A Critical Evaluation of the Requirement of Celibacy

For Diocesan Priests of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reviews the historical origins and rationale for mandated celibacy for diocesan priests of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church, and develops arguments for eliminating the rule. The author shows that the origin of the rule was largely due to the influence of sex-negative pagan philosophies on the thought of major Christian thinkers such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas. The adoption of celibacy as a mandatory requirement stemmed from the influence of monasticism and a wish to safeguard church property from inheritance by the legitimate children of priests. Martin Luther and John Calvin, the leaders of the Reformation, rejected mandatory celibacy because they could find no basis for it in scripture and because of their more positive valuation of sexuality. The author argues that if the Church could integrate elements of sex-negative pagan philosophies in its teachings (as it did with Augustine and Aquinas), it can and should integrate the more sex-positive philosophies of our age, such as feminism and postmodernism. He shows how the Roman Church, because of its own negative evaluation of the body, did not sufficiently challenge Cartesian dualism. The author then shows how a modern secular philosophy, feminism, can bring remedies of unity, cooperation, and wholeness to the various dualisms still to be found in medicine, science, and Catholic sexual ethics. Similarly, postmodernism is presented as a contemporary philosophy that challenges absolutist or essentialist thinking. The Church's stance on abortion is presented as an example of essentialist thinking in sexual ethics. The more liberal views on abortion found in other Christian churches and contemporary society provide evidence of postmodernist thinking. Arguments offered in favour of eliminating mandatory celibacy include the following: the manifest contradiction

involved in maintaining that celibacy, although a gift, must be imposed as a law; the use of the mandate as a means of control and power; its role in excluding women from church government and ordained ministry; the decline of vocations to the priesthood; failed celibacy; clerical sexual abuse; and the negative impact of mandated celibacy on the Church's response to such issues as homosexuality, abortion, and ecumenism.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this section is to state the purpose of the dissertation. Thus, several questions arise:

- What is this dissertation about, and what precise situation or problem is addressed therein?
- Why is it necessary to address this problem now?
- What theological, historical, cultural, and ecclesiastical contexts are used as a structure for the research?
- What methodology is used to achieve its purpose?
- Finally, what constitutes the general outline of this dissertation?

The Research Question

The question that I address in this work is the evaluation of the requirement of celibacy for the ordination of secular, or diocesan,[1] priests in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church, in order to determine whether this requirement continues to be a faithful response within our present religious and cultural context. The term *Latin Rite* is used to distinguish between this rite and the Eastern Catholic Rites, because the latter allow men to be ordained after marriage. Consequently, references to celibacy in this text designate the discipline of celibacy for diocesan priests in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. Although celibacy is a noble and time-honoured ideal, not only in Christianity but also in other major religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, it has been the object of controversy and disagreement throughout history. It is particularly challenged in our current North American culture. Why? Several social and religious issues provide the reason for the present enquiry. The crisis of vocations to the priesthood, the exodus of thousands of priests who have left the active ministry in the last forty years, the multiple scandals of abuse of minors by priests, the crisis of authority in the church and society, the rapidly changing sexual culture, and the awareness that celibacy is not required by the nature of the priesthood are but a few reasons to engage in this analysis. The ordination of women and self-declared homosexuals by several mainline Protestant churches raises further questions about the stance of the Roman Catholic Church and its requirement of celibacy for its exclusively male priesthood.

[1]These terms refer to priests who commit to assisting the ministry of a particular bishop in a specific territory usually described as a diocese. Diocesan priests are to be distinguished from regular priests who belong to a religious order or congregation. The latter make vows of chastity, while the former make a promise of celibacy. The difference is considerable but will not be discussed in depth in this work.

Methodology

The research methodology consists first of all in defining what is meant by celibacy and identifying how the term is used for the purposes of this dissertation. The discipline of celibacy emerged in specific contexts through a multiplicity of interacting factors—theological, cultural, spiritual, and anthropological—all of which become the objects of critical analysis. More specifically, this dissertation is an examination of the fundamental values for the development and maintenance of the requirement of celibacy for the diocesan priesthood in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. It seeks first to explore the reasons why the venerable gift of celibacy became a universal law of the priesthood, and then to determine how the requirement of celibacy is congruent or in conflict with today's culture and society, and why. From these general observations, other questions emerge. What is the impact of obligatory celibacy on the church and its members? What purpose is served by the requirement of celibacy? What are the alternative policies, and how can they be implemented?

It is assumed that the progressive requirement of celibacy in the history of the Church does not come from divine ordinance, but from the culture(s) of the times. Part of that culture includes influences that are not only theological and scriptural, but also based on certain paradigms emanating from ambient secular sexual anthropologies, notwithstanding the fact that theology and Scripture are also subject to a variety of interpretations. As much as we might wish it, we cannot do theology and spirituality in a vacuum or in total disengagement from the world. We are in the world, and we cannot escape its influence in order to do pure theology.

Current culture, within and outside the church, tends to devalue the importance of celibacy and sexual abstinence for a variety of reasons that are explained later in this dissertation. For the time being, suffice it to say that this dissertation is about celibacy and culture, in a time when sexual abstinence and virginity have lost much of their former value and the exercise of one's sexuality far exceeds the duty to procreate and to educate children. In fact, the birth rate has decreased in almost all countries of the Western world, while sexuality, in the form of free love, cohabitation, homosexuality, and same-sex marriage, to name a few "new" social issues, has gained a high social profile and is no longer taboo. Thus, one of the foci of this research is a comparison of the cultural contexts in which celibacy has emerged and the cultural context within which celibacy is being questioned and devalued.

A useful paradigm that guides this study is the exploration of some of the ways in which the Christian churches have interacted with the ambient culture throughout history. This is what H. Richard Niebuhr refers to as "the enduring problem."[2] For example, the early Christians caused enough stir and clashes with the culture of the day to merit almost three centuries of persecution until the conversion of Emperor Constantine, which allowed the Christian church to organize more publicly and with less fear of reprisal. These changes, in turn, resulted in the gradual institutionalization of religion, bringing with it many other problems and a variety of ways of relating to the surrounding culture. Avery Dulles encapsulated the paradigms of such organizations in his own classic work, in which he identified five models of church organization: church as institution, as

[2]H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco: Harper, 1951), 1. In this classic work, Niebuhr identifies five ways by which Christians relate to culture, i.e., Christ against culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, Christ of culture, and Christ transforming culture.

mystical communion, as sacrament, as herald, and as servant.[3] In some ways, the works of Niebuhr and Dulles complement each other and serve as paradigms to guide the present research. When applied to the study of celibacy, the question to be explored is the type of relationship that the Roman Catholic Church has with secular culture and the culture of other Christian churches. Has this relationship changed over the centuries? How does the Roman Catholic Church maintain its power and authority to continue to enforce the law of celibacy?

Put simply, this dissertation is a critical analysis of the past, present, and future of celibacy. This Introduction researches the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church concerning celibacy and situates these in the broader context of the sexual anthropology espoused by the Church. The research methodology in this section consists first of all in defining the term *celibacy* and determining how it is used in the context of this dissertation. Next is a selection of key official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church on celibacy during the last forty years, that is, during and since the Second Vatican Council. This period corresponds with what is commonly known as the sexual revolution, a period in which celibacy has been highly questioned. In order to understand current teachings, it is necessary to analyze the historical context that gave rise to the emergence of celibacy, from the early church until the universal legislation of celibacy in the twelfth century.

Chapter I presents a study of the sexual anthropology and ethics found in the writings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. These authors are selected for analysis because of their status as the two pillars of Roman Catholic theology and their decisive influence on the theology of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the

[3]Avery Dulles, *Models of Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

centuries, until today. Whereas Augustine exudes a certain dualistic pessimism between body, sexuality, and spirit, Aquinas is one of Catholicism's major proponents of natural law, which forms the basis most of the Church's theology (or anthropology) of sexuality. Primary and secondary sources reveal that both Augustine and Aquinas had negative views of women and sexuality. A critique of their positions from secondary sources is offered in each section.

Chapter II is dedicated to the challenges brought to bear on the doctrine of sexuality and celibacy by Reformation theologians. Martin Luther and John Calvin are selected because they are major figures of the Reformation; both emphatically rejected the doctrine and discipline of celibacy. Luther also had the experience of practicing celibacy as a young Augustinian monk; his reasons for later rejecting celibacy will be explored in the context of his sixteenth-century culture. Whereas Augustine and Aquinas are the two pillars of Roman Catholic theology, Luther and Calvin are considered to be the two pillars of Reformation thought. Both Luther and Calvin constantly surface in literature reviews related to sexuality and celibacy, whether the sources are Protestant or Catholic. Also, it is assumed that both Luther and Calvin were the primary targets of the Counter-Reformation as it is found in the Council of Trent, which mandated the development of seminaries in part for the preservation and supervision of the discipline of celibacy for candidates to the priesthood. The latter part of Chapter II presents a discussion of the Church's response to the Reformation.

In keeping with the major thrust of this dissertation, Chapter III highlights contemporary philosophical and theological challenges to Reformation theology and also (and especially) to traditional Roman Catholic philosophy and theology. The chapter

begins with an analysis of Cartesian dualism as an explanation for the many splits or separations that are responsible for the alienation and tensions between male and female, humans and nature, and mind and body (both in sexuality and medicine), just to name a few. Postmodernism is identified as a contemporary philosophy that represents a major threat to the assumptions of modernity. Postmodernism is pervasive in North America and Europe, and its influence is seen in many social and theological issues. Postmodernism is studied for better comprehension and analysis of its basic assumptions; this exercise reveals that the current theological and social climate is often directly opposed to modernity in general, and to the absolute truths expounded by conservative institutions such as the Roman Church in particular. Postmodernist principles emerge in opposition to issues such as compulsory celibacy as an unchanging discipline within a culture that demands change, freedom of choice, and diversity. Feminist philosophy, one of the fruits of postmodernism, is used throughout the dissertation to provide an alternative point of view.

Michel Foucault is presented as a major prototype of postmodernist thought, not only because of his tremendous influence as a contemporary philosopher, but also because of his study of the body in medicine and sexuality. His critiques are unique and leave no one indifferent. The theological and social dimensions of abortion are also considered; this is no small feat given the profound implications of abortion in Church and society. The issue of abortion is chosen also to illustrate and highlight the major differences between essentialist and postmodernist thinking. Of course, both of these approaches have the right to exist and to be heard, but neither can claim absolute and final truth.

Finally, because the Roman Catholic Church has found certain moral acts to be always and everywhere intrinsically evil, the principles of material and formal cooperation with evil are exposed. This discussion addresses in particular such cooperation on the part of Roman Catholics who work in medical centres that perform abortions and other procedures that are forbidden by the Church. Of course, the issue of cooperation is not restricted to medicine or medical procedures, but in all spheres of ethical behaviour. Curiously enough, it is mostly, if not solely in matters of reproduction and sexuality the Church finds actions that are intrinsically evil!

Chapter IV synthesizes and provides a scholarly reflection of the three previous chapters in an attempt to reconcile the tensions between the pros and cons of celibacy, as represented by the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the challenges of the Reformation and contemporary culture on the other. The themes of the previous chapters are revisited as arguments against mandatory celibacy. The origins of celibacy are reviewed and critically evaluated. The value of celibacy for our times is considered with respect and enthusiasm, with the certainty that God does "gift" certain individuals with the noble and venerable discipline of celibacy. However, one of the crucial issues analyzed in this chapter is whether the gift of celibacy, which can only be offered by God's grace, should continue to be enshrined in canon law and required for all priests who may be called to serve but not to be celibate. Several authors observe that few people have an authentic calling to celibacy.

Consequently, Chapter IV offers convincing arguments for the Church to allow individuals to serve as married priests, as is the case in the Oriental traditions since the origins of the church. The question of married priests brings into focus the authority and

structure of the Roman Catholic Church and questions its manner and reason for enforcing the discipline of celibacy while the Oriental churches (whether they are attached to Rome or not) and the Reformed churches do not require celibacy. Thus, it is presumed that the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church has departed from the time-honoured tradition of a married priesthood and that the Reformers simply returned to the married priesthood of the early church, proclaiming that there is no mandate in the Scriptures for obligatory celibacy. Thus the Latin Church stands alone in its requirement of celibacy, and this situation has serious implications for ecumenism.

According to some Roman Catholics, celibacy is responsible for the mass exodus of priests who left the active priesthood to marry in the last forty years. Celibacy is also suspected of contributing to the decline in vocations to the priesthood during the same period. Many Catholics, feeling deprived of sacramental and pastoral care because of the shortage of priests, are convinced that the gift of the Eucharist is more important for the People of God than the discipline of celibacy. They are further frustrated because they feel ignored or unheard and they have no recourse or forum in which to express their convictions. Celibacy is also presumed by some to attract a certain type of personality that fits the profile of pedophilia. Much has been written recently about the possible relationship between celibacy and sexual abuse of minors, particularly teenagers. Catholics and others are concerned that celibacy attracts men who have a homosexual orientation and that the majority of priests will eventually be homosexual. All of these questions are will be critically analyzed, along with the exclusion of women from the priesthood and the role of women within the Church. Finally, a brief section on the future of celibacy is offered as a conclusion to Chapter IV.

What is Celibacy?

In simplest and most basic terms, I define celibacy as the state of being unmarried. However, this definition is not sufficient, because the terms *singleness* or *the state of being single* also describe the same reality. In common parlance, to be single means to be unmarried; however, the term does not exclude the possibility of a future marriage. In Christian context, to be single usually means that such a person is chaste and abstains from sexual activity until marriage.

In contrast, a person who has made a promise of celibacy excludes the possibility of marriage permanently. The term *single* is most frequently used in contemporary society to designate an unmarried person. For example, when filling out forms where marital status is requested, we are asked whether we are single, married, divorced, and so on. We are not asked whether we are celibate, which has quite a different meaning. To be celibate, or to practice celibacy, has connotations related to sexual abstinence. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines celibacy as the "unmarried state," and a celibate is defined as one "committed to abstention from sexual relations and from marriage, esp. for religious reasons."[4] Celibacy is thus practiced or imposed for higher purposes; these will be described in subsequent sections. Whether referring to single men and women or celibates, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that all sexual activity outside of marriage is sinful. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will consider the discipline of celibacy for the priesthood in the Latin Rite, to the exclusion of other major orders such as the diaconate.

[4]*Canadian Oxford Dictionary,* 1998 ed., s.v. "Celibacy."

The following section highlights the key official Roman Catholic texts that support the requirement of celibacy for the priesthood and clarifies current teachings of the church on the issue. This will help to situate the discussion in its proper context.

Some Official Roman Catholic Texts During and Since the Second Vatican Council

Because the discipline of celibacy is still very much an issue within the Church, there have been several major pronouncements from the Magisterium on the subject of celibacy in recent years. These texts are primary sources for this research and are chosen from the last forty years, that is, during and since the Second Vatican Council. The value of these texts is that they are recent, and most importantly, they parallel an unprecedented evolution in sexual ethics in Western society, sexual anthropology, and Christian theology. They also illustrate the unchanging position of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to celibacy, despite these social and theological changes.[5]

There are many reasons for which celibacy commands respect. Several documents of the Second Vatican Council speak to this in eloquent terms:

> Outstanding among these counsels is that precious gift of grace given to some by the Father [Mt 19:11; 1 Cor 7:7] to devote themselves to God alone more easily with an undivided heart [1 Cor 7:32-34] in virginity and celibacy. This perfect continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven has always been held in high esteem by the church as a sign and stimulus of love, and as a singular source of spiritual fertility in the world.[6]

Celibacy is therefore a charism given by God to those who respond to such a noble calling; it is seen as a source of spiritual fecundity and fruitfulness.

The Council asserts that celibacy is not intrinsically linked to the priesthood: "It is true that is it not demanded of the priesthood by its nature. This is clear from the practice of the primitive church [1 Tim. 3:2-5; Tit. 1:6] and the tradition of the eastern churches

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[5]It is important to note that the unchanging requirement of celibacy for the priesthood in the Latin Rite is closely related, as we shall see, to the unchanging teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in matters of human sexuality and sexual ethics.

[6]"Lumen Gentium," art. 42, in Austin Flannery, gen. ed., *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* (NewYork: Costello, 1996), 64. Hereafter referred to as *Documents.*

where . . . there are also many excellent married priests."[7] The Catechism of the Catholic Church also affirms the idea that celibacy is not demanded by the nature of the priesthood, but it adds that priests of the Latin Rite are chosen only among those who chose celibacy.

> All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" [Mt 19:12]. Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord" [1 Cor 7:32], they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God.[8]

These official texts constitute the crux of the problems that this dissertation wishes to address. No one disputes the fact that celibacy is a legitimate and noble gift for those who are called to it by God. The question is whether it should be maintained as a universal discipline in the Latin Church when the Oriental Catholic, Orthodox, and Reformed churches continue to allow optional celibacy.

The church also enshrines the requirement of celibacy in its Code of Canon Law: "Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, and therefore are bound to celibacy. Celibacy is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can more easily remain close to Christ with an undivided heart, and can dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and neighbour."[9] Part of the question that I wish to address in this dissertation is whether a gift of God can or should be enshrined in law. As A. W. Richard Sipe has noted, "The question that is

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[7]"Presbyterorum Ordinis," art. 16, in *Documents.*

[8]*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994), 337, para. 1579.

[9]*Code of Canon Law* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1983), Can. 277, 47.

debated more and more in clerical circles is whether one can legislate a charism. The response from an authority is that the charism *must* be presumed to be present prior to ordination. . . . The *law* is clear: it requires perfect perpetual continence in order to serve like Christ."[10] Celibacy for the priesthood has been universally legislated since the twelfth century and thus has been a requirement for less time than the church has existed. But how did the requirement of celibacy come to exist? This question is the object of the following section, which highlights the cultural and religious values related to continence and celibacy.

[10]A. W. Richard Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited* (New York: Brunner-Rutledge, 2003), 30. This text refers to the *Code of Canon Law,* op. cit., Can. 1037, where we read: "A candidate for the permanent diaconate who is not married, and likewise a candidate for the priesthood, is not to be admitted . . . unless he has, in the prescribed rite, publicly before God and the Church undertaken the obligation of celibacy."

Historical Foundations for the Discipline of Celibacy

The previous section demonstrates that celibacy is not required by Jesus, Paul, or the nature of the priesthood; therefore, one must look elsewhere to find other reasons for which celibacy became associated to the priesthood. This section highlights the reasons for sexual continence and celibacy from a number of reputable secondary sources.

A review of the historical literature reveals that the development of the requirement of celibacy for the priesthood did not come about easily. The imposition of the law of celibacy was a long and arduous process, not without its moments of violence and abuse of power. There were also significant variations due to the culture, sexual ethos, and social values of different times and places. The literature review indicates that in the Early Church, most clergy were married. Anne Llewellyn Barstow puts it succinctly: "It is now generally agreed that the majority of clergy in the early church were married, a condition that remained unchanged until the Western Church began to debate the issue of clerical marriage in the fourth century. Even after that, married clerics were not forbidden by universal canon law to perform the ministry of the altar until 1139."[11] A general principle that needs to be emphasized for the purpose of this research is that obligatory celibacy first became a universal law in the twelfth century.

In his research focusing on the first seven centuries of Christianity, Roger Gryson also agrees that there was no legislation for obligatory celibacy before the fourth century: "On ne trouve pas trace, avant le IVe siècle, d'une loi qui obligerait les clercs à garder le célibat ou la continence. On voit, au contraire, qu'il y a des clercs qui continuent à user du mariage, sans qu'on leur en fasse reproche, à côté des clercs qui optent librement pour

[11]Anne L. Barstow, "Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy: The Eleventh-Century Debates," in *Texts and Studies in Religion* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 1:1.

la continence ou le célibat."[12] Gryson adds that during the same period, the majority of priests were married, that celibacy was the exception (although less so, as time elapsed), and that early texts seem to consider the state of being married as the normal situation of a bishop, and consequently, of most clerics.[13] Having established these general facts, I now wish to explore the reasons for the increasing emphasis on clerical celibacy.

Depreciation of Marriage and Influence of Greek and Roman Philosophies

This section identifies some of the cultural factors that influenced the sexual ethics of the early Christians. The gradual influence of the values of virginity, sexual abstinence, and eventually celibacy developed against a backdrop of negativity toward sexuality. Paul's teaching that Christ was soon to return and, therefore, that it might be recommendable to abstain from marriage in order to prepare for the parousia was a factor, but there were other, even more important factors. The idea that sexual pleasure, even within marriage, was suspicious and that it should be used only for begetting children indicates serious reservations about sexuality. Among others, Elaine Pagels has shown that these values did not originate only with the new Christian religion: "Not all these attitudes were original with the Christians, who borrowed much from Jewish and philosophical, particularly Stoic, tradition; but the Christian movement emphasized and institutionalized such views, which soon became inseparable from Christian faith. Heroic Christians went even further and embraced celibacy 'for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.'"[14] This backdrop of negativity toward sexuality is confirmed by Roger Gryson:

> Le mouvement en faveur du célibat ou de la continence des clercs s'est amorcé au sein d'un climat général de dépréciation du mariage et

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[12]Roger Gryson, *Les origines du célibat ecclésiastique du premier au septième siècle* (Gembloux, Belgium: Éditions J. Duculot, 1970), 42.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage, 1989), xvii-xviii.

> d'enthousiasme pour la virginité, qui tend à se répandre au IIIe siècle, sous la pression de multiples influences convergentes: certaines philosophies païennes (stoïcisme, pythagorisme, néoplatonisme), certaines sectes juives, les hérésies encratites et gnostiques du IIe siècle, tout cela paraissant trouver un appui dans la première épître de saint Paul au Corinthiens, dont on oubliait qu'elle avait été écrite dans la perspective d'une fin du monde toute proche.[15]

This great variety of influences against sexuality is echoed by Peter Brown, who cautions against facile or simplistic generalizations: "Nothing, however, is more striking to an observer of the Christian churches of the second century than is the variety of meanings that had already come to cluster around the mute fact of sexual renunciation."[16]

Culturally, the early Christians were already conditioned by these influences to practice sexual continence, even before embracing the Christian faith. Edward Schillebeeckx calls this the "gradual Christianization of already existing motives in pagan religions" and asserts that "celibacy, or at least continence for certain periods, for religious reasons, is thus not specifically Christian."[17] Because the New Testament, as we have already seen, does not present strong authoritative statements to support such a discipline, Schillebeeckx's idea of Christianizing pagan values is very helpful in explaining how and why sexual continence and celibacy became so important for early Christians. While sexual continence and celibacy became cultural values for all Christians, there was an increasing emphasis on celibacy for priests.

