

Clerical Celibacy

by Ian Paisley

The enforcement of Celibacy by the Church of Rome led to the development of depravity in the clergy and the corruption of society.

Scripture: Matthew 19:11, 1 Corinthians 7:8, 1 Corinthians 7:32, Ephesians 5:25, 1 Timothy 4:1

Topics: "Clerical Celibacy", "Roman Catholicism"

Description

Ian Paisley delivers a sermon critiquing the doctrine of Celibacy within the Roman Catholic Church, highlighting the lack of scriptural support for it and the detrimental effects it has had on clergy members and society. He exposes the corruption, immorality, and hypocrisy that have been associated with the enforcement of celibacy, leading to widespread debauchery and moral decay among the clergy. Paisley emphasizes the negative impact of celibacy on the clergy's spiritual well-being, their relationships, and their ability to serve as moral examples to the laity, ultimately condemning it as a tool used by the Papal throne to consolidate power rather than promote holiness.

Transcript

THERE is a peculiarity about the subject of Celibacy. The chief complaint against the other dogmas of Catholicism is, that they have no support in the Sacred Scriptures, properly interpreted. Several of them, indeed, have not even the shadow of it; while the rest are founded on the most obvious and culpable perversions. In the case of Celibacy, however, it is altogether otherwise.

Not only is there no Scripture which admits of being so perverted on its behalf, but there is most explicit and emphatic Scripture against it. It is expressly foretold, that among the other evil deeds of the Man of Sin, would be the prohibition of marriage. There is no point on which the Church of Rome is in such a fix. Her sin is here written on her forehead, as if by an angel's hand, in letters of fire!

The Council of Trent, in its Twenty-fourth Session, 1563, dealt largely with the question of marriage, pouring its fiercest anathema upon the heads of all who should dare to deny that marriage was one of the Seven Sacraments of the Church, and that, as such, it conferred grace! Those who maintained that persons in holy orders might "contract marriage, and that the contract is valid," were the subjects of the heaviest maledictions.

Such, from that hour, has been the law of the Romish Church respecting the marriage of the clergy. All ecclesiastics, of whatever order or degree, are bound to celibacy, and the penalty of marriage is instant

excommunication. They might form unhallowed connections, and live in the grossest iniquity, from the Pope downward to the humblest mendicant-that was connived at. Something, to be sure, might at times be done for the sake of appearances; but the grossest licentiousness was winked at, even when it could not be concealed. But the penalties were trifling- apparent rather than real.

Fornication, concubinage, adultery, if decently gone about, were safe; but it became all to beware of marriage! Nature and reason had long rebelled against the monstrous interdict; and it was not till after a considerable time, and much conflict, that the point was ultimately carried.

At last the enemies of truth and virtue triumphed, and thus was established one of the most immoral and pernicious institutions of the Popedom. It deserves remark, that the laity in general-strangely, and to their own grievous hurt-sided with the Vatican, and took part against the married priests, whom they persecuted in all possible ways, covering them with odium, and even reducing them to the sad alternative of starvation, or separation from their families!

While the married ministers, in many places, were thus driven out, and no others came forth to take their places, religious services, extensively throughout Germany, were unperformed. This was only a portion, and the lightest, of the penalties the people were to pay for their folly and wickedness; and in due season, they were visited with the terrible remainder, which they suffered in the shape of a deep wound on the morals of society, and on the peace, order, and purity of their own families.

It is a pleasing fact, and one which is peculiarly gratifying to Englishmen, that in no other country did the new doctrine of the celibate find so little favour with either the people or the prince as in England. The bulk of the British clergy were married, and Henry I., nobly standing between them and the fury of Rome, permitted them to continue with their families.

The celibacy of the clergy is a matter of fact, which, with its effects, has come within the province of the civil, who has dealt with it as freely as the ecclesiastical, historian; and both have united in testifying that, while Popery was rampant, it was the curse of the world. The circumstances of the case are such as to demand notice. The conjunction was of a character to show that it was a deep-laid scheme of the Prince of Darkness for the destruction of the Christian religion. Let it be remembered that the mass of the clergy, the subjects of a forced celibate, were men idle and luxurious, wholly destitute of true religion, and unrestrained by the fear of God. Human nature in the hearts of such men took terrible vengeance on the abettors of the injustice done them.

The very restraints put upon them only tended the more fearfully to develop the full force of their depravity. A mere digest of the history of their misdeeds would require whole volumes; but we cannot stain our pages with any attempt even at an analysis. Celibacy was enjoined upon the clergy under the pretext that it would eminently contribute to holiness; but while this was the avowed, it was very far from being the true, cause.

It was a lie spoken in hypocrisy; it is, therefore, proper to say, that if superior holiness was not found, it was not sought. The object aimed at was of a wholly different nature; it was not to produce an eminently spiritual priesthood, but to fortify the Papal throne, and augment, throughout all the earth, the Papal power.

As if to increase the danger, these were the men that were to keep the conscience of the female, as well as the male portion of the human race, and for that end to preside in the Confessional. These men were in

the highest possible degree prepared for being themselves tempted; and, then, they were placed in circumstances of the strongest possible temptation. That the bulk of them should not have fallen, was all but impossible; that any stood, is a matter for wonder. Infernal ingenuity was never so exercised in devising means to destroy the morality of mankind. It may be doubted whether this may not be considered as the master-stroke of the Prince of Darkness.

Before the rise of the Lutheran Reformation, the world was strewed, through the priesthood, with the wrecks of virtue; and no wonder if, up to the present hour, in the darkest places of the earth, the abomination remains with little abatement. The state of things was such that the bulk of modern readers have no conception of it; and it will not be without difficulty, they will bring themselves to credit the most veritable history. It may, therefore, be proper, in support of the heavy charges we have made in the foregoing paragraphs, to cite from the best authorities, chiefly Popish, a few facts confirmatory of our representations.

