requiring papal appointment. In conflict with the German rulers who had assumed power to appoint church officers, Gregory VII through the Lateran Council of 1075 issued a decree forbidding any priest or bishop to receive his bishopric or any abbot to receive his abbey from the hands of a secular prince. This included the king and the emperor. Gregory insisted that investiture should be from the pope only as God’s supreme representative in the world. Due to the system of feudalism the kings of Germany had placed bishops in their Sees over church lands, making them feudal lords who felt a responsibility and loyalty to the secular authority. Gregory determined to change this loyalty from secular rulers to the pope. This is referred to as the ‘investiture controversy’” (p. 193).

So celibacy was enjoined to prevent the inheritance of church offices rather than for any superior spiritual advantage. The current scandal has demonstrated its lack of spiritual value, though officials are denying any connection between celibacy and homosexuality. It may be true that celibacy does not of itself generate pedophilia but the celibate community has offered a closeted “safe-house” for it.

Because homosexuality has always born a stigma in society, it has been concealed in order to spare embarrassment and rejection. For a man to grow into bachelorhood constantly being queried by friends and family about his lack of girl friends, a love life, marriage, and producing grandchildren for his parents would become tedious and demeaning even though he were not a practicing homosexual. Since celibacy is required of priests, no one asks them those embarrassing questions. Becoming a priest solves that problem while giving the man a sense of dedicated service to God at the same time. So we can better understand the appeal the priesthood holds for them.

Within such a fraternity, homosexual practices are not likely to be exposed by fellow-priests who are also homosexual. Due to this protective facade, their numbers have increased so that some of their seminaries have come under control of those sympathetic and approving of this sub-culture. Ultimately, it has boiled to an explosion, though not from within the clergy, but from its victims.

This situation which has been centuries in developing through contests of secular and religious power has grown into a monstrous giant without spiritual or Biblical support. Any claim for Biblical authority for enjoining celibacy would mean that the church was in error until 1074 when it was decreed and enforced. If you are a Catholic reading this, you may find it shocking and offensive. I accept this risk though it is not my purpose to offend. My sincere desire is for any and all to read the New Testament scriptures again to see the

simplicity of discipleship of the lowly Jesus. It is a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ. Each disciple becomes a priest independent of any authoritarian system ruled by fellow human beings who may bind decrees to increase their power.

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