Cultic Purity

There is much in the literature to support the affirmation that the governing principle of sexual abstinence, and eventually priestly celibacy, is the idea of *cultic*

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[15]Gryson, 43.

[16]Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 64.

purity: the belief that sexual activity is incompatible with the priestly office and with the celebration of the sacraments, particularly Eucharist. As we have seen, Gryson contends that the need for cultic purity was not specifically Christian; it originated in pagan and Old Testament influences. His detailed analysis of these beliefs points to a very negative view of sexuality, which even considered sexual activity to be "bestial."[18] Barstow also recognizes cultic purity, along with freedom to serve pastorally, as two rationales that have endured for fifteen centuries.[19]

The Monastic Movement and the Increase of Papal Power

Another factor that favoured the establishment of the rule of celibacy was the monastic movement. The formation of priests in the seminary is closely akin to monastic rule, which includes the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Chastity and obedience continue to be an important part of priestly formation. Barstow puts it this way: "Perhaps the most revolutionary and lasting change instituted by the Gregorians was the monasticizing of the major clergy."[20] She also states that the popes who were most adamant about papal primacy were also the most insistent on clerical celibacy. Herein is implied the relationship between celibacy and papal power, which will be addressed later. For now, I think it is important to expose the thoughts of Augustine of Hippo in matters relating to sexuality and celibacy.

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[17]Edward Schillebeeckx, *Celibacy,* trans. C. A. L. Jarrott (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 51-52.

[18]Gryson, 203.

[19] Barstow, 175.

[20] Ibid.

Summary

This Introduction researched Roman Catholic doctrine related to the discipline of celibacy, as a means of initiating discussion regarding the relevance of this requirement for contemporary culture. The use of the term *celibacy* was described as it applies to the purposes of this dissertation. This description was followed by an analysis of several official texts published by the Roman Catholic Church in order to clarify its motivation and reasons to require the discipline of celibacy for the diocesan priests of the Latin Rite. These texts were drawn from the last forty years, a time that coincides with major paradigm shifts in North American culture in matters of human sexuality. The timeliness of this research is confirmed by the fact that many Christian churches have ordained not only married men, but also women and self-declared homosexual persons during that same period.

Because current doctrine must be explained in terms of its historical development, a retrospective into the tenets of early Christianity revealed that the discipline of celibacy evolved as a result of several cultural influences that had little or no relevance to the message of the New Testament. On the contrary, the ideal of sexual abstinence was a cultural norm that infiltrated early Christian spirituality partly as a result of dualistic Greek and Roman philosophies. As Christian laypersons practiced sexual abstinence for these reasons, the idea of cultic purity emerged progressively as a norm for priests who presided over various sacramental functions. Sexual intercourse and the cultic functions became increasingly incompatible with one another.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: THEOLOGY OF CELIBACY, SEXUALITY, AND MARRIAGE

Augustine of Hippo

The purpose of this section is to analyze the views of Aurelius Augustinus[1] on sexuality, concupiscence, marriage, and celibacy. Augustine is essential to this study because he is considered, along with St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the two pillars of Roman Catholic theology. I am also deeply convinced that his sexual anthropology still has a powerful influence on the sexual theology of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly in what pertains to the discipline of celibacy. Therefore, I consider Augustine's thought to be a primary source for such teachings. The broader context of Augustine's approach to sexuality, the body, and women will provide a deeper understanding of his thoughts and influence on the doctrine of celibacy.

The first part of this section summarizes most of Augustine's primary concepts on sexuality and marriage. Because Augustine's views developed over time, the items in this section are presented in the order in which Augustine himself wrote them, according to Mary T. Clark's account of this chronology.[2] This discussion is followed by the commentaries of several major scholars who offer a glimpse of the influence that Augustine still has or is perceived to have on modern sexual morality. The study of his legacy also includes some contemporary feminist perspectives. These perspectives will help us to

[1]Aurelius Augustinus lived in the fourth century A.D. (354-430). He the greatest of the Latin Fathers and one of the most eminent Western Doctors of the Church. He is also known as St. Augustine or Augustine of Hippo; the latter title refers to his ministry as Bishop of that city.

[2]Mary T. Clark, *Augustine* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994), xii-xix.

understand the controversies on sexual ethics and gender issues that continue to prevail today. As we will see, some of these authors have strong objections to Augustine's legacy.

Augustine's Early Views on Sexuality

I find Augustine to be quite candid in his views about women and sexuality. I also find his views to be quite negative. In *Soliloquies*, one of his early works (A.D. 386-387), Augustine engages in an imaginary dialogue with two dimensions of himself; one of these he identifies as "himself" (*ego*) and the other as "reason" (*ratio*); thus the title of this particular work. Both reason's query in regard to Augustine's intentions about marriage and Augustine's answers are revealing of his deep objections against marriage:

> What about a wife? Would you not be delighted by a fair, modest, obedient wife, one who is educated or whom you could easily teach, one who would bring along just enough dowry so that she would be no burden to your leisure . . . would you not be delighted by such a one, especially if you had reason to hope that you would suffer no inconvenience on her account?[3]

Augustine's answer: "I have decided that there is nothing I should avoid so much as marriage. I know nothing which brings the manly mind down from the heights more than a woman's caresses and that joining of bodies without which one cannot have a wife."[4] And, "I do not seek nor do I desire anything of this kind, and it is with dread and distaste that I even recall it."[5] These early texts reveal Augustine's negative mindset regarding marriage, women, and sexuality. It is my conviction that Augustine's negative views were influential on the Roman Catholic Church's subsequent teaching and similar distaste for sex in general, and for the marriage of priests in particular.

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[3]*Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947-), 5:365.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., 366.

In *The Lord's Sermon on the Mount,* which was written seven years later, Augustine, in commenting on Matthew 22, 30 and Galatians 3, 28,[6] writes, "Thus a good Christian is found in one and the same woman to love the creature of God, whom he desires to be transformed and renewed; but to hate the corruptible and mortal conjugal connection and sexual intercourse: i.e. to love in her what is characteristic of a human being, to hate what belongs to her as a wife."[7] None of this is found in Paul, nor in Genesis, where we hear God affirm the union and companionship of man and woman in Genesis 2:18 and the encouragement to become one flesh in Genesis 2:24. Where did Augustine get these ideas if not from a nonbiblical culture or some psychological aversion to love as expressed through sexuality? Augustine views sexual expression as a sickness and even a sin to be avoided, except for procreation. The legitimacy of sexual pleasure seems absent from Augustine's concept of sexual intercourse within marriage. For example, in one of his Sermons, he also writes,

> Nevertheless, if they cannot contain themselves (as I have said on other occasions), let them require what is due, and let them not go to any others than those from whom it is due. Let both the woman and the man seek relief for their *infirmity* [emphasis mine] in themselves. . . . And if they exceed the bounds of the marriage contract,[8] let them not at least exceed those of conjugal fidelity. Is it not a sin in married persons to exact from one another more than this design of the "procreation of children" renders necessary? It is doubtless a sin, though a venial one.[9]

Moreover, Augustine believes that there is a correlation between the avoidance of sexual expression and the strengthening of conjugal love: "And we know many of our brethren bringing forth fruit through grace, who for the Name of Christ practise an entire restraint by

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[6]These texts refer to the absence of sexual practices and gender identity in the afterlife.

[7]Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956) 6:18.

[8]A few lines earlier, Augustine defines this contract as solely legitimate "for the sake of the procreation of children."

[9]*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* 6:253.

mutual consent, who yet suffer no restraint of true conjugal affection. Yea, the more the former is repressed, the more is the other strengthened and confirmed."[10] Although this may be true in many instances, many married (or unmarried) couples would strongly dispute the assertion that sexual abstinence automatically strengthens the love of a couple. I would imagine that many couples find that sexual intercourse is a source of closeness to each other and to God when sexuality is accepted as a gift of grace.

Thus, Augustine's emerging views on sexuality, women, and marriage were consistently negative. It appears also that his conversion to Christianity has coincided with his views on celibacy and his rejection of marriage. Let us pursue our query further.

Sexual continence played a crucial role in the development of Augustine's theology and spirituality. In A.D. 395, the year before he became Bishop of Hippo, Augustine wrote a treatise entitled *On Continence;* this is the first work in which he specifically addresses matters of sexuality. In this book, Augustine refers to continence as "that virtue of modesty which, in the matter of bridling the genital members of the body, is usually and properly called continence."[11] Sexual restraint is, of course, necessary and desirable, lest we become disrespectful to God, others, and ourselves. Augustine clearly describes the inner conflict between the spirit and the flesh that behooves all of us, and he pleads with his readers not to allow consent to the evils of concupiscence: "For when that consent takes place, then there goes out from the mouth of the heart that which defiles a man. But when, through continence, the consent is not given, the evil of carnal concupiscence, against which a 'concupiscence' that is spiritual fights, is not allowed to do harm."[12]

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[10]Ibid.
[11]*Fathers of the Church,* 16:194.
[12]Ibid., 194-195.

However, Augustine is not only suspicious of any sexual inclination; he introduces a dualistic opposition between body and soul. For example, in refuting the Manichaeans' abhorrence of the flesh,[13] Augustine asserts that "the body is by nature certainly opposed to the soul, but it is not alien to the nature of man."[14] Thus, body and soul are in conflict with one another, but this conflict is inherent in human nature. Augustine explains that because God created both body and soul, it was God's will to save the whole man. Continence, therefore, is the remedy for sexual inclination and counteracts the evils of concupiscence: "This is the action of continence; thus the works of the flesh are put to death. On the other hand, the works deal death to those whom, when they fall from continence, concupiscence drags to the consent of such works."[15] Determined to distance himself from the dualism of the Manichaeans, Augustine refuses to oppose spirit as good and flesh as evil: "Actually, these two are both goods; the spirit is a good and the flesh is a good."[16] This is so because God has indeed created both, although there is conflict between them that can only be regenerated by baptism: "Indeed, in this nature of man, good and well established and ordered by the Good, there is also war now, because perfect health is not yet. . . . And this guilt the grace of God has already removed from the faithful by the waters of regeneration."[17] The cause of this inner conflict? It is our condemned nature, our disobedience to God; it is because man "despised and offended [nature's] own Author. . . . We were not this way in Adam. . . . This was not the earlier life of created man, but the later

[13]The Manichaeans were a Gnostic sect to which Augustine belonged for nine years before his conversion to Christianity. Their views were pessimistic about the material world, the body, and sexuality. Although Augustine fought them after his conversion, his theology is significantly influenced by that philosophy's pessimistic views.

[14]Ibid., 223.

[15]Ibid., 199-200.

[16]Ibid., 209.

[17]Ibid.

penalty of condemned man."[18] Augustine's pessimism is evident not only in his sexual theology but also in his global view of human nature.

Far from embracing his sexuality, Augustine regrets the sexual impulses of his younger years. For example, In his *Confessions* (397-401), Augustine decries the sins of his youth, during which "the mists of slimy concupiscence of the flesh and of the bubbling froth of puberty rose like hot breath beclouding and darkening my heart."[19] He reasserts his conviction that concupiscence is inherited from the sin of Adam: "No one is born without the intervention of carnal concupiscence inherited from the first man who is Adam."[20] Augustine candidly refers to his personal experience of the conflicting duality of the will, which leads to sin or goodness:

> I struggled with myself and was torn apart by myself. This tearing apart took place against my will, yet this did not prove that I had a second mind of a different nature; but it was merely the punishment suffered by my own mind. Thus, I did not cause it but the "sin dwells in me", and since I am a son of Adam, I was suffering from his freely committed sin.[21]

This statement contains a flavor of the polemic that existed between himself and the Manichaeans, whose beliefs he held for nine years. He constantly distanced himself from the Manichaean concept of two natures: one good, the other evil. In addition, his theology of original sin by which the "evil of concupiscence" is transmitted is both frequent and consistent, as we will see later. Augustine continues to describe his difficulties with continence: "being tied down with the disease of the flesh, I dragged my chain with deadly

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[18]Ibid., 214.

[19]*Fathers of the Church,* 21:34.

[20]*Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings,* trans. Mary T. Clark (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press 1984), 419.

[21]*Ibid.,* 94.

delight, dreading to be set free."[22] Continence is required by God, and celibacy is superior to marriage:

> You command continence for us. . . . Certainly it is through continence that we are brought together and returned to the One from whom we have flowed out in the many. For he loves too little who loves anything together with you which he does not love for your sake. . . . You command me to abstain from concubinage, and with reference to marriage you have advised something better.[23]

The Three Goods of Marriage

The same year (401) that he finished writing his *Confessions*, Augustine wrote a treatise entitled *On the Good of Marriage*. Eugène Portalié considers this to be the most complete work on marriage in the Patristic Era.[24] *On the Good of Marriage* is important because it was written in response to those (such as Jovinian) who considered the married state equal to virginity. While refuting what he regarded as heresy, Augustine wanted to affirm the dignity of marriage and to describe its purpose. Although Augustine hesitates to "put forth a final opinion on this question," he speculates, along with some of his contemporaries, on the possibility that there would be no need for intercourse if Adam and Eve "had not sinned, since their bodies deserved the condition of death by sinning, and there could not be intercourse except of mortal bodies. . . . And whether . . . they would have had children in some other way, without physical coition."[25] Although Augustine's interpretation of the Fall as the consequence of a sexual sin is not the object of this study, it is important to note that other theologians have supported this interpretation.[26] For now, it

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[22]*Fathers of the Church,* 21:154.

[23]*Selected Writings,* 145.

[24]"Vers 400, les partisans de Jovinien répétaient que l'on n'avait pu le combattre qu'en déprimant le mariage. Augustin répond en exposant sa dignité et sa fin. C'est le plus complet traité de patristique des devoirs des époux." See Eugène Portalié's article, "Augustin (Saint)," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique,* vol. 1, part 2, col. 2304.

[25]*Fathers of the Church,* 27:10.

[26]For a discussion on this topic, see Pagels, esp. 27 ff.

suffices to say that a long line of theologians after Augustine begrudged anything that had to do with sex, except in the circumstances that are explained in the following paragraphs.

Procreation

Augustine leaves aside the speculation about the superiority of virginity over marriage and affirms: "This is what we now say, that according to the present condition of birth and death . . . the marriage of male and female is something good . . . also because He [the Lord] came to the marriage when invited."[27] Augustine concedes that marriage is a good "not only because of the procreation of children, but also because of the companionship between the two sexes."[28] The mutual support of the spouses is an important concession that Augustine makes in this description of the goods of marriage. But his begrudging of sexual expression continues to be evident when he speculates about the elderly: "They are better in proportion as they begin the earlier to refrain by mutual consent from sexual intercourse . . . the chastity of the souls rightly joined together continues the purer, the more it has been proved, and the more secure, the more it has been calmed."[29] That is, the earlier the couple abstains from intercourse, the better. Concupiscence must be calmed in order to please God.

Augustine affirms that the sexual drive of youth, although bad, has the positive advantage of serving the cause of procreation in marriage. "Marriage has also this good, that carnal or youthful incontinence, even if it is bad, is turned to the honorable task of begetting children, so that marital intercourse makes something good out of the evil of lust."[30] Fortunately, the evil of sexual attraction is tempered or diminished by the preoccupation and

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[27]Ibid., 12.
[28]Ibid.
[29]Ibid., 12-13.
[30]Ibid., 13.

new role of the spouses when they become parents: "Finally, the concupiscence of the flesh, which parental affection tempers, is repressed and becomes inflamed more modestly. For a kind of dignity prevails when, as husband and wife they unite in the marriage act, they think of themselves as mother and father."[31]

Fidelity

Fidelity is another good of marriage. If couples are inclined to frequent intercourse, the vows of marriage protect them from infidelity: "Even if they demand its payment somewhat intemperately and incontinently, they owe fidelity to each other."[32] Augustine's influence on the current theology of sexuality of the Roman Catholic Church is evident when he begrudges sex for itself—that is, for pleasure—rather than for the purpose of procreation. In such cases, he speculates whether a faithful married couple can be called truly married; in fact, he attempts to equate such couples with fornicators and adulterers "if, although they do not have intercourse for the purpose of having children, they do not avoid it, so that they do not refuse to have children, nor act in any evil way so that they will not be born. But, if both or either one of these conditions is lacking, I do not see how we can call this a marriage."[33]

The practice of having a mistress or living with a woman outside of wedlock seems to have been fairly widespread in Augustine's time, albeit for different reasons than those found in our current culture: "For, if a man lives with a woman for a time, until he finds another worthy of his high station in life or his wealth, whom he can marry as an equal, in his very soul, he is an adulterer."[34] This statement underscores Augustine's change of heart

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[31]Ibid.
[32]Ibid., 13.
[33]Ibid., 15.
[34]Ibid.

after his conversion to Christianity. Having previously lived with a woman out of wedlock and had a son with her, he now describes this same situation as adulterous. It seems also that Augustine's attitude toward women may have had not only a theological basis but a social and cultural one as well.

As we have seen, Augustine cautions against the evils of concupiscence within marriage; however, he praises an unmarried woman who wants children if she endures sex unwillingly for that purpose. In that case, he places her "above many matrons who, although they are not adulteresses, force their husbands, who often desire to be continent, to pay the debt of the flesh, not with any hope of progeny, but through an intemperate use of their right under the ardor of concupiscence."[35] He is concerned that women might be too lustful, but praises marriage as prevention against adultery. "Still," he says, "in the marriage of these women, there is good, that they are married. . . . They are married for this purpose, that concupiscence may be brought under a lawful bond."[36] "For although it is disgraceful to make use of a husband for the purposes of lust, it is honorable to refuse to have intercourse except with a husband and not to give birth except from a husband."[37] Augustine also cautions against lustful men, particularly those who engage in intercourse during pregnancy: "There also are men incontinent to such a degree that they do not spare their wives even when pregnant. Whatever immodest, shameful, and sordid acts the married commit with each other are the sins of the married persons themselves, not the fault of the marriage."[38]

Supported by Paul, he concedes, as a favor, the legitimacy of intercourse without the purpose of procreation:

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[35]Ibid., 15-16.
[36]Ibid., 16.
[37]Ibid.
[38]Ibid.

> Furthermore, in the more immoderate demand of the carnal debt, which the Apostle enjoined them not as a command but conceded as a favor, to have intercourse even without the purpose of procreation, although evil habits impel them to such intercourse, marriage protects them from adultery and fornication. For this is not permitted because of the marriage, but because of the marriage, it is pardoned.[39]

Thus, we see the subtle nuances that Augustine introduces in his theology of marriage. Marriage is a good for the procreation of children and the prevention of adultery or fornication. But outside of this, the rigorous practice of chastity or conjugal continence is strongly advised in order to prevent the mortal sin of adultery; meanwhile, intercourse for its own sake within marriage is only a venial sin:

> In marriage, intercourse for the purpose of generation has no fault attached to it, but for the purpose of satisfying concupiscence, provided with a spouse, because of the marriage fidelity, it is a venial sin; adultery or fornication, however, is a mortal sin. . . . While continence is of greater merit, it is no sin to render the conjugal debt, but to exact it beyond the need for generation is a venial sin.[40]

Thus we see Augustine's hierarchy of goods and sins as they relate to marriage, or intercourse outside of it. Still better, however, is not to marry, or even for the human race not to have need of marriage at all: "For this reason it is a good to marry, since it is a good to beget children, to be the mother of a family; but it is better not to marry, since it is better for human society itself not to have need of marriage."[41] Actually, marriage only exists to prevent fornication or adultery, "for, such is the present state of the human race that not only some who do not check themselves are taken up with marriage, but many are wanton and given over to illicit intercourse."[42]

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[39]Ibid.
[40]Ibid., 17.
[41]Ibid., 22.
[42]Ibid.

Marriage as Sacrament

There is a third good of marriage, which Augustine attributes solely to Christians. "The good, therefore, of marriage among all nations and all men is in the cause of generation and in the fidelity of chastity; in the case of the people of God, however, the good is also in the sanctity of the sacrament."[43] Supporting his views by numerous references to Paul the Apostle, Augustine affirms, "The marriage bond is not loosed except by the death of a spouse."[44] Although the term *sacrament* was not used exactly in the same sense as it is today, one can see in this teaching the foundations of the theology of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the sacrament of marriage: marriage is an indissoluble bond, that can only be dissolved by the death of a spouse, because the couple's commitment to each other in marriage is the permanent and living sign (sacrament) among His People, of Christ's love for humanity to the point of giving His life for its salvation. Nowhere in *On the Good of Marriage,* nor in his other treatises, do we see even a glimpse of the possibility that sexual intercourse could be an expression of love between married or unmarried couples. The avoidance of concupiscence or lust seems to be Augustine's unique preoccupation.

Augustine's Views on Sexuality in Other Works

Augustine also wrote a work entitled *Holy Virginity,*[45] which is also a refutation of Jovinian's assertion that marriage is equal to virginity. The fact that Jovinian accused the Catholics of Manichaeism was enough to stir Augustine to a response that argues for the superiority of virginity over marriage. The Catholic Church was teaching this many centuries later.

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[43]Ibid., 47-48.
[44]Ibid., 48.

