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The Roman Catholic Church Now Faces A New Reformation

By Edgar Davie

A newly released book alleges the Roman Catholic Church today faces its greatest threat since the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century splintered Christianity.

The book, *Illicit Celibacy and the Deposit of Faith*, asserts an unorthodox papal change in Christ's original teaching now requires sexual abstinence for priests and bishops who prove incapable of living celibate lives. This ancient papal requirement of celibacy for priests is now determined by independent Catholic historians and theologians to be illicit, and the source of today's clerical sex abuse scandals.

... From these scandals another more serious threat to Catholicism has now arisen, that of papal heresy. A new examination of ancient Vatican documents reveals Christ's original teaching that priests are allowed the Sacramental grace of matrimony has been intentionally altered.

... *Illicit Celibacy and the Deposit of Faith* challenges the law of celibacy. It begins with Catholicism's first priests, who were married Jewish men, and explains how long forgotten Vatican documents now demonstrate Jesus' unchangeable teachings were later altered.

These changes occurred more than 900 years ago when most Catholics were illiterate, often denied access to the Bible, and excommunicated should they challenge papal authority. Since 1139 Catholic theologians and apologists who are aware of these changes have refused to confront evidence presented in this revealing book.

Mandatory celibacy for Catholic priests is a foreign Practice that entered Christianity in the fourth century

... Jesus made few changes in existing Jewish law for His followers. But among the most important changes He instituted were those concerning marriage for Christians. Jewish men of the time were allowed to have more than one wife as well as concubines; Jesus forbade polygamy. They were allowed to divorce; Jesus prohibited divorce (Matthew 19:9). And most importantly, Jewish law required all Jews, including priests, to marry by age 20 (Genesis 1:28), but Jesus allowed Christians to remain unmarried if they freely chose to do so (Matthew 19:12). And, contrary to current myth, Jesus did not require His apostles to take a vow of celibacy

or to abstain from marital sex in order to imitate His lifestyle; Christ allowed His apostles to freely choose either marriage or celibacy.

... Today, Church explanations of mandatory celibacy pose a great problem because it is acknowledged by all that apostles and priests during the earliest generations were married. More to the point, in the New Testament St. Paul specifically required bishops and deacons be married fathers, "capable of managing their families" (1Timothy 3).

Even more damaging to the idea of a required vow of celibacy, St. Paul specifically preached against newly converted Christian-Gnostics who brought with them a belief that all priests must reject desires of the flesh in order to successfully mediate between God and man. This ascetic and dualistic belief of conflict between flesh and soul was first taught by Plato c.428BC and spread across the western world with Alexander the Great before 300BC.

By Christ's time it had made its way into all religions' beliefs other than Orthodox Judaism and Christianity, who were unique among all beliefs.

In defense of married priests St. Paul confronted this new Christian-Gnostic belief. ... "The Spirit has explicitly said that during the last times there will be some who will desert the faith and choose to listen to deceitful spirits and doctrines that come from devils; and the cause of this will be lies told by hypocrites...they will say marriage is forbidden, and lay down rules about abstaining from food which God has created to be accepted with thanksgiving by all who believe and who know the truth." (1Timothy 4:1).

It is important here for Catholics to understand that all New Testament scripture such as this, from either Jesus or His Apostles, are declared by the Church to be the "Deposit of Faith", which ended c.98AD. These teachings are unchangeable, immutable, and any "new doctrine" that would change the Deposit of Faith after that time is forbidden. In "theological speak," the Deposit of Faith is the original Ordinary and Universal Magisterium.

Evidence is abundant that mandatory celibacy was a late entry into Christianity, and did not exist in the second or third centuries. As a matter of fact, the Church today acknowledges that "no law of celibacy as we know it today existed in the beginning".

More enlightening, we have witness in ancient Church literature from Apostolic Fathers such as Bishops St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp of Smyrna, they were 'hearers' of St. John the apostle. As married bishops and disciples of St. John, they realized that Jesus permitted men

to remain celibate if they freely chose to do so, but viewed them with caution.

Priests of the time were married men who also worked to support their families when celibate pagan converts began to appear in large cities, often resulting in conflict. Many celibate priests believed their ascetic chastity elevated them spiritually in the eyes of God to a superior spiritual plane, even superior to married bishops.

In his letter, 110AD, Ignatius asks Polycarp to instruct priests and their wives thusly: "Speak to my sisters [wives] that they love the Lord and be content with their husbands [priests] both in the flesh and in soul. In like manner exhort my brothers [priests] in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loved the Church. If anyone is able to remain celibate...let him remain so without boasting. If he boasts about it he is undone, and if he seeks to be more esteemed than the bishop he is corrupted."

This was an important event in the second century. From such ancient records we find that after the Deposit of Faith, as it was left by Jesus and His apostles, priests continued to choose either marriage or celibacy and that mandatory celibacy did not exist. So, when and how did things change?

IllicitCelibacy.com also contains a theological summary of this work.

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