The writings of Elizabeth of Germany, abound with charges. She says, addressing the Bishops: "The iniquity of the land, which ye have hidden for the sake of silver and gold, ascends up like the smoke of a furnace." Maimburg, a celebrated Popish writer, says, "The lives of the clergy themselves are so horribly debauched, that I cannot, without trembling, relate the hideous description."

The sphere of their abominations was extended to the monasteries and nunneries-those pretended paradises of pristine purity. Cardinal Baronius, himself the last man to bring a false charge, confesses that "They were deformed with the foulest practices, and that there was no crime of which their inmates were not guilty."

Mapes, the Archdeacon of Oxford, an indisputable witness, who was intimately conversant with the state of the Continent, has recorded the results of his experience thus: - "There is no demon worse than a monk! All the abbots I have ever seen, by their manner and conduct, lead men to hell." The renowned William of Paris, a monkish historian of the first distinction, moreover a lover of truth and virtue, has borne similar testimony. "The clergy, according to him, "have neither piety nor learning, but rather the foul vices of devils, and the most monstrous uncleanness and crimes! Their sins are not mere sins, but rather the most prodigious and dreadful crimes! They are not the Church, but rather Babylon, Egypt, and Sodom! The prelates, instead of building the Church, destroy it and make a mock of God!" Passing on to a later time, Alvarus Palagius, a Papist, in his "Lament of the Church," makes a similar charge against the clergy. According to him, "They are addicted to feasting, drunkenness, and whoredom, which is a common vice with them; and most of them also, are guilty of the sin which is against nature. They are not examples of good to the laity, as they ought to be, but rather the contrary; for in the present day, commonly the clergy are more wicked than the laity."

As bearing upon the subject of this chapter, he says, "Against that holy chastity which they have vowed to God, they offend constantly, even in public; besides those most horrid crimes, which they practice in secret, and which neither my paper will receive nor my pen will write." Let us hear another devout and faithful witness, Catherine of Sienna, who thus testifies: - "In former times, the clergy were moral and faithful, but in the present day they are wicked. Wherever you turn you behold all the clergy, both secular and religious, prelates, and those subject to them, small and great, old and young, infected with crime, pursuing riches and delights, neglecting the support of the poor and the care of souls, simoniacally selling the grace of the Holy Spirit, and mismanaging the affairs of the Holy Church. That which Christ purchased with his sufferings on the cross, they waste on harlots; they corrupt souls redeemed with the blood of

Christ."

This bold and fearless writer, aroused by her zeal, thus apostrophized the clergy in the person of Christ, "Oh! diabolical tabernacle! I chose you to be the angels of the earth, but ye are incarnate devils, whose works ye do. Oh! wretched animal of uncleanness; thou showest thy flesh, anointed with sacred oil and consecrated to me, unto harlots; yea, thou doest still fouler iniquity."

But let us hear Giesler, author of the "Text Book of History." That most competent witness, speaking of the clergy, says: "Their chief offence, their incontinence, seemed to grow worse, the more there was done to restrain it. In no century had there been so many decrees passed against the concubinage of the clergy, as in the fifteenth, yet in none were complaints so common of their incontinence (which in Italy degenerated into unnatural vices), as well as derision and lamentation over the inefficiency of all the means used to restrain them. The number of the offenders made it difficult or impossible to carry into effect the more severe punishments, whilst the avarice of the Bishops substituted a pecuniary mulct, afterwards changed into an annual tax. The commonness of the offence made it seem to the clergy a light thing; of course the laity could not be expected to view it in any other light, and in consequence the vice increased to a fearful degree."

But enough! The recital of similar facts would be needless and endless, and we think more is unnecessary. This may surely suffice to show the people of England what may be the effect should Popery once more gain ascendancy in the British Isles. The one great object of Pope Gregory VII was to separate the clergy as much as possible from all other interests, that they might be completely reduced to depend on the Pontiff.

The policy of the measure was precisely that which regulates earthly governments, in regard to fleets and armies, a desire to build around them a wall of separation from the people, and to divest them of all social interests, rendering them of no country, and without descent, cutting off at a stroke their name among mankind, and extinguishing all their interests in the affairs which domestic relations imply, and so creating an order of spiritual soldiers, to whom all men and all countries are alike, and constituting each an impersonation of heartlessness and selfishness, growing up into misanthropists, their bosoms the grave of every charity that sweetens life and blesses society. In trying to unmake men he succeeded in making devils.

Viewing the matter simply as a means to an end, the cunning of the project was equal to its wickedness. The success was complete. It greatly added to the power of the colossal engine of mischief of which it was so important a part. It was a meet step in the march of moral conquest-an additional trophy to the genius of iniquity. A body of agents were thus prepared for the doing of deeds which could not have been performed by men whose bosoms warmed with the sympathies of humanity while their hearts glowed with the charities of life.

Reader! such is the Roman celibate-that celibate which is still visible and active in your midst. Of the present character of that celibate, we shall say nothing; in England it is surrounded by antagonistic forces, in such strength as to control it in its more public manifestations. It is not to be judged by present appearance. Suffice it to say, that the principle is unchangeable, and that placed in its ancient circumstances, it would be attended with exactly its ancient effects.

It is essentially evil, and while it is in existence, it will continue to be a curse both to the individual and to society. It is assuredly not a plant of the Lord's right hand planting, and a thorough Scriptural reformation

of the Christian Church will root it up throughout all the earth.

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