Concupiscence and Lust

During another period of his life (413-427), Augustine wrote *City of God.* In the latter part of this book, Augustine addresses a variety of problems and questions related to the consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve. His views continue to be consistent. Augustine admits that there are "many kinds of lusts," but he asserts that when nonspecified, "it suggests to most people the lust for sexual excitement."[46] *City of God* also contains a detailed description of what has become singularly disgusting to Augustine: "Such lust does not merely invade the whole body and outward members; it takes such complete and passionate possession of the whole man, both physically and emotionally, that what results is the keenest of all pleasures on the level of sensation; and, at the crisis of excitement, it practically paralyses all power of deliberate thought."[47]

Such a pessimistic approach creates a major problem for every lover of wisdom and holy joys. In fact, "any such person would prefer, if it were possible, to beget his children without suffering this passion."[48] Augustine's reasoning is based on a literal interpretation of Genesis 3, and engages in a lengthy discussion of the shame that resulted from the sin of our first parents and which caused them to cover themselves with leaves. "And so, it was because they were ashamed of the rebellion in their flesh, which was at once a proof and a penalty of their rebellion against God, that they 'sewed together fig leaves and made themselves aprons' to cover their loins."[49]

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[45]Ibid., 135.
[46]*Fathers of the Church,* 14:388.
[47]Ibid.
[48]Ibid., 388-389.
[49]Ibid., 391.

Shame extends to all facets of sexual expression: "Wherever sexual passion is at work, it feels ashamed of itself."[50] Even the "most shameless of men know what they are doing is shameful."[51] Even the "parental duty . . . looks for a room from which all witnesses have been carefully removed. . . . Not even the children who have been born because it was done are allowed to be witnesses while it is being done. . . . It is a passion that makes everyone ashamed."[52] Finally, "Now [after the Fall], the present condition is not that of a healthy human nature; it is a sickness induced by sin."[53]

Concupiscence and Original Sin

It is important to note that Augustine does not identify concupiscence with original sin. Concupiscence is a consequence of disobedience; it weakens the will and its ability to discipline human passion: "It was only after the fall, when their nature had lost its power to exact obedience from the sexual organs that they fell and noticed the loss."[54] And "lust is a usurper, defying the power of the will and playing the tyrant with man's sexual organs."[55] Indeed, "lust . . . is a just penalty imposed because of the sin of rebellion."[56] It is logical, then, for Augustine to suppose that before the fall there would have been no lust: "How in the world, then, can anyone believe that, in a life so happy and with men so blessed, parenthood was impossible without the passion of lust?"[57] It is impossible for Augustine to imagine sexual attraction—or more specifically, lust—before the Fall.

In response to Pelagius's denial of the existence of original sin and as an encouragement to Juliana, who was influenced by the former's controversial and "heretical"

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[50]Ibid.
[51]Ibid., 392.
[52]Ibid.
[53]Ibid., 393.
[54]Ibid., 396.
[55]Ibid., 395.
[56]Ibid., 399.

teachings on virginity and marriage, Augustine wrote *The Excellence of Widowhood* in the year 414.[58] This work summarizes and repeats what has already been studied in the preceding sections.

In the year 418, after Pelagius was condemned, Augustine wrote another work entitled *On The Grace of Christ and Original Sin*. Strengthened and encouraged by the condemnations of the Pelagian heresies, Augustine reaffirms his doctrine of original sin. He declares that original sin "does not render marriage evil" and reaffirms the three-fold goods of marriage.[59] As he had done before, Augustine also asserts "that the evil of lust must not be ascribed to marriage. . . . The evil, however, at which even marriage blushes for shame is not the fault of the marriage, but of the lust of the flesh."[60]

Chastity and Continence as Gifts From God

The notion of chastity and celibacy as gifts from God is fundamental for Augustine, as it still is for the Catholic Church today. Congratulating and supporting Count Valerius, a "strict observer of conjugal chastity"[61] who remained faithful to his convictions despite the heresies of the time, Augustine wrote the treatise entitled *On Marriage and Concupiscence* in the year 420. In this work, Augustine sustains that "conjugal chastity is a gift from God" and that "none but a believer is truly a chaste man."[62] This is so because Paul the Apostle described celibacy as a gift;[63] if it is truly a gift, it can only be offered and received through grace. In the remainder of this work, Augustine basically reaffirms what he has said

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[57]Ibid., 406.
[58]*Fathers of the Church,* 16:274.
[59]*PN,* 5, 250-251.
[60]Ibid., 252.
[61]Ibid., 264.
[62]Ibid.
[63]1 Cor. 7, 7.

throughout his earlier writings. He reaffirms the good of marriage, the censuring of lust,[64] the shame resulting from the rebellion of our first parents, and the disobedience of the flesh.[65] There is a perceptible development of the theology of marriage as "indissoluble" and as "sacrament."[66] He continues to stress that continence is better than marriage, and that the only "sinless" purpose of intercourse is "to beget children," while all other uses are, at the very least, a "venial sin."[67] Finally, Augustine discusses the fate of unbaptized children and a number of other themes, which are not within the focus of this critique. Having thus summarized those of Augustine's ideas about sexuality, concupiscence, and marriage that are relevant to this dissertation, it will be useful to assess Augustine's legacy with the help of several contemporary authors whose opinions are varied and sometimes controversial.

Critique of Augustine's Views: Contemporary Authors

The foregoing sections illustrated much of Augustine's beliefs about sexuality and marriage in the context of primary sources. Many of those beliefs, in my opinion, emerged more from the social and philosophical influences of his day than from the word of God. The following section offers a critique of Augustine's beliefs as presented in secondary sources.

Several authors, beginning with J. J. O'Meara, an outstanding Augustinian scholar, question Augustine's theory that original sin is transmitted through the sexual act: "In effect, Augustine appears to say that original sin is transmitted through concupiscence—in sexual pleasure. This is at best a rather jaundiced view of sex in itself." Enumerating a number of factors such as Neoplatonism, Manichaeism, and the Pelagian controversy, O'Meara asserts

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[64]*PN,* 265.
[65]Ibid., 266.
[66]Ibid., 268.
[67]Ibid., 270-271.

that these had an "undue influence on Augustine's view of sexuality."[68] This is another confirmation of the thesis that Augustine's sexual theology is found not primarily in the Holy Scriptures but in other philosophies and contemporary influences, which were pessimistic, dualistic, and suspicious of the body, of women, of sexuality.

Augustine's biographer, Peter Brown, writes that Augustine's nameless concubine is the object of our modern curiosity, "which Augustine and his cultivated friends would have found strange."[69] Praising Augustine's sociability and capacity to establish lasting and meaningful friendships, Brown asks a question and then quotes from primary Augustinian sources: "Why, after all, had God chosen a woman to live with Adam?" Augustine answers, "If it was company and good conversation that Adam needed, it would have been much better arranged to have two men together, as friends, not a man and a woman."[70] This declaration is very telling in view of Augustine's treatment of women and of his son, Adeodatus.

Although he praises the intellectual abilities of his son, he nonetheless says about him, "I had no part in that boy but sin."[71] Brown remarks that after the death of Adeodatus, which occurred some forty years before his own, Augustine no longer refers to his son in any of his writings: "When he died . . . there are no more echoes of him in Augustine's writings."[72] Brown further asserts, in reference to Augustine's concubine, "Nor does Augustine seem to have been particularly happy about the needs that bound him to this woman: he would remember their relationship as 'the mere bargain of a lustful love.'"[73] For

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[68]J. J. O'Meara, ed., *An Augustine Reader* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1973), 446.

[69]Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 62.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., 63.

Augustine, there is no valuing of the sexual attraction that leads to the act of love, even when it begets children.

Commenting on Augustine's earlier writings, in which he had proposed that marital intercourse should be transformed into a permanent friendship, Brown further asserts, "Now, however, he will isolate sexual intercourse as an element of evil encapsulated in every marriage, an element whose significance is grotesquely magnified by being so carefully fenced in by a heavy frame of the virtues and joys of respectable Catholic wedlock."[74] Brown continues by describing how Augustine had isolated sexuality from love and relationships in his own life.

Augustine's pessimism, which prevents him from sanctioning the God-given gifts and pleasures of sexuality within marriage, is not unlike the ever-present preoccupation of the Roman Church with the appropriateness of the physical acts of sex, even within marriage. The physicality of the act seems to be more important than the intent with which the act is performed, even when the intent is to express love.

Because Augustine lived with his mother Monica for a considerable length of time in his adult life, Brown again refers to primary sources to describe Augustine's disquiet about women. In reference to a young man who "seemed oppressed with a mother," Augustine says, "What's the difference? . . . Whether it is in a wife or mother, it is still Eve (the temptress) that we must be aware of in any woman."[75] It is not surprising, therefore, that the Christian church, and the Roman Catholic in particular, has had difficulty treating women equitably, whether the reasons be theological, cultural, or both; it also sets the stage for the rage of modern feminists, which will be discussed later.

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[74]Ibid., 390.
[75]Ibid.

Conversely, John J. Hugo, another Augustinian scholar, wrote an interesting and strong apology and defense of Augustine's views on sexual matters.[76] The book was written in the same year as Pope Paul VI's encyclical on birth control. Bishop John Wright, who wrote the Foreword, sets the tone: "One of the welcome results of Pope Paul's reaffirmation of the long-standing Christian understanding of marital love may be a re-reading of Saint Augustine's teaching concerning sexuality, marriage and the relations of both to the condition and vocation of humankind. If so, and the thoughtful should fervently hope so, Father Hugo's present book could not be more timely or more helpful."[77] It might be difficult to find a clearer statement of Augustine's influence on modern Catholic sexual morality. The implication is that whoever gives assent is thoughtful and faithful, but we wonder how Wright would categorize the dissenters. Father Hugo's apology centres on many of Augustine's teachings, which appear moderate when compared to the asceticism of that time. For example, Augustine's theology of marriage[78] is strongly affirmed and defended as supported by the Second Vatican Council. However, in other instances, Hugo appears to exaggerate. Although Sigmund Freud's theories have not achieved universal acceptance, Hugo uses Freud to parallel the insidious pervasiveness of sexuality in human psychophysical development,[79] lengthily decries the evils of erotic love and pornography as unreasonable reactions against Augustinian teachings,[80] and even proposes Augustine as the first feminist[81] for having said that men and women were equal. Referring to St Paul's praise of chastity and virginity, Hugo maintains that "the Scripture—not Augustine—teaches the

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[76]J. J. Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage* (Chicago: Scepter, 1969).
[77]John Wright, foreword to J. J. Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage.*
[78]Hugo, 106-136.
[79]Ibid., 93-94.
[80]Ibid., 95-106.
[81]Ibid., 153-159.

value of continence."[82] These are but a few examples of the scope of the controversy and debate that Augustine still fuels.

On the other hand, Eugen Drewermann is not so gracious toward Augustine. In describing the failure of the Western Church to really face the complexities of human life, he states that the Church has sought, instead, to seek refuge in the safety of monastic life. Drewermann includes Augustine in the following analysis: "Plus les hommes souffrent de l'existence terrestre, plus ils sont saisis du désir de fuir les misères de la vie en se fiant à la réconfortante réponse que leur propose la vie monastique."[83] This is exactly what Augustine had done.

Augustine desires to free himself from earthly attachments, especially those related to the needs of the body, which are sinful. Drewermann incisively affirms, "le péché originel, enseigne Augustin avec autorité, a fait que l'attachement naturel de l'Homme au monde est devenu péché. Pour atteindre à la vie pure et céleste du monde divin, . . . il faut fuir comme autant de chaînes et de pièges tous les besoins du corps: désir de nourriture, de force et d'épanouissement sexuel, tous les souhaits de la chair."[84] This effort must be relentlessly pursued, up to and including one's dreams.[85] Drewermann continues by commenting on Augustine's monastic rule, in which Augustine gives detailed instructions on how to master one's sexual inclinations and to practically strive toward living an angelic life.[86]

Augustine's influence is incalculable, because his ascetic approach is still very prevalent in our time. John Mahoney encapsulates this notion in these words: "If today one

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[82]Ibid., 162.

[83]Eugen Drewermann, *Fonctionnaires de Dieu,* trans. Francis Piquerez and Eugène Wéber (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 313.

[84]Ibid., 435.

looks back down the arches of some fifteen further centuries of Christian thought and life, on which it is almost impossible to calculate his influence, one would be forgiven for concluding that he has seemed not of an age but for all time."[87]

The purpose of this section is to illustrate Augustine's theology and spirituality of sexuality and its continuing influence, particularly in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Several theologians dispute Augustine's pessimism concerning human nature and his anthropology of sexuality. Finally, from my own contemporary experience of Roman doctrine related to sexuality, it is easy to see that Augustine is still very present in the subconscious culture of Roman Catholic Church.

Feminist Perspectives

This section evaluates the effects of Augustine's thought on the role and status of women within the Church. The emphasis on celibacy and virginity has the consequence of introducing a certain dualism between body and spirit and between man and woman. Historically, women were relegated to second-class status in society and church, despite pious affirmations that they are also created by God and thus equal to men. This section identifies how three feminist theologians assess Augustine's influence in general, and how it affects the status of women in the Christian churches in particular.

Well-known Catholic feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether identifies Augustine as the classical source of what she calls "patriarchal anthropology":

> [Since the Fall], proneness to sin and disorder is no longer potential but actual, and woman is particularly responsible for it. Within history, woman's subjugation is both the reflection of her inferior nature and the punishment for her responsibility for sin. . . . Augustine is the classical source of this type

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[85]Ibid., 436.

[86]Ibid., 450-452.

[87]John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of The Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 39.

> of patriarchal anthropology. Although elements of it are present in the New Testament and in earlier patristic theologians, Augustine expresses all aspects of it explicitly.[88]

Although Reuther acknowledges that Augustine considers women "redeemable" and "participants" in the image of God, she finds that his view "is so overbalanced by [woman's] bodily representation as inferior, sin-prone self that he regards her as possessing the image of God only secondarily. The male alone possesses the image of God normatively."[89] To support this affirmation, she quotes a telling passage from Augustine's *De Trinitate*:

> The woman, together with her own husband, is the image of God, so that whole substance may be one image, but when she is referred to separately in her quality as a helpmeet, which regards the woman alone, then she is not the image of God, but as regards the male alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one.[90]

Ruether assesses Augustine's influence as follows: "He is, in turn, the source of this type of anthropology for the later Western Christian tradition, both Catholic and Protestant, which looks to Augustine as the font of orthodoxy."[91] As we shall see in Chapters III and IV, there is still a strong misogynist culture in the Christian churches, as evidenced in the continuing exclusion of women from the hierarchy, from official theological discourse, and from ordained ministry in the Roman Catholic Church.

As the Scripture texts, which are used to support the development of sexual moral theology, are largely drawn from St. Paul, she further asserts:

> Pauline theology, as it came to be interpreted by Augustine and his successors, saw the Adamic fall as obliterating human freedom to choose good. . . . Thus the scapegoating of Eve as the cause of the fall of Adam

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[88]Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 95.

[89]Ibid.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Ibid.

> makes all women, as her daughters, guilty for the radical impotence of 'man' in the face of evil, which is paid for only by the death of Christ![92]

Reuther criticizes Augustine's interpretation of Pauline theology, because Augustine blames all women, as typified by Eve, for being at least indirectly responsible for the Fall. The emergence of feminist theologies which, in recent years, have vigorously protested these notions of traditional patriarchy and the "superiority" of men over women is easily understood and not surprising, when one considers the centuries of oppression to which women have been subjected because of them.

Uta Ranke-Heinemann, a Catholic feminist theologian who has held the chair for the History of Religion at the University of Essen, identifies Augustine as one of "the two main pillars of Catholic sexual morality,"[93] and states that he "was especially convinced of woman's inferiority [and] asserted that in solitude a man means more to a man than a woman does."[94] She vigorously disputes Augustine's assertion that "the core of human nature . . . is not touched by sexuality"[95] by brilliantly demonstrating how sexuality is really part of the spiritual human being, whose sexual identity and definition reaches far beyond reproductive functions.[96] In a section of her book that concerns family planning in antiquity, Ranke-Heinemann writes, "The issue of contraception has played a continuous role in the Church's celibate, anti-pleasure regulation of marital sex, particularly since the time of Augustine."[97] She assesses his legacy as follows:

> The man who fused Christianity together with hatred of sex and pleasure into a systematic unity was the greatest of the Church Fathers, St Augustine (d.430). His importance for Christian sexual morality is unquestioned, and it

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[92]Ibid., 167.

[93]Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality and the Catholic Church,* trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 52.

[94]Ibid., 55.

[95]Ibid., 53.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Ibid., 63.

> set the standard for the condemnation of 'artificial' contraception by Paul VI (1968) and John Paul II (1981). Augustine is the theological thinker who paved the way not just for centuries, but for the millennia that followed.[98]

In addition to identifying Augustine's influence on the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on contraception, she assesses his authority in sexual matters: "Augustine was the father of a fifteen-hundred-year-long anxiety about sex and an enduring hostility to it."[99] In specific references to marriage, "he laid such a heavy moral burden on marriage that we cannot be surprised if people unnaturally oppressed by it were stung into rejecting Christian sexual morality. . . . However significant Augustine's conversion may have been for theology, it was a disaster for married people."[100]

Ranke-Heinemann relates Augustine's conversion to his unceremonious treachery toward the woman he loved and who swore fidelity to him even if he rejected her: "After his conversion his bad conscience over his own betrayal of his first lover was transformed into a contempt for sexual love in general."[101] Augustine's motivation for his views on sexual matters, therefore, is guilt: "As guilty as he may have felt, he thought the fault lay less in himself than in the evil pleasure of the sexual act."[102] Ranke-Heinemann further ventures into a psychological assessment: "Augustine's pessimistic sexual morality is simply a repression of his bad sexual conscience, his aversion to women a continual ferreting out of the culpable cause of his failure. . . . The Manichaean became a Christian."[103] Henri De Lubac also detects a certain Manichaean influence in Augustinian pessimism, but he cautions his readers that these influences arise from opposing forces: "pessimisme qu'on pourra, si on y tient, attribuer à quelques réminiscences manichéennes,—encore que certains

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[98]Ibid., 75-76.
[99]Ibid., 78.
[100]Ibid.
[101]Ibid., 79-80.

auteurs fassent une part vraiment trop généreuse à ces réminiscences, sans remarquer assez que le pessimisme manichéen et le pessimisme augustinien s'inspirent de principes opposés."[104]

Ranke-Heinemann also links Augustine's influence with the authority of the Church: "Augustine's conversion to Christianity from the love of pleasure to hatred of it, took place by classifying women as stimulants and ignoring them as partners. And to this day, male celibate clergy are still putting women in their place."[105] She continues her indictment of "Augustine's complicated schizophrenic distinction between feeling pleasure but enduring it (sinless) and seeking pleasure and enjoying it (sinful),"[106] which she says has had an enduring, decisive influence on the sexual moral theology of the Catholic Church.

More moderate but no less erudite and insightful, Kari Elizabeth Børresen makes a brilliant and detailed analytical comparison between Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in their treatment of women.[107] She also confirms that Augustine's conversion to Christianity coincided with his rejection of women and the imposition of continence on all categories of women's lives: "La conversion à Dieu est pour Augustin le synonyme du refus de tout attachement à une personne de l'autre sexe et cet idéal de perfection s'impose à tous."[108]

Also worthy of note is Børresen's detailed study of Augustine's hierarchy of sexual chastity for women, from the contamination of her reproductive capacity by the evil of concupiscence, to the blessedness of perpetual virginity and chaste widowhood. Børresen quotes from Augustine's primary sources to demonstrate that according to him, woman can

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[102]Ibid., 80.
[103]Ibid.
[104]Henri De Lubac, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1965), 12.
[105]Ranke-Heinemann, 82.
[106]Ibid., 142.
[107]Kari Elizabeth Børresen, *Subordination et équivalence: Nature et rôle de la femme d'après Augustin et Thomas D'Aquin* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968).

only restore her inferiority in the order of creation and free herself from the domination of man through the practise of (perpetual) chastity and continence: "L'état de continence actualise ainsi, pour la femme, dans l'existence temporelle, son équivalence avec l'homme telle qu'elle se réalisera dans l'ordre du salut. En optant pour l'état supérieur et en renonçant au bien inférieur du mariage, la femme échappe à son rôle de subordonnée."[109] In other words, women are equal, but by choosing continence in this life, woman anticipates, in the present, the equal dignity that will eventually be assigned to her only at the resurrection of her body.

Summary

This section has provided us with both a glimpse and a critique of Augustine's views on sexuality, marriage, and virginity. In the context of this dissertation, it is important to understand the theology of Augustine, but more important to realize that the sexual theology of the Roman Catholic Church has evolved only slightly since the time of Augustine. From the Church's teaching on contraception, masturbation, or extra-marital sex, one can recognize Augustine's influence: "Augustine's understanding of what was 'natural' in sexual relations contributed to the church's rejection of various sexual practices."[110] Ironically, Portalié describes in detail the high esteem in which Protestant theologians hold Augustine, especially since Luther and Calvin: "Chose étrange! il semble que les critiques protestants aient été spécialement séduits en ces derniers temps par la grande figure d'Augustin, tant il lui ont consacré d'études profondes. . . . Les réformateurs, Luther et Calvin, s'étaient contentés de traiter Augustin avec un peu moins d'irrévérence que les

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[108]Ibid., 24.

[109]Ibid., 113.

[110]Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson, eds., *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 72.

autres Pères."[111] In effect, what Portalié is saying is that Luther and Calvin were polite to Augustine (at least not too irreverent), but not much more. However, he says that some Protestant theologians are more sympathetic to Augustine than Luther and Calvin were. This could be the object of another study. For now, it is enough to note that Protestantism has almost universally rejected celibacy as superior to marriage and thus as a preferred option for its ordained ministers. This introduces another question for ecumenical relations between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, particularly as the former moves increasingly toward the ordination of women and homosexuals.

Finally, it is very difficult to evaluate Augustine's influence during the last fifteen hundred years, because it is impossible to measure with any kind of precision the conscious and unconscious forces that he has had and still has on the theology of all our Christian churches. Mahoney asserts that Augustine is the "one single individual in Christian history who has had the most influence on the making of moral theology."[112] Although we may all have our "Augustinian moods and moments . . . the Church was not born Augustinian. And although for 1500 years it has experienced something more than an Augustinian moment in its moral thinking, it now appears to be in the difficult process of shaking its long Augustinian mood."[113] In reading and researching Augustine's approach to sexuality, I was surprised to see how I recognized the values and principles that still guide the Catholic Church today. Celibacy for a Catholic priest necessarily entails much of the thought of Augustine, including his cautions about relationships with women. His preference for the companionship of another male (except in the case of procreation) reminds one of the current clerical culture among Catholic priests.

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[111]*Dictionnaire de théologie catholique,* col. 2318.
[112]Mahoney, 71.

One thing is beyond doubt: Augustine's influence has been and continues to be of indescribable magnitude, given the number of references and publications that are still being quoted and written on his account. There is no less certainty that the theological debates surrounding the fourth-century Bishop of Hippo will continue for many decades to come.

[113]Ibid.

St. Thomas Aquinas

Along with Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas[114] (c. 1225-1274) is one of the venerated, foremost, and influential philosophers and theologians of the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, many of the official teachings of the Church in matters of dogma and moral theology bear the imprint of both Augustine and Aquinas. This in itself is sufficient reason to engage in an in-depth study of Aquinas's opinions concerning sexuality, marriage, and celibacy. Like Augustine, Aquinas is an authority of choice in Roman Catholic theology and in the theological and spiritual formation of priests, even to this day. Ralph McInerny confirms Aquinas's dominance of Roman Catholic theology in these words: "Aquinas' religious writing has had a significant influence on both theological and philosophical thought through the centuries."[115] In a different text, McInerny affirms that Aquinas is "rightly looked upon as a major proponent of natural law, which is the view—that there are true directives of human action which arise from the very structure of human agency and which anyone can easily formulate for himself."[116]

Aquinas proceeds in an organized and structured manner; his work is very well systematized. Most of his massive work is based on the capacity of humans to live rightly and to use the faculty of reasoning to attain truth. Humans think and act with the assistance of natural law, guided by Revelation. For Thomas, Revelation consists in the authority of Scripture as well as in the authority of the Church Fathers. Much of his work

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[114]For simplicity, it is legitimate to refer to Saint Thomas Aquinas simply as "Aquinas," or "Thomas," as is often the case in academia.

[115]Ralph McInerny, ed. and trans., *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), opening page.

[116]Ralph McInerny, *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 40.

is structured with concepts found in the pagan philosophy of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.).

Although they are not the objects of this section and thus are not studied here, the concepts of reason, natural law, conscience, truth, knowledge, and Revelation (as described above) all form the basic principles and methodology of most of the teachings of Thomas. These notions are presupposed and, if carefully considered, greatly assist in understanding his approach, which is both philosophical and theological.

As implied, the specific purpose of this study is to explore Thomas's teachings as they pertain to sexual ethics. In this section I will identify the key points of Thomas's views on sexual ethics and evaluate his influence on Roman Catholic sexual theology and anthropology. The method used is to focus mainly on Aquinas's development of the virtues, as "his is not an ethic of duty and law, but an ethic of virtue . . . because his primary concern is not just good decisions, but good persons."[117] Thomas's concern for virtues and the need to become good persons through right reason and actions illustrates that Thomas was not only a philosopher and theologian, he was also a saint in his daily living. This insight explains why his sexual ethic is framed within the context of vices and virtues.

The primary source used for this paper is Aquinas's main work, the *Summa Theologica*, unless otherwise stated.[118] Other works are considered as they are found in secondary sources. Most of Thomas's writings on sexual ethics are found within his discussion of temperance as a cardinal virtue. Hence emerge the virtues related to

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[117]Paul J. Waddell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 4.

[118]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947).

temperance, namely chastity, virginity, and continence, and their contrary vices, which are treated under the general term of lust.

After briefly considering these themes from the primary sources in the first section, I present critiques of Thomas's sexual ethics from secondary sources and, of course, my own insights. As was the case with Augustine, I also provide an account of the influence that Saint Thomas has had on the development of Roman Catholic moral theology throughout the centuries. The controversies emanating from Thomas's understanding and application of natural law in sexual ethics are also highlighted in this section. Finally, I offer a glimpse of how Saint Thomas viewed women, the influence of these views, and the difficulties that result from them.

Temperance as the Context of Thomas's Sexual Ethic

In Thomas's moral theology, virtues are, simply stated, good habits; vices are bad habits. In his analysis of temperance, Thomas first begins by asking whether temperance is a virtue. For Thomas, virtue inclines humans to good "in accordance with reason," and because temperance is so inclined, he concludes that it is indeed a virtue.[119] As with all virtues, temperance is not contrary to the inclination of human nature, but in accord with it. However, it is contrary to "the inclination of the animal nature that is not subject to reason."[120] Thus, Thomas quickly establishes that the virtues belong to the human realm and vices to the animal realm. In other words, humans possess an animal nature that must be subjected to reason. Of course, animals do not have the moral capacity for virtue. However, what Thomas considers reasonable does not constitute universal agreement.

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[119]Ibid., II-II, q. 141, a. 1, *Respondeo.*
[120]Ibid., *ad* 1.

Thomas establishes that temperance is about the "desires and pleasures of touch," and concludes that temperance is "properly about pleasures of meat and drink and sexual pleasures."[121] This is the general context within which he builds his ethic of sexuality. Thomas recognizes the power of human desires and pleasure by claiming, "temperance is about the greatest pleasures, which chiefly regard the preservation of human life either in the species or in the individual."[122]

Thomas defines a cardinal virtue as one that has "a foremost claim to praise on account of one of those things that are requisite for the notion of virtue in general."[123] Temperance is identified as a cardinal virtue, because all the other virtues related to the pleasures of the body and the propagation of the species derive from it. With regard to the pleasures of food and drink (in contrast to sex), Thomas states that (a) these pleasures are most natural to us, (b) it is more difficult to abstain from them and to control our desire for them, and (c) their objects are more necessary to the present life.[124] Thomas is less pessimistic than Augustine in his assessment of the natural desires of humans; as we have seen, Augustine believes that the desires of the flesh, especially those related to sexuality, are the sinful results of sexual lust.

Interestingly, Thomas refrains from naming temperance as the greatest of virtues. Indeed, temperance moderates "only the desires and pleasures which affect man himself; . . . justice and fortitude regard the good of the many, more than temperance does; . . . prudence and the theological virtues are more excellent still."[125] Here we see that Thomas has a strong sense of order and value in his classification of virtues. As with

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[121]Ibid., q. 141, a. 4, *Respondeo.*
[122]Ibid., a. 5, *Respondeo.*
[123]Ibid., a. 7, *Respondeo.*
[124]Ibid.

the theological virtues and the other cardinal virtues, Thomas hinges many notions of virtue on the cardinal virtue of temperance. In the next section, we study the ones that relate to the sexual dimensions of temperance.

The Virtue of Chastity

When considering chastity, Thomas first establishes that chastity is indeed a virtue, because reason chastises concupiscence. And because "the essence of human virtue consists in being something moderated by reason . . . it is evident that chastity is a virtue."[126] He further explicates as follows: "For it belongs to chastity that a man make moderate use of bodily members in accordance with the judgment of his reason and the choice of his will."[127] Thus, we see Thomas's continuing emphasis on reason and will as a means of controlling one's passions. As we shall see, reason equates natural law, because reason tends to the good.

Like Augustine, Thomas defines chastity in the strict sense as the "regulating of the concupiscences relating to venereal pleasures . . . and the mingling of bodies." However, Thomas does not restrict the notion of chastity to bodily pleasures. He also speaks of spiritual chastity in the metaphoric sense. This he defines as the desire of the human mind to delight in a spiritual union with God. Its contrary, spiritual fornication,[128] lies in delighting in union with other things against the requirements of the order established by God. The idea of spiritual union with God, or its contrary, is central to Thomas's concept of chastity.

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[125]Ibid., a. 8, *Respondeo*
[126]Ibid., II-II, q. 151, a. 1, *Respondeo.*
[127]Ibid., *ad* 1.
[128]Ibid., a. 2, *Respondeo.*

Chastity and abstinence. Thomas asserts that chastity can be distinguished from abstinence: whereas the former is about "venereal pleasures whereby the nature of the species is preserved," abstinence is about the "pleasures of the palate."[129] He further determines that venereal pleasures are more "impetuous and oppressive;" therefore, "they are in greater need of chastisement and restraint, since if one consents to them, this increases the force of concupiscence and weakens the strength of the mind."[130] It is interesting to note that Thomas does not challenge or contradict Augustine; quoting from Augustine's *Soliloquies* i, 10, he says, "I consider that nothing so casts down the manly mind from its heights as the fondling of women, and those bodily contacts with the married state."[131] In fact, Thomas uses Augustine to support his own position! It is quite surprising to see that both these men, who lived centuries apart, have such similar views. Hence, we perceive Augustine's influence on the thought of Thomas, including a glimpse as to how women are viewed by both men. We will see more on that in the next chapters.

The nature of purity. Thomas defines purity in its etymological sense from the Latin *pudicitia* or *pudor*, which means "shame." Thus, Thomas asserts that purity is properly about the "things of which man is most ashamed." This definition is particularly applicable to sexuality, even in marriage. Again supported by Augustine (*De Civitate Dei* xiv, 18), Thomas affirms that "men are most ashamed of venereal acts . . . so much so that even the conjugal act, which is adorned by the honesty of marriage, is not devoid of shame. . . . And this because the movement of the organs of generation is not subject to the command of reason, as are the movements of the other external members."[132]

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[129]Ibid., a. 3, *Respondeo.*
[130]Ibid., a. 3, *ad* 2.
[131]Ibid.
[132] Ibid., a. 4, *Respondeo.*

Thomas's emphasis on reason as the regulatory and dominating element over all passions and desires is particularly evident in his view of sexuality. As with Augustine, pleasure experienced in sexual acts, even in marriage, is suspect and appears to be shameful. However, it is a necessary evil to ensure the propagation of the human race. There is consistency between Aquinas and Augustine when they both proclaim the shamefulness of the sexual drive.

Thomas affirms that purity is particularly attentive to the external signs related to the shame of sexual union, namely "impure looks, kisses, and touches," whereas chastity concerns the sexual union itself. Thus, purity expresses "a circumstance of chastity." This is the reason why Thomas hesitates to identify purity as a virtue. Yet, he does concede that purity could be considered a virtue in the broad sense and that chastity and purity are sometimes used interchangeably.[133] These texts illustrate that any expression of sexuality, however remote, is subject to intense interest and scrutiny. One almost gets the impression that it is unfortunate that God has attached the dimension of pleasure and passion to the propagation of the species. Theologically, I doubt whether this idea truly falls within the views of the Creator. It appears, once again, that such views emerge from culture more than from theology. The notion of control or power over the senses underlies the sexual ethic of Aquinas, as it does that of Augustine. Both writers seem to be fearful of the sexual drive.

The Virtue of Virginity

In his treatise about virginity, Thomas begins by asking whether virginity consists solely in the "integrity of the flesh." He derives his definition of virginity from the Latin *viror*, meaning "freshness." And freshness can be ascribed to a thing that is not parched

by excessive heat. Thomas finds this definition quite appropriate, because "virginity denotes that the person possessed thereof is unseared by the heat of concupiscence which is experienced in achieving the greatest bodily pleasure which is that of sexual intercourse."[134] Supported by Ambrose (*De Virginitate* I, 5), he declares, "virginal chastity is integrity free of pollution."[135] The idea that sexual pleasure should preferably be avoided, that it is a source of contamination, continues to emerge.

Thomas considers three facets of virginity. The first consists in bodily integrity and its contrary, which he calls "the violation of the seal of virginity." The second concerns the link between the soul and the body, which is related to "the resolution of semen, causing sensible pleasure." The third pertains entirely to the soul, which is the purpose of attaining such pleasure. Because moral acts are perfected by reason through one's motives and intentions, the question of bodily integrity is of lesser importance. "Since then virginity consists in freedom from the aforesaid corruption, it follows that the integrity of the bodily organ is accidental to virginity . . . the purpose of perpetually abstaining from this pleasure is the formal and completive element in virginity."[136] Thomas remains true to his convictions as well as to his methodology by emphasizing the primacy of reason and right intention in moral matters. He insists that unintentional physical pleasure or loss of bodily integrity does not negate virginity under certain conditions. Such circumstances are "during sleep, or through violence without the mind's

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[133]Ibid.
[134]Ibid., q. 152, a. 1, *Respondeo.*
[135]Ibid.
[136]Ibid.

consent . . . or again through weakness of nature. In such cases virginity is not forfeit, because such like pollution is not the result of impurity which excludes virginity."[137]

Interestingly, Thomas wonders whether virginity is unlawful in the context of natural law, which stipulates that the sexual functions have been created to achieve their intended purpose, that is, procreation. This question points to Thomas's sense of integrity and consistency. He answers the question by saying that right reason requires that things directed to an end should be used in a measure proportionate to that end. Thus, he establishes a hierarchy of goods, which indicates that the goods of the soul take precedence over the goods of the body, and that the things that pertain to the "contemplation of truth" are more important than the "active life"; following this reasoning, virginity would not be unlawful, but even recommended: "If a man abstains from bodily pleasures, in order to more freely to give himself to the contemplation of truth, this is in accordance with the rectitude of reason. Now holy virginity refrains from all venereal pleasure in order more freely to have leisure for Divine contemplation. . . . Therefore, it follows that virginity instead of being unlawful is worthy of praise."[138] Thus, if the end of sexual intercourse is the propagation of the species, virginity is not only legitimate but recommended, because its end is for an even higher purpose. Here, we recognize the validation of virginity and celibacy as freedom to serve without the encumbrance of family responsibilities. I wonder whether married priests or ministers agree with this perspective.

As we have seen, Thomas considers that the matter of virginity consists in the integrity of the flesh. At birth, all humans possess material virginity and "freedom from

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[137]Ibid., *ad* 4.
[138]Ibid., q. 152, a. 2, *Respondeo.*

venereal experience"; however, in order to be truly a virgin, one must have "formal virginity," which is "the purpose of safeguarding this integrity for God's sake."[139] It is this permanent disposition and spiritual motivation that characterizes and confirms virginity as a virtue. It is one's intention that counts, not just bodily integrity.

As to whether virginity is more excellent than marriage, one can already surmise that Thomas will answer in the affirmative. To support his answer, Thomas relies on the example of Christ who both "chose a virgin for His mother, and remained himself a virgin, and by the teaching of the Apostle [Paul], who counsels virginity as a greater good (1 Cor. 7)."[140] True to his method, Thomas adds the dimension of reason, because "the good of the soul is preferable to the good of the body, and again because the good of the contemplative life is better than that of the active life."[141] He continues his reasoning by affirming that virginity is directed to the good of the soul and the contemplative life, which is "thinking on the things of God."[142] As is the case with Augustine, Thomas does not seem to allow for any possibility to reconcile closeness to God with one's sexuality.

On the other hand, marriage is directed to the things of body, that is, "the bodily increase of the human race," the active life, and the "things of the world"; for all these reasons, Thomas concludes, "without doubt . . . virginity is preferable to conjugal continence."[143] Here we recognize the consistent teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which have remained virtually unchanged to this day. Within the notion of generous service in ministry, there seems to be no room for a contemplative spirituality of marriage and sexual intercourse.

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[139]Ibid., a. 3, *ad* 1.
[140]Ibid., a. 4, *Respondeo.*
[141]Ibid.
[142]Ibid., q. 152, a. 2, *Respondeo.*

No less interesting is Thomas's discussion as to whether virginity is the greatest of virtues. While conceding that virginity is most excellent in its own "genus," and thus superior to both widowhood and marriage, Thomas refrains from affirming that virginity is the greatest of all virtues. Recalling that "the end which renders virginity praiseworthy is that one may have leisure for Divine things," Thomas nonetheless asserts, "the theological virtues as well as the virtue of religion, the acts of which consist in being occupied about Divine things, are preferable to virginity."[144] To further explicate his position, he evokes the martyrs "who work mightily in order to cleave to God and who hold their own life in contempt." To support his assertion that virginity is not simply the greatest of virtues, he also expresses support and admiration for those who dwell in monasteries and who "give up their own will and all they may possess."[145] This discussion illustrates that Thomas, while exalting the value of virginity, keeps it in proportion to other major virtues and religious commitments.

Related to the virtues of chastity and virginity is the concept of continence and its opposite, incontinence. Thomas relates these concepts to the cardinal virtue of temperance and to the virtues of chastity and virginity. By his own admission, continence is nothing more (or less) than the dispositions already studied in the discussion of the virtues of chastity and virginity. Therefore, a study of his work on continence would add little to the previous discussion. However, reference is given as a matter of interest.[146]

This concludes the research of the virtues related to sexuality. I will now address the vices related to the same subject matter.

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[143]Ibid.
[144]Ibid., a. 5, *Respondeo.*
[145]Ibid.
[146]Ibid., II-II, q. 155-156.

The Sexual Vices According to Thomas Aquinas

This brief section highlights the sins or vices that are contrary to the cardinal virtue of temperance. The reason for this brevity is that Thomas establishes that vices are contrary to reason, natural law, Scripture, and Tradition. In the same manner, as we have seen, virtues are in accord with all of these. Thus, it would serve no purpose to repeat in reverse the same arguments that were presented in the previous section. However, this section serves to note that Thomas is very consistent in the use of the same methodology, using basically the same arguments and concepts when considering vices as contrary to virtues.

Lust as a Capital Vice

As stated previously, Aquinas employs the generic term *lust* to denote the sins and vices that are contrary to chastity and virginity. Worthy of note is that fact that lust is connected to the experience of pleasure: "Now venereal pleasures above all debauch a man's mind. Therefore, lust is especially concerned with such like pleasures."[147] This statement bears a definite likeness to Augustine's negative understanding of sexual pleasure. Yet, Thomas concedes that lust "secondarily applies to any other matters pertaining to excess, such as the pleasure of food and drink and the like."[148]

When considering whether any venereal act can exist without sin, Thomas first establishes that sin is "that which is against the order of reason" and that reason "consists in its ordering everything to its end in a fitting manner."[149] Thus, if sexual acts are ordered to the preservation of the nature of the human species, they are not sinful,

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[147]Ibid., q. 153, a. 1, *Respondeo.*
[148]Ibid., *ad* 1.
[149]Ibid., a. 2, *Respondeo.*

"provided they be performed in due manner and order."[150] Thus, according to natural law, every sexual act must be oriented and open to procreation. This concept has awesome consequences for generations and centuries to come.

Thomas defines lust as "excess," primarily in sexual matters. Hence, anything "exceeding the order and mode of reason in the matter of venereal acts . . . without doubt . . . is a sin."[151] Despite his obvious reservations (not to say ambivalence), when considering sexual intercourse even within marriage, Thomas speaks of "the contrary vice of insensibility" for those who so dislike it "as not to pay the marriage debt."[152] Here again, Thomas consistently places a high priority on the begetting of children within the context of marriage, and he identifies as a vice the inappropriateness of refusing intercourse without proper motive. As with Augustine, procreation has high priority.

Contrasting lust with the cardinal virtue of temperance, Thomas is consistent in identifying lust as a "capital" or "principal" vice, "since such like concupiscence is connatural to man."[153] Thomas establishes that the most powerful force of concupiscence in humans is their sexual drive, and that all the other appetites are secondary to it.

The Six Species of Lust

Thomas identifies six species of lust, namely, "simple fornication, adultery, incest, seduction, rape, and the unnatural vice."[154] All of these consist in "seeking venereal pleasure not in accordance with right reason," which happens when such pleasures are "inconsistent with the end of the venereal act."[155] Thomas is concerned that

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[150]Ibid.
[151]Ibid., a. 3, *Respondeo.*
[152]Ibid., *ad* 3.
[153]Ibid., a. 4, *Respondeo.*
[154]Ibid., q. 154, Obj. 1.
[155]Ibid., a. 1, *Respondeo.*

this end is not achieved "when generation cannot follow." Such is the case in the "vice against nature."[156]

Thomas defines simple fornication as "the union of an unmarried man with an unmarried woman." Considered *in se*, simple fornication is a natural act; however, it is a "hindering" to the end of sexual intercourse, because it "implies an inordinateness that tends to injure the life of the offspring to be born of this union."[157] Thomas compares such a union to the animal realm; he is very concerned for the welfare of the offspring resulting thereof, because the union is "indeterminate." And because "it is opposed to the good of the child's upbringing," Thomas concludes that it is a mortal sin.[158] The welfare of the child is of paramount importance, and the gravity of the sin is in proportion to this particular concern. Furthermore, Thomas condemns fornication, even in the case of the man who generously provides for the child, because the law is universal, is applicable to all, and is not concerned with particular cases.[159] This notion needs further critique, which will not be done here.

Thomas classifies seduction as a species of lust for several reasons. First, he defines it as "the violation of a virgin who is under her father's care." Seduction is wrong because the woman is hindered from contracting a lawful marriage and because such an action puts her in danger of losing "the seal of virginity," which should only be removed by marriage. In addition, seduction represents shame and injustice to the father who is her guardian.[160] Here, the shame and injustice seem to be more connected to the father than

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[156]Ibid.
[157]Ibid., a. 2, *Respondeo.*
[158]Ibid.
[159]Ibid.
[160]Ibid., a. 6, *Respondeo.*

to the victim of seduction. Moreover, seduction is not simple fornication, because the latter can occur with women who are no longer virgins.[161]

Rape is distinguished from seduction in that the former is characterized by the use of force or violence. Thus, rape can occur without seduction and vice versa. Again, the idea of seduction is identified with a virgin: "There is rape without seduction if a man abducts a widow or one who is not a virgin." Conversely, "there is seduction without rape when a man, without employing force, violates a virgin unlawfully."[162]

Adultery (*ad alienum torum*) is defined as "access to another's marriage bed." Adultery is wrong, not only because it is against the Decalogue, but also because one accesses a woman who is not joined to him in marriage. This is contrary to the good of the upbringing of his children. In addition, the adulterer hinders the good of another's children.[163] Again, we see Thomas emphasize the good of the children in all cases of unlawful intercourse.

Thomas gives three reasons to determine incest as a species of lust. First, it is shameful and inconsistent with the respect that one owes to one's parents and other blood relatives. Secondly, such blood relations must live closely with one another; thus, the interdiction against incest serves as a safeguard against unbridled lust. Thirdly, incest prevents the man from making new friends through marrying a stranger and establishing friendships with his in-laws.[164]

Sacrilege is the defilement of a person or an object directed to the worship of God. A vow of chastity undertaken for the worship of God becomes an act of religion.

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[161]Ibid., *ad* 1.
[162]Ibid., a. 7, *Respondeo.*
[163]Ibid., a. 8 *Respondeo.*
[164]Ibid., a. 9, *Respondeo.*

Thus, the violation of a person who has made such a vow is a sacrilege, and, in the context of chastity, it is accounted as a species of lust.[165]

Given his emphasis on natural law and the primacy of right reason in moral decision-making, it is not surprising that Thomas is most critical of what he calls the unnatural vice. All of the previously mentioned vices have at least the characteristic of being normal in the sense that they are oriented toward natural sexual intercourse. Thomas identifies the unnatural vice in several ways. One is by "procuring pollution without any copulation for the sake of venereal pleasure." Although he does not use the term, he undoubtedly refers to masturbation. Another unnatural vice is "copulation with a thing of undue species," which he calls bestiality. A third unnatural vice is copulation with an undue sex, such as male with male, or female with female; this he calls sodomy. And finally, Thomas refers to actions that do not observe "the natural manner of copulation, either as to undue means, or as to other monstrous and bestial manners of copulation."[166] This latter description simply leaves the reader to one's own imagination. I believe it refers to sexual positions that Thomas would not approve of. What is certain is that they are all wrong and sinful for the reasons already mentioned.

To the question of whether the unnatural vice is the greatest sin among the species of lust, Thomas answers a resounding "yes!" Reason? "Since by the unnatural vices man transgresses that which has been determined by nature with regard to the use of venereal actions, it follows that in this matter this sin is the greatest of all."[167]

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[165]Ibid., a. 10, *Respondeo.*
[166]Ibid., a. 11, *Respondeo.*
[167]Ibid., a. 12, *Respondeo.*

Interestingly, Thomas names incest as the second most grievous sin, because it is "contrary to the natural respect which we owe persons related to us."[168] Thomas continues his evaluation by stating that injury to another person (i.e., adultery) is more serious than simple fornication. Simple fornication "is committed without injustice to another person, [and] is the least grave among the species of lust." Thus, adultery is more serious than seduction, because it involves a third person who has conjugal rights. This type of injury is more serious than guardianship of a virgin. Of course, all of these transgressions are aggravated by violence, in the same order. Finally, all of these are also aggravated by sacrilege, which is the defilement of an object or, in this context, a person consecrated to God.[169]

Thus emerge the principles that guide Thomas in his assessment of virtues and vices. The most important is to ensure that all sexual acts are natural, between male and female, and open to the possibility of begetting children, the primary (if not the only) reason for sexual intercourse. Another important principle is that a legitimate marriage is the only true guarantee of protecting and promoting the upbringing and education of children. Finally, chastity and virginity are superior to marriage, because they are orientated to a greater good, which is the unhindered contemplation of God.

The preceding paragraphs offer a glimpse of Saint Thomas Aquinas's hierarchy of values in matters of sexual morality as found in the *Summa.* We have identified the methodology and the central ideas that he uses to construct his system, and we have become better acquainted with the virtues and vices that he finds pivotal in his approach to sexual ethics. Four main concepts emerge from this study: (a) the narrow interpretation

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[168]Ibid.
[169]Ibid.

of the purpose of sex, which, as in Augustine's writings, is limited to procreation; (b) that love plays a very secondary role (if any) in the sexual life of the couple; (c) that shame is associated with the sexual act, even in marriage; and finally, (d) Thomas clearly establishes virginity as superior to marriage. Although Augustine and Thomas lived centuries apart and used different methods, their conclusions are very much the same. All of these concepts are questioned by today's cultural approach to sexuality. Sex for pleasure (or for its own sake) is still frowned upon in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church; every sexual act must be open to procreation, and no other act is considered normal. The following section is a critique of Thomas's views from the perspective of authoritative secondary sources.

The Influence of Saint Thomas Aquinas on Catholic Theology

The views of Saint Thomas Aquinas on sexual ethics constitute a very small portion of his important and extensive work. However, in matters of sexual ethics and natural law, one can still recognize that Thomas's teachings are still basically intact, not only in many manuals of moral theology within the Roman Catholic Church, but also in the official teachings of the Church. One only has to recall the current teachings of the Catholic Church on marriage, masturbation, contraception, homosexuality, natural law, and celibacy to recognize that the teachings of Saint Thomas are still very much with us. This section does not attempt to document all of these; however, through examples, I will demonstrate the influence of Saint Thomas in some of the official teachings of the Catholic Church and through the writings of several theologians.

Official Teachings

There are innumerable references to the writings of Saint Thomas in official Catholic doctrine. In fact, it is my opinion that the teachings of Saint Thomas, especially in regard to Catholic sexual morality, are so well integrated in Catholic thinking that reference is no longer made to him as the source of such teachings. Aquinas's influence has become a sort of collective unconscious, automatic reflex, and second nature to Catholic theology.

Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) is often referred to as one who gave a strong impetus to the work of Saint Thomas Aquinas at the end of the nineteenth century and all of the twentieth century, in reaction against increasing philosophical controversies and challenges to Christianity within the social context of his time. Leo also sought to show, by referring to Saint Thomas, that there is no conflict between science and faith: "The ecclesiastical sciences found a generous patron in Pope Leo. His encyclical, *Aeterni Patris* (1879), recommended the study of Scholastic philosophy, especially that of St. Thomas Aquinas, but he did not advise a servile study."[170] Leo had fourteen years to oversee the implementation of this encyclical before his death. Since then, the Vatican has ensured that the teachings of Aquinas are taught in Catholic colleges and universities.

The Second Vatican Council (1961-1965) reaffirmed the Catholic commitment to the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. For example, in its "Decree on Priestly Formation," we read, "Then, by way of making the mysteries of salvation known as thoroughly as they can be, students should learn to penetrate them more deeply with the

[170]*The Catholic Encyclopedia,* s.v., "Leo XIII" (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910, accessed 21 February 2007); available from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09169a.htm; Internet.

help of speculative reason exercised under the tutelage of Saint Thomas."[171] The Council also gives momentum to Saint Thomas in its *Declaration on Christian Education:* "The Church . . . intends to promote an ever deeper understanding of . . . how faith and reason give harmonious witness to the unity of all truth. The Church pursues such a goal after the manner of her most illustrious teachers, especially St. Thomas Aquinas."[172]

In 1964, Pope Paul VI aptly summarized this unqualified support for the wisdom of Thomas. His text deserves attention:

> Let teachers reverently pay heed to the voice of the Doctors of the Church, among whom St. Thomas holds the principal place; for the Angelic Doctor's force of genius is so great, his love of truth so sincere, and his wisdom in investigating, illustrating, and collecting the highest truths in a most apt bond of unity so great, that his teaching is a most efficacious instrument not only in safeguarding the foundations of the faith, but also in profitably and surely reaping the fruits of its sane progress.[173]

After seven hundred years of history and doctrinal development, one would be hard pressed to find a more elaborate and complete praise of the genius and work of Saint Thomas. This tribute is not just an expression of polite admiration, a powerful witness to the enduring influence of Saint Thomas, but also an engagement to study and integrate Thomas's teachings in all facets of Catholic life.

More recently, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* demonstrates its own allegiance to Thomas through many references to his work. By way of illustration, I refer to the notions that are most relevant to this study. For example, the Catechism maintains,

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[171]"Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatam Totius*)," in Walter M. Abbot, gen. ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966), no. 16, 452.

[172]"Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*)," in *The Documents of Vatican II,* no. 10, 648.

[173]Pope Paul VI, "Allocution to the Pontifical Gregorian University of Studies," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 56 (12 March 1964): 365.

almost intact, the definition and classification of virtues taught by Saint Thomas.[174] Thus one of the reasons for including them in this research is to evaluate Thomas's enduring influence in the official teachings of the Church. The Catechism also refers to Saint Thomas when teaching and defining the notion of natural law.[175] The Catechism again echoes Saint Thomas when asserting, "It belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions must be governed by reason."[176] The Catechism retains, by direct quote, Aquinas's explanation of mortal and venial sins,[177] thus further highlighting his powerful influence on Catholic moral theology.

This section has clearly researched, through examples, the influence of Saint Thomas Aquinas in official Catholic doctrine throughout the centuries until very recent times. Even if the Catholic Church might not accord equal value to all of his teachings, his work is, for the most part, embraced with enthusiasm in many official documents. Of course, Saint Thomas is never criticized in official church documents. Such documents do not allow for debate, because debate precedes the publication of official texts. These official texts are intended to impart authoritative teachings, often in order to settle a debate or to clarify ambiguities. Thomas is often the central and final authority in official church teachings.

Contemporary Theologians

This section highlights Thomas's influence on Catholic doctrine in general and his influence on Catholic sexual ethics in particular. Of course there is no attempt to document the myriad of Catholic authors and theologians who simply expose or defend

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[174]*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994), para. 1804-1829.

[175]Ibid., nos. 1951, 1955, and 1976.

[176]Ibid., no. 1767. Reference to Saint Thomas is given as follows: I-II, 24, 3.

the teachings of Saint Thomas throughout the centuries. Many of these authors appear to give Thomas an aura of infallibility and seem unable or unwilling to offer a critical evaluation of his work. These theologians seek to teach the Catholic faith through the eyes of Saint Thomas, without any critical content, for Thomas is simply regarded as the norm in all of theology. An example of such unquestioning loyalty is found in the following text: "For we think that what St. Thomas says is, by and large, so true that he needs no defense from us. All he needs is the justice of an accurate and faithful report of his teaching in a language which is intelligible to a contemporary audience."[178]

Although there are still diehard Thomists who would not change an iota of his teachings, other scholars readily question them. Dissent from established teaching is not welcome by the Vatican; however, the Church allows theological discussion on points that have not yet been clearly defined by the Magisterium. This discussion assists the Vatican in its teaching office. Hence, I will assess Thomas's influence, as well as to offer some critique, with the assistance of contemporary theologians who do not necessarily agree with Thomas. Such discussion might also lead to questioning of the Roman Church's current teachings, with which Thomas is often identified.

Contemporary theologians seem to have the most difficulty with Thomas's concept of natural law as it is applied to sexual ethics. Lisa Sowle Cahill writes, "The characteristic Catholic approach to questions of ethics has for several centuries been based on Thomas Aquinas's hypothesis of a 'natural moral law.'"[179] This statement confirms the influence of Saint Thomas and establishes the *point départ* for Cahill's

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[177]Ibid., no. 1856. The reference to Saint Thomas is I-II, 88, 2, corp. art.

[178]Peter A. Redpath, *The Moral Wisdom of St. Thomas: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), x.

critique of traditional Catholic sexual teachings. Cahill observes that Thomas's insistence that the exclusive end of sexual intercourse is the procreation of children is too narrow. However, she assesses Thomas positively in these terms: "Perhaps the most important contribution of Aquinas to the theology and ethics of marriage—one which deserves attention—is his description of marriage as the 'greatest friendship' (*Summa Contra Gentiles* III/2.123)."[180] She also celebrates Thomas's appreciation "for the interpersonal dimensions of marriage, and the contribution that sexuality makes to this relationship."[181] Cahill further observes that the Catholic Church has recently distanced itself from Aquinas's views on marriage and sexuality by affirming the concept of responsible parenthood, and by supporting the concept of natural family planning.

Jack Dominian also has something to say about the influence of Thomas and his concept of natural law:

> Turning to natural law, which has been such a powerful force in the shaping of sexual morality, we come across a view developed by Thomas Aquinas which eventually became the standard argument in Catholic moral theology against premarital sex: that it is opposed to the natural purpose of sexual intercourse, which needs a stable marriage unit—the generation and education of children. Perhaps more than any other, however, this argument has lost its force today.[182]

This text clearly establishes the link between Thomas Aquinas, natural law, and Catholic traditional sexual ethics, and it challenges Thomas's views on premarital sex. The author continues by arguing that there is more to sexuality than the physical dimension and the upbringing of children.

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[179]Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Current Teaching on Sexual Ethics," in Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, ed., *Dialogue about Catholic Sexual Teaching,* Readings in Moral Theology, no. 8 (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 527.

[180]Ibid.

[181]Ibid.

[182]Jack Dominian, "Marriage Under Threat," in *Dialogue about Catholic Sexual Teaching,* 448.

As stated earlier, the concept of natural law is too narrow to explain all the complexities of a sexual relationship, even within marriage. Although he was censured by the Vatican, Charles Curran echoes the thinking of many Catholics when he observes that "a second inadequacy in the textbook natural law approach to sexuality is the over-emphasis on procreation as the primary end of marriage and also of sexuality."[183] Curran clearly describes the influence of Saint Thomas, specifically in Catholic moral theology. He writes, "Theology textbooks from Thomas Aquinas until a very few years ago divided the sins against sexuality into two classes—sins against nature (*peccata contra naturam*) and sins according to nature (*peccata iuxta naturam*)."[184] Curran confirms that the term *sins against nature* was meant to identify the sins of masturbation, homosexuality, and whatever else did not meet the procreative end of sexuality. Conversely, the sins according to nature respected the natural purpose of sexuality, but could lack other dimensions or add undesirable dimensions such as violence. These sins are, as we have seen, fornication, incest, and rape. This analysis is consistent with the study of lust as found earlier in the primary source.

Curran is also eloquent in further explicating Thomas's influence in reference to natural law. He writes, "Catholic theologians generally followed the teaching of St. Thomas, that sins against sexuality are grave because they go against an important order of nature or because the absence of marriage between the parties fails to provide the education of the child who might be born of such a union."[185] Curran challenges this understanding of natural law on the basis of two arguments. First, "Thomas Aquinas saw

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[183]Charles E. Curran, "Sexuality and Sin: A Current Appraisal," in Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, ed., *Dialogue about Catholic Sexual Teaching,* Readings in Moral Theology, no. 8, 1993, 407.

[184]Ibid., 406.

the generic grave malice of fornication in the harm done to the child who might be born from such a union. The use of contraception would destroy the primary argument of St. Thomas asserting the generic malice of fornication!"[186] Secondly, Curran criticizes the physicalist[187] orientation of Saint Thomas in this manner: "Thomas mentions that fornication is wrong because it is against the good of the offspring and the propagation of the human race. No mention is made of the unitive or love union aspect of sexuality."[188] This argument is crucial because, as previously stated, there is not much reference to love in Thomas's treatment of sexuality. It is rarely found in Augustine either.

Vincent Genovesi is another theologian who is of the same mind concerning premarital sex. He writes, "It is possible to imagine situations where such sexual expression will not in fact injure the welfare of a child, either because no child can or will be conceived or because the child can and will be properly educated without the marriage of his parents."[189]

Philip S. Keane, another author who assesses the legacy of Saint Thomas, also criticizes the fact that Roman Catholic teaching overemphasized the physical aspects of human sexuality to the exclusion of all other human factors. He states, "There have been fairly clear . . . physicalist leanings in Thomas, the Thomists, and in much of the Roman Catholic tradition in moral matters."[190] Consequently, according to these theologians, sexual actuation must be seen in a more global perspective, and not simply restricted to the physical dimension. It must include the psychological dimension and the dimension

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[185]Ibid., 408.

[186]Ibid., 414.

[187]In the context of morality, this term refers to an exclusive focus on the body, without taking into consideration the mental, spiritual, and social dimensions of the person.

[188]Curran, 415 n. 9.

[189]Vincent J. Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987), 169.

of love as well. Of course, in our current culture, we enjoy a wealth of biological and psychological scientific information about sexuality and other matters. Obviously, this was not available to Saint Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century! However, it is available to the Roman Catholic Church of today; it is fascinating to see how Thomas's teachings continue to endure, unchanged, in its official teachings, without the insights of other sciences.

The previous discussion focused on the inadequacies of Thomas's theory of natural law in relation to the procreative end of sexual activity. Referring to the other sexual vices, Curran affirms, "Thomas Aquinas has practically the same enumeration as found in more recent manuals of moral theology."[191] This text again illustrates the influence of Saint Thomas in Catholic sexual ethics.

Thomas Aquinas is included in a long list of theologians who have condemned masturbation throughout the ages. Lawler, Boyle, and May observe that "the Fathers of the Church, the medieval Scholastics, and all moral theologians until most recent times have been unanimous in condemning every deliberate act of masturbation as a serious violation of the virtue of chastity."[192] Then, the authors proceed to offer three arguments to question the traditional teaching on masturbation. We do not have to present these arguments here, but it will suffice to reiterate that Thomas's concept of natural law is under considerable siege, even when considering sins against nature, such as masturbation. Philip Keane also questions Thomas's opinion on masturbation, on the basis of a distinction that Thomas himself makes, in distinguishing the primary and

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[190]Philip S. Keane, *Sexual Morality: A Catholic Perspective* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 45.
[191]Curran, 415 n. 4.

secondary principles of natural law (*Summa Theologica* I-II, 94, a. 4). Thomas's distinction will not be explained here, but Keane's explanation gives us a glimpse of what it is. "Using this distinction, it becomes difficult to see how all the applications of Thomas's basic and still-sound theory on marriage as the best context for sexual expression could be construed as being other than secondary (and, therefore, changeable) elements in the natural law."[193] This means that in its first and most basic principles, natural law is changeless; it also means that in its application, the principles of natural law are valid in the majority of cases, but not always.

Curran's evaluation of Thomas and moral theologians who adopted his views can be summarized as follows: "The older view of the theologians rests upon a very inadequate notion of natural law which has exaggerated the importance attached to actions against sexuality."[194] This statement simply reinforces the arguments that question Thomas's concept of natural law. Curran adds, "The manualistic concept of natural law applied to questions of sexuality distorts the meaning and importance of sexuality because it sees sexuality only in terms of the physical, biological process. No mention is made of the psychological dimension which is just as objective an aspect of human sexuality as the physical."[195] Curran, along with several other others, has consistent difficulty with the interpretation of natural law by Thomas and many other Thomists after him.

Genovesi questions the Catholic prohibition of artificial birth control as going beyond Thomas's understanding of natural law. He writes, "However, in calling the

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[192]Ronald Lawler, Joseph M. Boyle Jr., and William E. May, "Masturbation," in *Dialogue about Catholic Sexual Teaching,* 361. Here reference is made to Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 154, a. 5.

[193]Keane, 65.

modern forms of artificial contraception which allow for insemination (into the vagina) unnatural, Catholic teaching seems to have gone beyond Thomas's understanding of the term, if not beyond his intention."[196] Although it is not our purpose to enter into the debate about birth control, that debate is one more indication that the interpretation of natural law within Catholic moral theology continues to raise questions.

This concludes my critique of Thomas's influence in Catholic sexual ethics. We have seen how the application of the concept of natural law presents some real difficulties for several theologians, especially in what concerns the ends of sexual intercourse and its related vices. The notion of natural law as it pertains to sexuality has little credibility with the average Catholic of today. Most pastors are uncomfortable with it, and it is rarely a topic for a sermon. Another area of difficulty, however, is Saint Thomas's view of women, which I will now consider.

Aquinas and Women

This section would not be complete without a brief section on Saint Thomas's view of women. We will focus on some of Thomas's statements about women, which present particular difficulties for some contemporary theologians. One of these statements is Thomas's agreement with Aristotle that "the female is a misbegotten male."[197] Thomas repeats this assertion in a different way: "As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex." And he adds, "The production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material

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[194]Curran, 412.
[195]Ibid.
[196]Genovesi, 276 n. 50.
[197]Aquinas, I, q. 92, a. 1, obj. 1.

indisposition."[198] Thomas further asserts that it was "necessary for woman to be made . . . as a 'helper' to man," solely "in the work of generation," and not in other works, "since man can be more efficiently helped by another man in other works."[199] This concept is almost identical to Augustine's view of women. In the same article, Thomas assigns "the active power of generation to the male sex, and the passive power to the female,"[200] implying an inferior role for women in the procreative process. Finally, Thomas concludes, "Woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates."[201]

Although these texts do not represent everything that Thomas wrote about women, they are clearly demeaning, and they place women in a position of inferiority in several spheres, including the biological and psychological. If we take Thomas seriously, as I believe the Catholic Church does, it is no wonder that women play a secondary role in Roman Catholic leadership. In the words of Rosemary Radford Reuther,

> women are seen as biologically defective, both physically and in their capacity for thought and moral self discipline. They are inherently servile, being to the male as the body is to its head. On these grounds, Thomas regarded women as inferior by nature and more prone to sin in the disorder of the fall. . . . Women, therefore, cannot exercise 'headship' in the Church or in society. Hence, only males can be priests and represent Christ.[202]

Women are subjugated to an inferior role, even in the order of creation. Moreover, both Augustine and Aquinas seem to imply that woman's only purpose is reproduction.

As does Augustine, Thomas simply assumes the biological and spiritual inferiority of women, without offering much explanation to support it. Kari Elizabeth

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[198]Ibid., a. 1, *ad* 1.
[199]Ibid., *Respondeo.*
[200]Ibid.
[201]Ibid., *ad* 2.

Børresen expresses this as follows: "Il est difficile de savoir comment il définit cette imperfection féminine qui, selon lui, atteint l'âme et le corps, mais pour laquelle il ne donne pas d'autre précision."[203] Børresen suspects Thomas of simply identifying with the culture, social structures, and morals of his time.

In today's context, Thomas's beliefs about the order of creation, and the use of natural law to justify his views relating to the alleged inferiority of women, are simply unacceptable. Given the magnitude of Thomas's influence, one can only guess what effect his thinking has had on Christianity in general, and the specific role he has played in the manner in which the Catholic Church continues to treat women. Curran writes, "The subordination of the female in sexuality and marriage as well as in all aspects of life has been a part of the Catholic tradition until recently. . . . From the earliest times, the woman was identified with what was considered inferior: the bodily, the corporeal, and the material. The male was identified with what was considered superior: the spiritual and the rational."[204] This only confirms what we already know. But what we cannot ignore is the crucial question of Thomas's influence on Catholic thought, specifically toward women. Although we cannot blame Thomas for all the patriarchies in the Christian churches, his thoughts and beliefs have permeated, consciously or unconsciously, many domineering and oppressing attitudes toward women. This argument is even more convincing when one considers the magnitude of his influence.

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[202]Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (NewYork: Seabury, 1975), 72.

[203]Kari Elizabeth Børresen, *Subordination et équivalence: Nature et rôle de la femme d'après Augustin et Thomas d'Aquin* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968), 142.

[204]Charles E. Curran, *The Living Tradition of Catholic Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 33-34.

Summary

This section researched the wealth of information found in the primary sources of Thomas Aquinas. Yet, we have not studied the structure of the human act, the process by which Aquinas arrives at the concept of natural law, the role of conscience, the nature of virtue, and the role of reason and will, in Aquinas's moral theology. Thomas appears to be more conciliatory and less pessimistic than Augustine about human nature and sexuality. Whereas Augustine speaks of the human will being incapable of choosing good as a result of the Fall, Thomas speaks of a weakened will in the context of his theory of virtues. However, both men arrive at similar conclusions when it comes to their treatment of shame and sin related to sexuality (even in marriage). Both men see the purpose of sexuality as being limited to procreation, and they have similar views in their treatment of women. Both establish virginity and celibacy as superior to marriage, and both imply that sexual activity creates distance between God and humans beings. Therefore, by implication, the priesthood and sexual activity are incompatible.

Thomas's fairly narrow focus on the cardinal virtue of temperance has enabled us to study in considerable detail the virtues and vices related to the sexual ethics of Thomas Aquinas. We have seen how Thomas values chastity and virginity, and why, partly as a result of his influence, the Catholic Church continues to value these virtues. Through the study of the vices related to sexuality, we have been able to identify how the concept of natural law is applied in Catholic sexual ethics. Today, no one would support the thesis that masturbation is more serious than violent rape (or incest) on the basis that the latter is more natural and the former against nature. Of course, Thomas is right in the sense that he follows his own preordained premises and simply arrives at their logical conclusion.

Using different criteria, however, he could be said to be totally wrong. It is within this context that we have seen a number of theologians disagree with the application of natural law as Thomas applies it to premarital sex and masturbation.

Thomas's view of women, as we have seen, also presents some difficult questions. There is no doubt that the philosophical premises and the reasoning process Thomas uses to arrive at such conclusions about women are faulty. And if he can be disputed so evidently in such a crucial question as the dignity and equality of women, how reliable are his conclusions in the other realms of his discussions? This question remains unanswered and left for further study.

Finally, I wish to affirm the significant genius of Saint Thomas on the one hand, and his seemingly limitless influence on the other. For it seems that the Roman Catholic Church has retained much of his teachings, and as we have seen, very little has changed in the field of sexual ethics and natural law since Saint Thomas. These narrow views on sexual ethics and the minimal role accorded to women illustrate the enduring power of patriarchal systems.

Chapter Summary

Research into the writings of Augustine and Aquinas, the two pillars of Roman Catholic theology and sexual ethics, revealed their great discomfort with sexuality. They both reflected and provided continuity with the sexual ambivalence of the prevailing Greek and Roman philosophies at the time when the Christian Church began to grow. This uneasiness continues to influence the Roman Church to this day, particularly in what pertains to the notion of priesthood and the place of women in the Church. The next chapter considers the increasing challenges offered to celibacy by the Protestant Reformers.

CHAPTER II.

CHALLENGES TO CELIBACY: THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The previous chapter presented the views of Augustine and Aquinas on celibacy, sexuality, and women. Although, as we have seen, there were few areas of resistance to the discipline of celibacy throughout the Latin world, Rome imposed a universal law of celibacy in the twelfth century. We have seen also that Augustine and Aquinas were, and still are, the two pillars of Roman Catholic theology and morality. The current chapter presents some strong challenges to the discipline of celibacy through the writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin, whom I identify as the two pillars of Reformation theology and moral discipline.

Martin Luther

The purpose of this section is to examine the validity of monastic vows and clerical celibacy in light of Martin Luther's position on these issues. While keeping in mind the confines of such a brief study, it is possible to document directly from the primary sources some key concepts of Luther's thought and writings on these subjects. As an Augustinian monk, Luther had obviously accepted and claimed to have practised the monastic vows. What were the theological, social, psychological, and spiritual changes that occurred in Luther's life that led him to leave his Augustinian order and marry? What legacy did he leave to his followers in these matters?[1]

Through documentation and dialogue with authors who have studied and commented on Luther's thinking on vows and celibacy, I hope to uncover some answers to these questions. The topic has a high degree of relevance for our current society and for most Christian churches.

Contemporary Christian churches in North America and elsewhere are confronting new and revolutionary changes in societal values in regard to human sexuality. The challenge comes from a more permissive, and perhaps a hedonistic, secular society, which is seen by some to promote a utilitarian, materialistic approach to sexuality.

No less formidable is the pressure from within the churches by their own members: The traditional restrictions that prevented women from being admitted to ordained ministries have been lifted in several denominations, and homosexuals are claiming the right to be ordained, while practising their sexuality. The experience of

several mainline churches (e.g., Anglican, Lutheran) has produced many well-respected female priests and ministers. The ongoing debate and controversy in the United Church of Canada regarding the ordination of homosexuals is evidence of a profound change of paradigm regarding sexuality, thus raising questions that would hardly have been whispered about 20 years ago. How would Luther respond to these issues? Is it possible to surmise what he would teach and preach today about these matters?

On the other side of the debate are the staunch and unrelenting official position of the Roman Catholic Church pertaining to chastity in general, and the maintenance of the rule of celibacy for its diocesan clergy in particular. Within, as well as outside the Catholic Church, the debate over gender issues and the finality of sexuality continues to rage: the ordination of women, married men, and homosexuals, not to mention many broader issues such as abortion and premarital sex. In all of these examples, we find individuals and groups who favour a re-examination of the issues of gender and sexual orientation, while others remain steadfastly opposed to any change either in doctrine or in practice.

In the last few decades, the Roman Catholic Church experienced a great exodus of priests and nuns, especially after Pope Paul VI's encyclical, "Humanae Vitae." In recent years, a German psychoanalyst and priest, Eugen Drewermann, has written extensively about the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, energetically and sometimes bitterly

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[1]For an opinion on the current discussions regarding matters of sexuality by Lutherans in America, see Leonard Klein, "Lutherans in Sexual Commotion," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Life,* no. 43 (May 1994): 31-38.

attacking the Church's teaching about these issues.[2] His criticism is mainly aimed at what he perceives to be distortions of Scripture passages, contradictions between the example given by Jesus—which is frequently used as a basis from which to justify celibacy—and what he perceives to be the manipulation of candidates to the priesthood, not so much to prepare them to serve God, but to serve the Church as a heartless institution. Yet, many Roman Catholic priests and laypersons who wish to enter into the arena in order to debate these questions find very little response or consolation when attempting to do so. Do these occurrences constitute a vindication of Luther's thought and position? Are there sufficient theological and scriptural bases in these discussions to enter into a dialogue with Luther on these contemporary questions? While being conscious of the limits imposed by the scope of this section, I will research the possibility of answering these questions.

Luther's Views on Monastic Vows and Clerical Celibacy

Luther's most obvious and extensive treatise on monastic vows and priestly celibacy is "The Judgement of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows,"[3] which he wrote during his stay at the Wartburg.[4] This work was intended to encourage and support those who were thinking of leaving the monasteries. Quoting Psalm 76:11,[5] Luther affirms that the command to offer vows was instituted by divine authority.[6] The major question for Luther is not to argue against all vows, but to determine "which vows are godly, good,

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[2]Eugen Drewermann, *Fonctionnaires de Dieu,* trans. Francis Piquerez and Eugène Wéber (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993).

[3]Martin Luther, "The Judgement of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows," in *Luther's Works,* ed. James Atkinson and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 44:251-400.

[4]A German castle where Luther was brought after having been abducted by friends who feared for his safety.

[5]"Make your vows and keep them!" (R.S.V.); *Luther's Works,* 44:252.

[6]Ibid.

and pleasing to God. . . . Further we are trying to show how we may distinguish which vows are ungodly, evil, and displeasing to God."[7] Having established this conviction at the outset, Luther then proceeds to explain why monastic vows should be rejected as unpleasing to God. The following paragraphs assess critically the major points of his thinking on these matters.

Monastic Vows Are Contrary to the Word of God

In a complex discussion, Luther asserts that those who take vows do so on the pretext that they are obeying evangelical counsels, which in reality they are transforming into a precept or commandment:

> If celibacy is an evangelical counsel, what is the sense of your making a vow that goes beyond the gospel and makes a rigid commandment out of a counsel? For now you live not according to the gospel but beyond it. In holding this you even live contrary to the gospel and no longer have a counsel. If you obey the gospel, you ought to regard celibacy as a matter of free choice; if you do not hold it as a matter of free choice, you are not obeying to the gospel. It is quite impossible to make an evangelical counsel into a precept, and it is equally impossible for your vow to be a counsel. A vow of chastity, therefore, is diametrically opposed to the gospel.[8]

Luther's discussion in the above paragraph constitutes the basis of his thesis on monastic vows. If God proposes something as an option, no earthly authority has the right to impose it as a way of life. Indeed, Luther draws abundantly on Scripture passages to support his position. Christ said, "He who is able to receive this precept, let him receive it" (Mt. 19:12), and, "Not all can receive this precept" (Mt. 19:11); according to Luther, Jesus was not encouraging celibacy but rather discouraged it: "Are these not the words of someone who prefers to *advise against* [emphasis mine] virginity and celibacy and

[7]Ibid.
[8]Ibid., 262.

discourage their application?"[9] Although Luther acknowledges the validity of the evangelical counsels as an option offered by God, he is strongly convinced that it is an error and a sin to transform them into precepts or commandments. Therefore, Luther acknowledges false praise of celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7:32 and Christ's praise of eunuchs in Matthew 19:12.

True to his thesis of justification by faith alone, Luther argues that the unmarried state in itself has no perfection or redemptive value: "Thus Christ praises eunuchs . . . because they castrate themselves for the kingdom of heaven but not for the sake of the kingdom of heaven in the sense that they are saved by their chastity, otherwise everybody would have to be castrated before they could enter the kingdom. Faith alone saves."[10]

Monastic Vows Are Against Faith

Using the same argument that man is justified by faith alone, Luther proceeds to explain that monastic vows are against the Christian faith. His argument is that persons who make vows, by the simple fact that they make them, express doubt in God's redemptive grace; this gives further credence to his conviction that vows are against faith:

> But God has commanded us to put our whole trust in his mercy, and with utter certainty and without any doubt to have faith that both we ourselves and all our works are pleasing to him not because of our worthiness or merit, but because of his goodness. . . . On the other hand, the kind of faith that does not believe . . . that both it and his works are pleasing to God, devastates the conscience and sins against it.[11]

And further: "Vows and the works of vows are but law and words. They are not faith, nor do they issue from faith, for what else is a vow but some kind of law?"[12] Luther further

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[9]Ibid., 261.
[10]Ibid., 264.
[11]Ibid., 277.
[12]Ibid., 280.

explains that those who take vows do so in the hope that "their good life will earn them salvation."[13]

Thus, Luther strongly advocates that persons who have pronounced monastic vows, as well as diocesan priests (who do not make vows but who are required to be celibate in order to become priests), should consider themselves absolved from their vows and promises: "I am bold enough to declare that all monks be absolved from their vows since they are unacceptable and worthless in the sight of God."[14]

In this, his authority comes from studying Paul's letter to Timothy (I Tim. 4:1-3): "In the last days some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits of doctrines of devils, who speak lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience burned, forbidding people to marry, making them abstain from meats which God created to be received for thanksgiving by the faithful."[15]

Monastic Vows Are Against the Freedom of the Gospel

Luther continues his thesis by saying vows are contrary to evangelical freedom because they bind the conscience of those who make them: "They do nothing else but ensnare consciences in their own works and take them away from Christ, after having first destroyed their freedom as well as any teaching or knowledge of freedom."[16] And in reference to celibacy as a new and unacceptable law,

> He never wanted celibacy to be made obligatory but left it a matter of free choice. God did not want it to take on the nature of sin if someone chose to marry. Yet by your vow you make celibacy lifelong, as well as obligatory under the law to a point that what else is there to do then but to demonstrate here that the vows of the religious as well as the whole idea

[13]Ibid., 280.
[14]Ibid., 282.
[15]Ibid.
[16]Ibid., 300.

of monasticism are against the freedom of the gospel, and are forbidden by divine commands?[17]

On the contrary, says Luther, what is truly sinful is to violate the freedom established by divine providence. "You may take and keep all the vows you like, as long as you do no violence to the freedom commanded by God."[18] And finally, "Life-long poverty, obedience and chastity may be observed, but cannot be vowed, taught, or imposed. The freedom of the gospel may still be retained by observing these things . . . but as soon as you teach them, vow them, and demand them, then evangelical freedom is lost."[19] Again, we see Luther's heavy and exclusive reliance on Scripture, including Paul, but most especially the freeing spirit of the gospel, in order to refute the practice of monastic vows. These forceful words and arguments illustrate clearly the principles that guide his reasoning and convictions.

Monastic Vows Are Against God's Commandments, Love, Common Sense, and Reason

In continuing his treatise, Luther develops the idea that vows are contrary to the commandments of God.[20] He argues that "monastic vows violate the first commandment in a number of ways. They displace faith with works; they elevate the founders of religious orders above Christ himself"[21] He further argues that "vows are against love"[22] because "they not only deny the Christian's responsibility and obligation to his neighbour, they actually impede it. They prevent the son from caring for his parents and

[17]Ibid., 310-311.
[18]Ibid., 311.
[19]Ibid., 315.
[20]Ibid., 317.
[21]Ibid., 249.
[22]Ibid., 326.

exonerate those who have taken vows from all those works of mercy and love which Christ has enjoined upon all."[23]

Luther further builds his treatise by adding that vows are "contrary to common sense and reason."[24] In this discussion, he demonstrates that "where for some reason it is impossible to keep a vow . . . a dispensation can be granted."[25] Here he refers to the impossibility of keeping the vows of poverty and obedience when one is sick or imprisoned or for other reasons. "But there is no dispensation in the matter of celibacy. This one monastic vow does more than anything else to torture body and soul."[26]

Possibly one of the most forceful ideas that Luther uses to eliminate monastic vows and celibacy is a quote from the Book of Samuel: "Obedience is better than sacrifice."[27] In commenting this passage he adds, "They say that the man who vows to enter monastic life is actually offering himself as a sacrifice to God, but the Lord says that he abhors such sacrifice if it contravenes obedience to his commandment."[28]

Further Statements by Luther

Luther has written about monastic vows and clerical celibacy in several other books and passages. However, these texts do not constitute formal treatment of these subjects. They are often a repetition of what has already been said elsewhere or an application of his opinions to particular circumstances. Perhaps the most telling example of what is meant here can be found in the Smalcald Articles, which were written in 1538 after Luther's treatise on monastic vows:

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[23]Ibid., 249.
[24]Ibid., 336.
[25]Ibid., 249.
[26]Ibid., 249.
[27]I Sam. 15:22.
[28]*Luther's Works,* 44:329.

> The Papists had neither authority nor right to prohibit marriage and burden the divine estate of priests with perpetual celibacy. On the contrary they acted like anti-Christian, tyrannical, and wicked scoundrels, and thereby they gave occasion for all sorts of horrible, abominable, and countless sins, in which they are still involved. As little as the power has been given to us, to make a woman out of a man, or a man out of a woman, or abolish distinctions of sex altogether, so little have they had the power to separate such creatures of God or forbid them to live together honestly in marriage. We are therefore unwilling to consent to their abominable celibacy, nor shall we suffer it. On the contrary, we desire marriage to be free, as God ordained and instituted it, and we shall not disrupt or hinder God's work, for Paul said that to do so is a doctrine of demons.[29]

This passage is one of the most scathing encountered in this research, although it may be argued that some are equally and even more indicting and brutal. It is also a sample of the polemic style, which was used in the 16th century, not only by Luther, but by his allies and foes as well. In reviewing other works—"On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church,"[30] "Against the Roman Papacy an Institution of the Devil,"[31] "An Exhortation to the Knights of the Teutonic Order that They Lay Aside False Chastity and Assume the True Christian Wedlock,"[32] and several other books or tracts—one can find many passages that are interesting for their polemic content (which can also become irksome after a while). There are passages that serve to re-emphasize a particular point of view, but they are not fundamentally different from Luther's position as critiqued in the preceding pages.

Critique and Assessment of Luther's Position

Hundreds of volumes have been written throughout history regarding Luther's theology. These can be approached through many avenues and disciplines such as

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[29]*Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings,* ed. Timothy F. Lull (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1989), 533.

[30]Ibid., 267.

[31]*Luther's Works,* 41:263-376.

[32]Ibid., 45:141-158.

psychology, sociology, spirituality, and obviously theology. Regardless of one's position, Luther's genius and courage are to be admired. Throughout history, Luther has been both lauded and condemned. On the positive side, he challenged the Church to ground its position more clearly in the Bible. This he did with tremendous passion and energy; yet, he did so from an individualistic and subjective perspective that alienated his contemporaries and, of course, the institutional Church.

Moreover, Luther did not appreciate that the gospel does not uniformly identify the shape of the Church for the centuries to come. He did not recognize that, in interpreting and applying the Bible, the contemporary context plays a crucial role. He also neglected to observe that in the Early Church during the persecutions, and in the Middle Ages during the missionary effort, the monastic orders and celibate lifestyle had been positively creative and redemptive. It is thus easy to understand why the confrontation between Luther and his adversaries became so intense. Because Luther was considered a heretic (for which the punishment was death), Luther was condemned to death. This only further convinced him that he was right.

The question still before us is whether monasticism and clerical celibacy are still relevant today. Is the Catholic interpretation of the Bible in regard to the evangelical counsels sufficient to close the debate? Both Catholics and Protestants have revisited this question in the light of modern social sciences, but no concrete change in position can be credited to this research and dialogue. The following sections critically assess the positive and negative characteristics of Luther's legacy.

Luther's General Impact on Catholicism

It is safe to assume that Luther's strong and energetic attacks on the Roman Catholic Church have had a profound effect on this Church's view of itself, which in turn led it to its own reformation process, beginning with the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Obviously, the tone of the Reformation did not allow for friendly dialogue. Positions became rigid, exclusive, and rejecting of one another for the next four centuries. Ecumenism as a dialogical discipline has existed only in the past few decades. Luther's impact on Catholicism is very difficult to assess with certainty. Nonetheless, the recently published *Catechism of the Catholic Church*[33] is an extremely valuable instrument for studying the Roman Catholic Church's current official teachings; it is a compendium of doctrinal positions on a wide range of matters of faith and morals. One can find therein an excellent account of the New Law of Love as found in the New Testament:

> The New Law [Jesus' commandment to love one another] is called a *law of love* because it exhorts us to act out of the love infused by the Holy Spirit, rather than from fear; a *law of grace,* because it confers the strength of grace to act, by means of faith and the sacraments; a *law of freedom,* because it sets us free from the ritual and juridical observances of the Old Law [and] inclines us to act spontaneously by the prompting of charity.[34]

This language is ironically similar to the argument that Luther used to advocate the elimination of vows, but in a reverse manner. The Catechism, also quoting Scripture, (especially Paul), teaches that the New Law of the New Testament frees Christians from the old law of fear and opens ways for the ultimate giving of self in charity.

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[33]*Catechism,* para. 1972.
[34]Ibid.

The above argument opens the way for a specific teaching regarding monastic vows, which are referred to by the broader term of *evangelical counsels:*[35]

> Besides its precepts, the New Law also includes the *evangelical counsels.* The traditional distinction between God's commandments and the evangelical counsels is drawn in relation to charity, the perfection of Christian life. The precepts are intended to remove whatever is incompatible with charity. The aim of the counsels is to remove whatever might hinder the development of charity, even if it is not contrary to it.[36]

It is also interesting to note that the Catechism, in this particular reference, draws a careful distinction between counsel and commandments. This was a major point in Luther's treatise. One may be tempted to see in this a direct response to Luther, but it is impossible to prove. Unfortunately, the Catechism refers mainly to classical or medieval sources and does not take into account the more recent ecumenical dialogues between Protestants and Catholics. It does not refer to its own contemporary theologians either. In this perspective, the Catechism raises questions as to its own credibility and relevance, because it does not include the most recent insights gained by authoritative reflection and ecumenical dialogue. It is therefore in danger of being already outdated, although many Catholics would see in it the Magisterium's final word, directly related to papal infallibility.

By now, it must be obvious to the reader that Luther has not influenced the substance of the Roman Church's teaching on monastic vows. However, one is permitted

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[35]Monks today are characterized by persons who profess a very specific type of religious life, usually contemplative or semicontemplative, living in cloistered convents called monasteries under a fairly strict rule with scheduled times of communal prayer and works. They are relatively few, in comparison to the thousands of religious orders or congregations who are active in all facets of life, who work as other people do in the world and society, and who also profess the evangelical counsels. Of late, the Roman Catholic Church has encouraged the development of *secular institutes* in which persons who are fully integrated in society profess the evangelical counsels without belonging to a religious community; they meet occasionally for prayer, mutual support, and planning of their missionary activities. Still others observe the counsels on an entirely private basis without reference to any structure whatsoever.

to think that Luther might have contributed by challenging the Church to reformulate its position and to modify the manner and reasons for practising the evangelical counsels. Specifically, the Catechism is careful to present the vows as a consequence of one's understanding of Christian love as taught by Christ and the gospel: willingness and freedom to live one's life totally dedicated in joyful and loving service to God and humankind. This perspective is very different from one that would view monastic vows and clerical celibacy simply as a means of achieving or earning one's salvation through works; although it is possible that some individuals would subscribe to the latter idea, it is doubtful that one would find this motivation in the Roman Church's official teachings today.

A Contemporary Protestant Assessment of Luther's Position

In a brilliant work,[37] René Esnault, a French Protestant theologian,[38] offers a critique of Luther's views on several fronts. He questions whether Luther's assessment of monastic vows can speak about the experience of the whole Church or are valid only within the context of his experience with the Augustinian Order in medieval Germany:

> Le réformateur a-t-il embrassé tout le champs des questions posées par la vie monastique ou est-il resté confiné dans les limites d'une situation particulière: celle l'institution votive au XVIe siècle, et encore dans une des zones seulement de cette dernière: la province allemande de l'ordre des Ermites de Saint-Augustin, sous le vicariat encore récent d'André Proles et celui de Jean Staupitz? Autrement dit, si tel était le cas, Luther a-t-il vraiment pu passer à des conclusions applicables au monachisme dans son ensemble?[39]

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[36]*Catechism,* para. 1973.
[37]René Esnault, *Luther et le monachisme aujourd'hui* (Paris: Labor et Fides, 1964).
[38]Esnault is a Pastor of *L'Église réformée de France.*
[39]Esnault, 21.

Esnault also describes the development of monastic orders within Protestantism as necessary for its own internal equilibrium and vitality. In quoting Antoine Vermeil, the founder of a Protestant feminine order of deaconesses in the last century, he writes:

> Le fondateur, 'le pasteur Antoine Vermeil, prit peu à peu conscience d'une grave lacune dans les éléments constitutifs des Églises protestantes de son temps: c'était l'absence de communautés religieuses.' 'C'est ainsi que . . . Vermeil résolut de travailler à restaurer dans nos Églises 'les ordres religieux de femmes'. 'C'était là expliquait-il, non pas adjoindre à nos Églises une richesse suppplémentaire et facultative, mais y intégrer un élément vital qui manquait à son équilibre interne, à sa vigueur et à son rayonnement.
>
> Ces communautés ont depuis longtemps conquis leur place dans la vie du protestantisme et celui qui s'aviserait aujourd'hui de la contester, comme elle le fut aux origines, ne pourrait le faire sans montrer qu'il ignore ou qu'il méprise un fruit remarquable parmi nous de la foi et de la charité chrétiennes.[40]

In this text, the author eloquently recognizes the concept and development of religious communities within Protestantism; he further sees them as vital for its Churches. Indeed, he says, anyone who denies this would ignore a remarkable fruit of Christian faith and love! Of course, religious communities within Protestantism are still relatively rare; they have not developed without protest from the larger Protestant community, but they do exist. A most recent example is the flourishing Ecumenical Community of Taizé in France, which this writer had the privilege of visiting in the summer of 1988.[41]

Current Dissent within the Roman Church

Having given a cursory glance at Catholic and Protestant responses to Luther's position on monastic vows, it seems useful to look at the criticisms that are currently directed at the Catholic Church by some of its contemporary theologians. In the following

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[40]Ibid., 18.

[41]The members of this community profess the evangelical counsels; the community is mainly composed of Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists who live a life of dedicated service, especially to the youth of the world.

paragraphs, I will explain how some Catholics still protest their Church's attitude toward monastic vows and clerical celibacy. As we will see, the debate does not centre so much on the content and validity of vows, but in the exercise of power in regulating them.

In recent years, Catholics around the world have questioned many of the official positions of their church, particularly in matters of sexuality. Eugen Drewermann,[42] in a major work that has yet to be translated into English, praises Luther's understanding of Paul in aspiring to free humankind from the guilt of law and sin:

> En vérité, l'oeuvre et la vie de Paul étaient tout à fait à l'opposé des angoisses masochistes du péché; il visait à libérer de la pratique mortifère de la loi. Cela n'avait rien à voir avec la façon dont on s'est mis à inculquer aux gens des sentiments de culpabilité, les rendant tributaires de prêtres dont le pardon se substituait à la miséricorde divine. Et c'est en se réclamant de lui que, réagissant contre une domination sacerdotale qu'il jugeait outrageusement indécente, Martin Luther redécouvrit la relation directe de chacun de nous avec son Dieu.[43]

Drewermann refers to the clergy-dominated Church of Rome, which he perceives to transform and impose the dogmas of the Church and even the gospel into laws to be observed, thus stifling the spirituality and creativity of its members, especially the priests. In the passage quoted above, he praises Paul and Luther: the former for his efforts to teach freedom from the law, and the latter for promoting a personal and intimate relationship with God. In doing this, Drewermann echoes the convictions of many Roman Catholics today who are feeling oppressed by the institutional church and who, in keeping with the teachings of Paul and Luther, would like to be free from the very laws that the church continues to impose on them, especially in regard to conjugal morality, the ordination of women, ordination of married men, and priestly celibacy. In this sense,

Luther's teaching is still very relevant and continues to influence the Church. Indeed, the back cover of Drewermann's book describes him as a "new Luther."

In her assessment of Luther's influence on Catholic sexual morality,[44] Uta Ranke-Heinemann, a German Roman Catholic feminist theologian, agrees that

> Luther did repeat all the pleasure-hating nonsense of the Christian past, mostly in its Early Scholastic . . . form. But nevertheless he discarded it . . . ; despite his Augustinian roots and his stress on original sin, Luther did introduce some essential progress in sexual morality. . . . Luther's trailblazing achievement in this area . . . was the fact that he did away with the unnatural subordination of the married state to celibacy.[45]

Ranke-Heinemann gives further credit to Luther for "levelling . . . the classification between venial and mortal sin . . . thereby paving the way for liberalization"[46] and decries the Council of Trent's demand "that sins had to be reported with information about their kind, number of times committed and the circumstances in question."[47]

The foregoing discussions illustrate very well that some contemporary Catholic theologians are still arguing against the Roman Catholic Church's position on sexual matters in general and monastic vows and celibacy in particular. This is an indication that the essence of Luther's teachings are validated by many Roman Catholics of today; it may be assumed that these theologians are saying what many others do not dare say publicly.

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[42]A German psychoanalyst and Roman Catholic priest whose teachings and writings have been strongly questioned by the Vatican to the extent that he is no longer authorized to teach in Catholic Universities.

[43]Drewermann, 63.

Historical Assessment of Luther's Teachings

In his documentation of the history of celibacy, Henry C. Lea amply described the lack of discipline of the clergy and the sociopolitical circumstances that prepared the Reformation.[48] Lea describes the sixteenth century as "irreverential."[49] The very first line of his chapter entitled "The Reformation in Germany" is quite revealing of the context in which Luther lived: "The opening of the sixteenth century witnessed an ominous breaking down of the landmarks of thought."[50] The disintegration of these landmarks, too complex to describe in detail here, nonetheless contributed to set the stage for the liberalization of thought in the letters, sciences, arts, education, politics, commerce, and of course religion, which could not expect to escape these social forces. It is indeed in this context that "Luther became Luther;" we may thus conclude that he was simply faithful to himself and to his time. However, Luther had the personality to become a strong agent of confrontation, change, and reform:

> It would be a mistake to credit Luther with the Reformation. His bold spirit and masculine character gave to him the front place, and drew around him the less daring minds who were glad to have a leader to whom to refer their doubts, and on whom their responsibility might partly rest; yet Luther was but the exponent of a public sentiment which had long been gaining strength, and which in any case would not have lacked expression. In that great movement of the human mind he was not the cause, but the instrument.[51]

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[44]Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of God: Women, Sexuality, and the Catholic Church,* trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 257-263.

[45]Ibid., 257-258.

[46]Ibid., 258.

[47]Ibid., 325.

[48]Henry C. Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy,* 3d ed. rev. (Williams and Norgate, London, 1907), 2:1-30.

[49]Ibid., v.

[50]Ibid., 31.

[51]Ibid., 35.

Lea's assessment is very helpful in putting Luther in the context in which he lived. It may also help us to understand the polemic style of interaction between Luther and his foes outside the parameters of the critical methods used today.

Psychological Assessment of Luther's Personality

Some of Luther's critics have dismissed him as a troubled, neurotic, and scrupulous monk who was preoccupied with childhood conflicts and demons. Although one would agree that he might have been, it would be totally unfair to dismiss him totally on that basis. Indeed, history has taught us many times that one cannot succeed or be noticed unless hounded by some sort of passion or obsession. Such a person can be alternately labelled as a genius, a saint, or simply crazy. Eric Erikson's work is helpful for shedding some light on Luther's personality, although his assessment might appear too simplistic and irrelevant to some:

> But it seems certain, and is fully documented by his friends, that Luther in those years suffered from acute anxiety, and would wake up in a cold sweat ('the devil's bath,' as he called it); that he developed a phobia about the devil which in the way typical of obsessive ambivalence gradually included the fear that the very highest good, such as a shining image of Christ, might only be a devil's temptation; that he came to fear and even hate Christ . . . as one who came only to punish.[52]

Erikson is not hostile to Luther. On the contrary, he finds in Luther an interesting psychological and historical subject that one could study, possibly as a hobby and a challenge. On a psychological plane, one can surmise that Luther's objection to monastic vows and his subsequent marriage served mainly to resolve his sexual conflicts and to alleviate his neurotic guilt. But this writer believes that Luther's objections were much more profound; he had a profound passion for Scripture, theology, and life in all its

[52]Eric H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958), 148.

manifestations. This is what makes Luther an interesting character to meet, and one can always entertain the fantasy of having the joy and challenge of knowing him as a person.

Summary

This has been a demanding but rewarding research section. Luther's powerful arguments challenge us today. It would be interesting if one could reopen the dialogue with him on the topic of monastic vows, clerical celibacy, and marriage, as they are discussed and lived in our current religious and cultural context.

One of Luther's main objections to monastic vows was that they implied the notion of merits, something that he could not accept. One could easily agree with him, considering that celibacy is a gift from God and a loving response to that vocation. Of course, priests should not embrace celibacy to earn merits or to earn their salvation; nor should celibacy be demanded by legal mandate. Another major point of discussion would certainly be the exercise of authority that many Catholics still see as being too centralized in Rome and in the office of the papacy.

Luther was also very consistent with his thesis of justification by faith alone, and we are thus reminded of his theological battles with the proponents of indulgences, purgatory, and merits. It is not surprising, therefore, that he had strong objections to vows and celibacy, insofar as they implied the very notions that he rejected. Fortunately, the Roman Catholic Church has at least modified its presentation of these theological themes, with a strong emphasis on the need for the re-evangelization of the world, a theme that was frequent in Pope John Paul's sermons and writings.

On the other hand, Luther appears at times to be rather uncompromising, arrogant, and obsessed. Yet, his passion for the truth and his love of Scripture are commendable,

particularly in a religious context in which Scripture seemed to be largely ignored. His total rejection of any kind of consecrated life or practice of the evangelical counsels raises questions, particularly if one finds love and freedom in practising them. Possibly, Luther would modify his position today, even slightly, in light of a certain renewal of community religious life within the Protestant tradition, as documented previously. Nonetheless, he brought a refreshing new paradigm to the sexual mores of his day: "Only Luther, 1100 years [after Augustine], was strong and aware enough to challenge the Augustinian-platonist theological juggernaut with partial success."[53]

I would like to close with a quote from a contemporary Catholic theologian who has been likened to Luther:

> Les défenseurs de la vérité du Christ se sont montrés incapables de reconnaître en Martin Luther l'*homme*; de voir que, derrière les débats théologiques sur la grâce, le libre arbître et la justification, il y avait un croyant, avec ses angoisses, ses dépressions, son vif souci des âmes, son courage intellectuel et son irritation croissante devant le formalisme des clercs et leur manie de toujours avoir raison.[54]

This quote, applicable to Luther and his time, is also applicable today in the way that the Roman Church continues to demand submission and conformity to its teachings without giving sufficient respect to the persons whose humanity and legitimate aspirations as human beings are only too often ignored and devalued. Possibly the greatest tragedy resulting from the separation between Catholicism and Protestantism is the array of seemingly irreconcilable differences between the objective and the subjective dimensions in theology, Scripture, and human life. Let us hope that the current ecumenical dialogues

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[53] Raymond Lawrence, *The Poisoning of Eros: Sexual Values in Conflict* (New York: Augustine Moore Press, 1989), 131. This publication won the 1989 Book Award from the World Congress for Sexology.

[54] Drewermann, 148.

between Roman Catholics and Protestants will serve to bridge the gap that both sides have lost through the tribulations of history.

John Calvin

This section first focuses on the originality of John Calvin's concepts regarding the discipline of sacerdotal celibacy and then explores his views on Christian marriage and the role of women in such a marriage. Along with Martin Luther, John Calvin was one of the early Reformers, in the context of a movement that later became known as the Protestant Reformation. As was the case with Luther, much of the debate centred on differences with the Roman Church. The main primary source for the first part of this study will be Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion.*[55] Calvin's views regarding women will be gleaned primarily from his works as they are referred to in secondary sources.

The Discipline of Celibacy

Most Protestant Reformers appear to have rejected celibacy as a requirement from their ministers for social as well as religious reasons. Historical studies of the sixteenth century offer ample evidence that many priests were not faithful to their promise of celibacy; part of the Reformers' agenda was to rectify the discrepancy through a re-examination of the usefulness and validity of this discipline. In addition, Reformers like Calvin who wished to return to purity of doctrine were anxious to find scriptural bases for the doctrines of the Roman Church. The doctrines that were unclear or judged to be nonexistent in Scripture were rejected. Celibacy was a discipline that did not survive John Calvin's scrutiny. Let us now look at Calvin's personal convictions about this matter as they are expressed in his own words.

[55]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* vols. 20 and 21 of *The Library of Christian Classics,* ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Lewis Ford Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960).

Social Context for the Rejection of Celibacy

Calvin praises the traditional discipline within clergy ranks, and rightly so; it is fitting for clergy to set an example for the laity. Historically, there had been many rules, sanctions, and punishments meted out to erring clergy. However, Calvin describes the abuses of his contemporaries in these terms: "There is no need to relate how all this has fallen into disuse, since today nothing more unbridled and dissolute than this order can be imagined, and they have broken into such licence that the whole world cries out"[56] The licentiousness of the clergy in Calvin's time compels him to challenge the Church and call the clergy to conversion: "Therefore, whenever the defenders of this new tyranny seek the pretext of antiquity in defense of their celibacy, we shall have to require of them that they restore that ancient chastity in their priests."[57] And again: "But it is needless to speak of the extent to which fornication prevails among them unpunished; and how, relying on their foul celibacy, they have become callous to all crimes."[58] Through these words, it is easy to become convinced of Calvin's abhorrence of the clerical practices of his day.

Rejection of the Historical Argument for Celibacy

Calvin rejects the Roman contention that celibacy should be required. Noting that the Early Church did not require celibacy, he states, "It was an astonishing shamelessness on their part to peddle this ornament of chastity as something necessary."[59] He is equally indignant that the Church would defend its position by grounding its argument in ancient Church history: "This they did to the deep disgrace of the ancient church."[60]

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[56]Ibid., 21:1249.
[57]Ibid., 1253.
[58]Ibid., 1249.
[59]Ibid., 1252.
[60]Ibid.

Relying on the history of the Church, Calvin reverses the reasoning by referring to the fact that celibacy was not required in Apostolic Times: "For if they do not heed the apostles (they are accustomed sometimes to treat them with outright contempt), please, then, what will they do with all the ancient fathers, who certainly not only tolerated marriage in the order of bishops but also approved of it?"[61] He dismisses the alleged early development of celibacy in these terms: "Then those times followed when the too superstitious admiration of celibacy became prevalent."[62]

Referring to the Council of Nicaea, in which there was "agitation to require celibacy," Calvin writes, "What was decreed? Paphnutius's opinion was accepted, who declared that it was chastity for a man to cohabit with his own wife."[63] Calvin thus dismisses the claim that the ancient Church required celibacy: "Marriage remained sacred among them; and it caused them no shame, nor was it thought to cast any spot upon the ministry."[64]

Rejection of the Universal Requirement for Celibacy

Despite his many objections, Calvin grants that there was respect for celibacy in the ancient Church: "I admit that these regulations, because they bring reverence to the priesthood, were also received with great approbation in antiquity."[65] However, he rejects the imposition of the universal discipline of celibacy for three reasons: "But if my adversaries claim antiquity against me, my first answer is that this freedom of bishops to be married existed both under the apostles and for some centuries afterward."[66] Calvin ingeniously uses a reasoning that could embarrass the proponents of the Roman tradition: "We ought to hold the example of the earlier church of greater importance than to judge as

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[61]Ibid.
[62]Ibid.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Ibid.

unlawful or unseemly what then was accepted with praise and was customary."[67] Secondly, celibacy was not imposed universally despite the controversies about the value of virginity: "That age which with immoderate affection for virginity began to discriminate against marriage did not impose the law of celibacy upon priests as a thing necessary of itself, but because a celibate was preferred to a married man."[68] Thirdly, he argues that the Early Church did not force continence on all clergy: "They did not require it in such a way that by necessity and force they compelled celibacy of those who were not fitted to keep continence."[69]

In this context, Calvin expresses some understanding of the reasons for which certain priests did not keep their promise of celibacy: they simply could not. Thus, there was a crisis of conscience for those who were confronted with the dilemma of being called to ministry, and at the same time, being forced to promise celibacy. Yet, as we have seen, Calvin does not condone their lustful behaviour.

Calvin conveys another interesting idea. Celibacy should be a matter of personal choice and be valued for its usefulness to the Church rather than enforced by a universal law: "We shall have to admonish them once more not to claim as obligatory that which, being free, depends on its usefulness to the church."[70] These are some of the original ideas that Calvin promoted to his contemporaries regarding the discipline of clerical celibacy.

Rejection of Vows

By extension, Calvin applies the same reasoning to those who pronounce vows and who are not eligible for, or do not feel called to the priesthood: "Celibacy holds the first

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[65]Ibid.
[66]Ibid., 1252-1253.
[67]Ibid., 1253.
[68]Ibid.

place for insane boldness. For priests, monks and nuns, forgetful of their own infirmity, think themselves surely capable of celibacy. But by what oracle were they taught to maintain chastity throughout life, and take vows to this end?"[71] Furthermore, Calvin identifies continence as a transitional and circumstantial occurrence: "How confidently do they shake off for life that general calling, inasmuch as the gift of continence is more often given for a limited time, as occasion requires?"[72] He also deplores the valuing of celibacy at the expense of marriage. Indeed, not only do those who take vows refuse to heed the Word of God—"It is not good for man to be alone"[73]—and therefore act against human nature, but they also discredit marriage: "They not only dare do this, but dare also to call marriage 'pollution,' only to extol some sort of celibacy with wondrous praise."[74]

In a lengthy section reminiscent of Luther's treatise on monastic vows, Calvin refutes, one by one, the arguments of the Roman Church in favour of maintaining them.[75] Invoking Paul (I Tim. 4: 1-3), Calvin asserts, "The prohibition of marriage is the hypocrisy of demons"[76] and, supported by Hebrews 13:4,[77] he argues, "The Spirit declares marriage holy and honourable in all."[78] The following statement is chosen as a summary of Calvin's thinking on vows in general and monastic vows in particular: "It is a matter indeed to be deplored that the church, whose freedom was bought at the inestimable price of Christ's blood, has been thus oppressed by cruel tyranny and almost overwhelmed with a huge mass

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[69]Ibid.
[70]Ibid.
[71]Ibid., 1257.
[72]Ibid.
[73]Genesis 2:18.
[74]*Institutes of the Christian Religion,* 21:1257.
[75]Ibid., 1254-1276.
[76]Ibid., 1178.
[77]"Marriage must be honoured by all, and marriages must be kept undefiled, because the sexually immoral and adulterers will come under God's judgement" (New Jerusalem Bible).
[78]Calvin, 21:1178.

of traditions."[79] The context of this passage points to Calvin's disapproval of vows as a means of earning merits through one's sacrifices rather than relying on God's salvation through Christ's blood. We recall that the rejection of merits was also one of Luther's major arguments against celibacy.

This concludes our study of Calvin's thinking on clerical celibacy and vows. I have provided an overview of the historical and religious context in which Calvin's views were expressed. I have also examined the valuing of celibacy at the expense of marriage by the Roman Church. It will now be interesting to explore Calvin's views on marriage.

Marriage in Calvin's Theology

In this section we will study Calvin's views on marriage as a divine institution, which confers to it a very special dignity and some clear consequences as to its proper purpose. We will also explore Calvin's definition of a sacrament and his reasons for refusing to consider marriage as a sacrament.

The Dignity and Purpose of Marriage

Supported by Genesis 2:24[80] and Matthew 19:4,[81] Calvin unhesitatingly stresses, "All men admit that [marriage] was instituted by God."[82] Like Augustine and Paul before him, Calvin views marriage as a remedy for man's (and presumably woman's) lustful inclinations: "If his power to tame lust fails him, let him recognize that the Lord has now imposed the necessity of marriage upon him."[83]

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[79]Ibid., 1254.

[80]"This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and they become one flesh" (New Jerusalem Bible).

[81]"He answered, 'Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become flesh?* They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide' (New Jerusalem Bible).

[82]Calvin, 21:1481.

[83]Ibid., 20:407.

Quoting Paul in I Corinthians 7:9,[84] Calvin asserts that the "greater part of men are subject to incontinence" and that of "those who are so subject he enjoins all without exception to take refuge in that sole remedy with which to resist unchastity."[85] And those who find themselves in these circumstances and do not marry, commit a sin: "Therefore, if those who are incontinent neglect to cure their infirmity by this means, they sin even in not obeying the command of the apostle."[86]

This language is indeed reminiscent of Augustine's views on marriage, although not as extreme. Like Augustine, however, Calvin advises married couples as to the proper use of marriage: "Now if married couples recognize that their association is blessed by the Lord, they are thereby admonished not to pollute it with uncontrolled and dissolute lust."[87] In this context, Calvin continues to warn married couples to exercise restraint and respect for each other and for God's law in order to "not admit anything at all that is unworthy of the honorableness and temperance of marriage."[88] Now let us consider Calvin's theology of marriage as a sacrament.

Refutation of Marriage as Sacrament

As we have seen, Calvin affirms marriage as instituted by God and further declares, "Marriage is a good and holy ordinance of God."[89] In a lengthy section in which he discusses and rejects most of the sacraments of the Roman Church, Calvin gives us a further indication of his divergence with Rome by repudiating marriage as a sacrament. Indeed, confirming marriage as instituted by God does not designate it as a sacrament: "Farming, building, cobbling, and barbering are lawful ordinances of God, and yet are not

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[84]"But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. . . ." (New Jerusalem Bible).
[85]Calvin, 20:407.
[86]Ibid.
[87]Ibid.

sacraments."[90] Rejecting the historical argument, Calvin affirms that marriage was never celebrated "as a sacrament until the time of Gregory. And what sober man would have thought it such?"[91] What are his reasons? Part of the answer lies in Calvin's definition of a sacrament: "For it is required that a sacrament be not only a work of God but an outward ceremony appointed by God to confirm a promise. Even children can discern that there is no such thing in matrimony."[92] It is obvious that this definition excludes marriage as a sacrament if, for example, one compares it to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

In a brief but intense dismissal of scholastic (Sophist) reasoning, which focuses on the definition of signs and symbols as they relate to sacraments, Calvin pushes the argument to the limit: "There is nothing that by this reasoning will not be a sacrament. . . . In fact, *theft* [emphasis mine] will be a sacrament, inasmuch as it is written, 'The Day of the Lord is like a thief' [I Thess. 5:2, Vg]."[93] Drawing comparisons with scriptural symbols such as mustard seed, shepherd, vine, branches, and leaven, Calvin asserts, "Anyone who would classify such similitudes with the sacraments ought to be sent to a mental hospital."[94] Continuing with a discussion based on Ephesians 5:31-32,[95] in which he says Rome misinterpreted and interchanged the meaning of the terms *mystery* and *sacrament,* Calvin chooses the former term to deny marriage as a sacrament. In a diatribe against Rome's inconsistency, Calvin remarks, "Having graced marriage with the title of sacrament, to call it afterward uncleanness and pollution and carnal filth—what giddy levity is this? How absurd it is to bar

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[88]Ibid., 408.
[89]Ibid., 21:1481.
[90]Ibid.
[91]Ibid.
[92]Ibid.
[93]Ibid.
[94]Ibid., 1481-1482.

priests from this sacrament!"[96] In the same section, he points to another internal contradiction within Rome's theology: first, "they affirm that in the sacrament [of marriage] the grace of the Holy Spirit is conferred," and then, "they deny that the Holy Spirit is ever present in copulation."[97]

Bailey interprets and summarizes Calvin's teachings as follows:

> Calvin insisted that wedlock was a good, holy, and divine ordinance, but that God had appointed no external ceremony of a special grace-bearing character by means of which to confirm this promise . . . if the latter is indeed a sacrament . . . how, at the same time can it be unclean, polluted and carnally defiling—as writers of high repute in the Church have asserted?"[98]

Finally, Calvin terminates the debate as follows: "Thus you may say that they sought nothing but a den of abominations when they made a sacrament out of marriage."[99]

The preceding sections leave no doubt as to where Calvin stands on the dignity of marriage and its status as a sacrament. This concludes my discussion of Calvin's theology of marriage as it is found in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. His views are very succinctly focused on the rejection of celibacy and on the dignity but nonsacramentality of marriage.

Discussion Arising from Secondary Sources

In an extensive work that offers extremely valuable insights into the mores of the sixteenth century, André Biéler describes the circumstances that necessitated a renewal of the social and sexual customs of the times. Some of the reasons he cites for this decadence were war, the refusal of the clergy to accept the universal imposition of celibacy, the

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[95]"'This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh'. This mystery has great significance but I am applying it to Christ and the Church" (New Jerusalem Bible).

[96]Calvin, 21:1483.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *The Man-Woman Relation in Christian Thought* (London: Longmans, 1959), 178.

inconsistency of Rome's teachings and dogmas, the powerlessness of holy and pious Catholic religious and laity to change the system, the denigration of marriage, the lack of faith, prostitution, promiscuity, games, song, dance, clothing, gluttony, parental authority, houses of ill-repute, and the changing role of women.[100] It is within this context that Calvin wrote his *Institutes, Commentaries, Tracts and Sermons.*

Derrick Sherwin Bailey corroborates Biéler's perception of Calvin's primary reasons for rejecting celibacy: "Calvin made it clear that he disapproved only of vows of celibacy which are improperly regarded as acts of religious service, and are rashly undertaken by those who cannot keep them."[101] Likewise, he confirms Calvin's rejection of universal celibacy for scriptural reasons: "In particular, the imposition of celibacy is to be condemned; the Scriptures show that men have no right to forbid what God has left free."[102] Despite his rejection of celibacy, "Calvin . . . held nevertheless that virginity is essentially superior to marriage, and that if given by God as a virtue not embraced under compulsion, it should not be despised."[103] Paul K. Jewett confirms this perception that Calvin had a more moderate view of celibacy: "In expounding the seventh commandment, [Calvin] observes that celibacy is the gift of the few and marriage the guarantor of chastity in the many."[104] Calvin's position on celibacy and virginity thus seems to be more moderate than those of Luther and Augustine, whose beliefs were more extreme, albeit at opposite ends of the spectrum.

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[99]Calvin, 21:1484.

[100]André Biéler, *L'homme et la femme dans la morale Calviniste: La doctrine réformée sur l'amour, le mariage, le célibat, le divorce, l'adultère et la prostitutiton, considérée dans son cadre historique* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1963), 7-34.

[101]Bailey, 169.

[102]Ibid.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 29.

In this section, I will present Calvin's theology of man and woman as reflections of the image of God, the concepts of mutual and voluntary subjection, and the role and place of woman in the hierarchy of the couple. In addition, I will provide a glimpse of Calvin's opinions on the use of sexuality within marriage.

Although Calvin does not present a formal treatise on marriage or the role of women, several authors have found valuable references on these subjects in his writings. Claude-Marie Baldwin writes, "When seeking to address marriage in John Calvin's writings, we look in vain for treatises on this topic. . . . But it is in his sermons that Calvin's fullest expression appears. As the preacher addresses his parishioners in Geneva, he fills out his views in order to reach the common man and woman."[105]

In assessing Calvin's legacy, Bailey emphasizes that "in several respects Calvin's conception of marriage, and therefore of woman, was more original and affirmative than that of Luther. . . . Although he allowed that the propagation of the species is a special and characteristic end (*proprius finis*) of matrimony, he taught also that its primary purpose is rather social than generative."[106] This statement reiterates Calvin's originality when compared not only with Luther but also with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Quoting extensively from the French text of Calvin's *Commentaries on the Five Books of Moses*, Biéler concludes that Calvin views men and women as equal in the order of creation in the same way that God is a plurality of persons:

> A l'origine, l'homme et la femme ont été crées à l'image de Dieu. Cela veut dire qu'à la ressemblance de l'être divin, qui existe en plusieurs personnes dans l'unité de son essence, l'homme et la femme sont les manifestations du

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[105]Claude-Marie Baldwin, "Marriage in Calvin's Sermons," in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of John Calvin,* vol. 10 of *Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies,* ed. Robert V. Schnucker (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1988), 121.

[106]Bailey, 173.

> même être, la créature humaine. C'est dans cette dualité que se réalise pleinement son unité.[107]

Having established Calvin's conviction that men and women are equal, Biéler uses the following quote from Calvin's *Commentary on Genesis* to establish woman's subordination to men:

> Quand Dieu assigne la femme à l'homme pour lui être en aide, non seulement il ordonne aux femmes la règle de leur vocation, pour les instruire de leur devoir, mais il prononce que le mariage sera par effet aux hommes un très bon secours de leur vie. Faisons donc résolution que l'ordre de nature porte que la femme soit en aide à l'homme.[108]

Thus, for Calvin, woman is subordinate to man, not because she is essentially inferior, but because of the nature of the social and created order: "S'il y a égalité fondamentale entre les deux sexes, la différentiation de fonction de chacun d'eux apparaît déjà dans l'ordre de la création. Il y a une subordination fonctionnelle de la femme à l'homme."[109] According to Jewett, this subordination existed between Adam and Eve before the Fall, but becomes more difficult (less voluntary) after the Fall: "Calvin observes that there would seem to be a contradiction in saying that the subjection of the woman is both the imposition of her creation and the punishment of her transgression. He proposes a voluntary subjection of the woman as created which becomes less voluntary after the Fall."[110] Thus "woman's subordination is not simply the result of the Fall; by the very order of creation woman is subject to man."[111] With this concept of voluntary subjection, which women find more difficult to accept after the Fall, it is easy to understand why Calvin taught discipline within marriage and that he would expound more on these concepts in his sermons. In other

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[107]Biéler, 35.
[108]Ibid., 36.
[109]Ibid.
[110]Jewett, 63.
[111]Ibid., 68.

words, a good Christian woman voluntarily submits to the authority of her husband. This calls for humility and discipline!

Yet, in fairness to Calvin, man must not dominate simply because he is male: "In a true marriage, rarely will either party command or obey, and when such occasions do arise one ought not to say the husband should always give orders because he is a man while the wife should always obey because she is a woman."[112]

Baldwin goes further in explaining Calvin's views concerning the place of women in marriage: "Calvin discusses the hierarchical order within marriage which has three bases: (1) nature itself, (2) punishment as a consequence of the rebelliousness of Adam and Eve, and (3) the present condition of mankind in a fallen universe."[113] Having established the reasons for this hierarchy, Calvin exhorts women to accept this order and experience satisfaction with their place within creation and nature. Baldwin states that "throughout Calvin's sermons where marriage is mentioned, we find that one of his leitmotifs is that woman should be content with the station which God has assigned to her even though this subjection is hard to bear at times."[114]

Ronald S. Wallace points out that this subjection is not limited to relationships between men and women; hierarchy and social order is found throughout creation and in the social order of humankind: "Calvin frequently appeals for humility and recognition of a common humanity in the exercise of all forms of earthly authority. There must be nothing harsh or domineering."[115] Wallace applies Calvin's views to man-woman relations: "It is especially when he speaks about the relationship between husband and wife in marriage that

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[112]Ibid., 132.
[113]Baldwin, 122.
[114]Ibid., 124.
[115]Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 162.

Calvin stresses the fact that there must be companionship within mutual subjection."[116] God has given woman as a companion to man and to assist him; "therefore man must not tyrannise or domineer or trample underfoot one who was made to be his companion for this purpose. . . . The image of God is printed alike in both man and woman."[117] Wallace continues to describe Calvin's views in a manner that seems to be a little more benevolent than some feminist authors will acknowledge (as we will see later). According to Wallace, Calvin sometimes sums up the duties of those who have superiority by referring to the law of mutual subjection, which demands that the superior must be subject to the inferior as well as vice versa. It is true that it has to be a more voluntary subjection on the part of the superior member, but it must be a voluntary subjection if the law of love is to be fulfilled.[118] In marriage, "this relationship of 'mutual benevolence' between the sexes ought to prevail not only between married partners but throughout social life."[119] The dynamic of superiority and subjection "is for Calvin much more than a means to create order among men. It is a means whereby the image of God can be reflected within human life. Calvin sees the glory of God reflected in all human pre-eminence."[120] This is a confirmation of Biéler's interpretation, which was described previously. Thus we gain more insight into Calvin's teachings concerning spousal relationships as they emanate from his theology of the created and social order.

A word concerning the use of sexuality within marriage. In a section on the "restoration of true order" and "Christian moderation," Wallace interprets Calvin's convictions thus: "Within the marriage bond itself there is need for constant avoidance of

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[116]Ibid., 163.
[117]Ibid.
[118]Ibid., 165.
[119]Ibid., 164.

excessive intemperance."[121] Like Augustine, Calvin also asserts that although "conjugal intercourse is a thing pure, honorable and holy because it is the pure institution of God . . . a sense of shame is inseparable from such intercourse."[122] This sense of shame is attributed to the Fall, because "everything which proceeds from man since the Fall is corrupted."[123] As we have seen, "marriage is, however, a veil by which the fault of such intemperance in marriage is covered over and what is shameful in it is cleansed. . . . Yet marriage is such a remedy for incontinency only if it is used as such temperately."[124]

Bailey writes about the originality of Calvin's thinking as compared to that of Luther, whom he sees as "more conventional": "Calvin . . . reveals a more profound and original conception of the relation between husband and wife. . . . He repudiated Jerome's interpretation of St Paul's words: 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman' [I Cor. 7:1], and affirmed that coitus is undefiled, honorable, and holy, because it is a pure institution of God."[125] Although Calvin believes that it was Satan who inspired the idea that intercourse is a pollutant, Bailey nonetheless asserts, "Yet Calvin was somewhat uneasy—characteristically, on account of the pleasure concomitant with coitus."[126] Satan was also, for Calvin, the "arch-defamer of matrimony" who further degraded it by the "pestilential law of celibacy."[127] Here we catch a glimpse of Calvin's conviction that Satan was very active in the Church of Rome. Both Martin Luther and Menno Simons held similar opinions.

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[120]Ibid., 160.
[121]Ibid., 175.
[122]Ibid.
[123]Ibid.
[124]Ibid., 175-176.
[125]Bailey, 171-172.
[126]Ibid., 172.

Feminist Perspectives

As implied in the previous sections, Calvin's views concerning women are not such that they provoke extreme reactions. Calvin was a man of his times; in the context of the sixteenth century, he seems to figure among the moderates, despite his liabilities.

In a critical and extensive analysis of Calvin's treatment of women in his theology and exegesis, John Lee Thompson argues that Calvin had a "germ of feminism" that never seemed to get off the ground. Calvin's doctrine of subordination was central and never really changed: "That Calvin could accommodate women in roles of leadership is established by his relationships with various noble and royal women. But that his position was merely one of accommodation and not advocacy is also thereby established, for Calvin refused to shift his doctrinal stance even when it would have been pragmatic to do so."[128]

Baldwin also approaches Calvin's beliefs from a feminist perspective. She uses a primary source (*Sermons,* Eph. 5:22:26) in which Calvin expounds on the potential vices of both men and women in a given marriage. Baldwin writes, "Despite this tableau of vices, the overriding principle remains that a wife must still be subject to and obey her husband."[129] As Baldwin points out, Calvin affirms that "these numerous troubles are mankind's doing. 'That does not come from the nature of marriage . . . but since we are corrupt . . . we convert good into evil: and what God had instituted for our glory, we often convert into ignominy.'"[130] Baldwin continues, "In fact, in this twisted world, [the wife] is able to be submissive even when her husband treats her poorly: 'But the vices which are in

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[127]Ibid.

[128]John Lee Thompson, *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Roles in the Exegesis of Calvin, His Predecessors, and His Contemporaries* (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1992), 62.

[129]Baldwin, 126.

the man must not prevent the woman from being subject to him and obeying him.'"[131] Thompson's criticism of Calvin thus seems justified. Baldwin concludes, "[Calvin's] reasoning is offensive when he tells women to be content with their place since, after all, animals who are lower than women do not complain about theirs. His statement is distorted when he blames women wholly for the Fall. His thinking is harsh when he counsels women to submit to abusive treatment."

Rosemary Radford Ruether, an outspoken and respected feminist theologian, corroborates much of what has already been researched. She summarizes Calvin's teachings as follows: "In Calvinism, women not only were but are equivalent with men in the image of God. . . . Women have as much capacity of conscience and spiritual things as do men."[132] This is already a very positive and affirming statement regarding women. Ruether continues her analysis of Calvin's thought: "The subordination of women to men is not an expression of an inferiority either in nature or fallen history. Rather it reflects the divinely created social order by which God has ordained the rule of some and the subjugation of others."[133] What is supportive to women in these statements is the fact that, contrary to Augustine and Aquinas, Calvin does not consider women inferior in the very essence of their being!

Ruether points out that the concept of subordination is of a different order: "This hierarchical order is not a reflection of differences of human nature, but rather differences of appointed *social office.* The man rules not because he is superior but because God has commanded him to do so. The woman obeys not because she is inferior but because that is

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[130]Ibid. Baldwin provides the following reference for her quote: Jean Calvin, Sermond Deut. 24:1-6, CO 28, 159. *CO* stands for "Calvini Opera." Baldwin states that all translations into English from Calvini Opera are hers.

[131]Ibid., 127. Baldwin cites the following: Jean Calvin, Sermons Eph. 5:22-26, CO 51, 736.

[132]Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 98.

[133]Ibid.

the role God has assigned to her."[134] This statement is clearly representative of our findings in previous sections. In other words, "domination and subjugation represent the original divinely created order of things."[135] Actually, sin consists in the attempt to reverse this social order, which is willed by God: "Sin, therefore, can only be a rebellion against this rightful dominance and subordination. Any effort to change this order and give woman equality with man would itself be a sinful rebellion against God's divinely enacted ordinances of creation and redemption."[136] In this particular account, Ruether seems content to simply offer a summary of the Calvinist position and does not submit it to the strong critical analysis of which she is capable.

In another work, Ruether refers to Calvin's teachings that the husband "is not to oppress his wife." But she gives an account of Calvin's pastoral response to oppression and abuse perpetrated by a non-Christian husband: "Calvin . . . makes it clear that scripture does not permit believers to leave an unbelieving partner voluntarily merely because of hostility or suffering. . . . She must pray for courage and constancy to resist demands [of idolatry] that would be sin against God and to show her faith with sweetness and humility."[137] Should there be doubt in the reader's mind of the accuracy of Ruether's interpretation, Ruether refers to Calvin's statement about another situation of abuse that clarifies his theological and pastoral stance:

> We have a special sympathy for poor women who are evilly and roughly treated by their husband, because of the roughness and cruelty of the tyranny and captivity which is their lot. We do not find ourselves permitted by the Word of God, however, to advise a woman to leave her husband, except by force of necessity; and we do not understand this force to be operative when

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[134]Ibid.
[135]Ibid.
[136]Ibid.
[137]Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed., *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1974), 300.

> a husband behaves roughly and uses threats to his wife, nor even when he beats her, but when there is imminent peril to her life, whether from persecution by the husband or by his conspiring with the enemies of the truth, or from some other source. . . . We exhort her . . . to bear with patience the cross which God has seen fit to place upon her; and meanwhile not to deviate from the duty which she has before God to please her husband, but to be faithful to whatever happens.[138]

The preceding excerpt gives us a clear account of the manner in which Calvin dealt with situations of abuse. Although his compassion and support for abused women is apparent, fear of losing her life appears to be the only justifiable motive for a wife to leave her husband. But there seems to be a sincere wish on Calvin's part to authorize or counsel separation.

In today's context, one could be tempted to judge Calvin severely for not being more protective of women who are abused. However, a careful reading of this passage will indicate that this struggle is still very current; the concepts and counsels expounded therein are used in many counselling and legal situations, even in a secular society. In this society, as in others, it is difficult, practically impossible, to legislate love or hate. Yet, Calvin's text was written more than four hundred years ago (1559), and we are just beginning to grapple with these justice issues as a society! We are left to wonder how Calvin's ideas, and those of many other leaders throughout history, have contributed to our own current struggle.

When considering our research in the primary as well as the secondary sources, Calvin appears to be among the moderates in his treatment of women. The reason for this is that the ideal of the true marriage is mutual subjection and accountability. Harshness and abuse in marriage is not the will of God but the evil in man. Baldwin recapitulates this idea in the following words: "And to be sure, where charity reigns, there is mutual servitude. Because Calvin was a careful and balanced student of Scripture, he tempered his sexist

[138]Ibid., 300-301.

views with a biblical view of reciprocity of commitment in marriage."[139] It is no wonder that Calvin reveals his thoughts more clearly in his sermons. It is indeed quite a challenge for a pastor to exhort couples to mutual subjection and discipline in order to make a marriage work, while at the same time teaching them a fairly rigid doctrine of voluntary female submission to the male of the household. It takes more than sermons in today's context to convince women to submit to abuse in the name of God. Should they have ever done this? One wonders what Christian pastors are telling men and women of today concerning abuse in spousal relationships. Undoubtedly, this practical dynamic of submission continues to exist in many "good" Christian couples today.

Summary

And so we come to the conclusion of this section and of this chapter. The review of the primary sources reveals that Calvin's material on celibacy and marriage is not abundant, but it is clear and concise. The secondary sources offer little divergence of interpretation of Calvin's writings, probably because of the exactness and clarity of Calvin's thinking.

Finally, the research that produced this chapter contributes significantly to the understanding of the issues pertaining to celibacy and marriage in the foundations of Christian thought. The following chapters research other pertinent issues related to sexuality, the body, and clerical celibacy.

[139]Baldwin, 129.

CHAPTER III.

RELEVANCE OF FOUNDATIONS TO THE POSTMODERN AGE

This chapter explains how the development of modern scientific thought over the last few centuries has contributed to the alienation of mind, body, and spirit. Curiously enough, science has influenced, if not enabled, the Roman Catholic Church to maintain a similar dualism in its approach to sexuality, by opposing mind and body, spirit and flesh, male and female, and other elements of humanness. Augustine and Aquinas contributed to this alienation; now science becomes another ally of the Church in maintaining this dualism.

Such dualism is also found in the development of modern medicine, which still largely sees the human body simply as a machine to be fixed. The approach used by scientific medicine almost totally ignores the spiritual dimension and the unity of mind, body, and spirit in the human person. Such separation between the constitutive elements of the human person cannot but lead to further illness.

These discussions will be used to draw a parallel between dualism in science in medicine and the dualistic approach used by the Roman Catholic Church in its consideration of sexuality. Both science and the Church have much to learn from ancient methods of healing by aboriginal peoples. These ancient methods considered the human person as a whole. This chapter will also outline the true reasons for which celibacy is still required for the Latin priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church and why a change in this requirement is necessary and consistent with our current culture.

As in the previous chapters, feminist literature and analysis will be used to provide a different perspective and rereading of history. In this chapter, they will

demonstrate and critique the masculinization of thought and culture in the development of modernity.

Cartesian Dualism and the Body: A Feminist and Scientific Critique

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity introduced a dualism in Western philosophical thought through the development of René Descartes's scientific and rational approaches. The study of several feminist authors from a hermeneutical perspective will show how Cartesian dualism, defined as the separation of subject and object, of mind and body, of the inner and outer worlds of the person and the cosmos, has resulted in a masculinization of thought from which women have been excluded and objectified.[1] Feminist literature focusing on the insights of psychoanalytical theory will be used to illustrate how this happened. Proposals for a new or different interpretation will be offered in each section.

I will discuss also how Cartesian dualism has influenced modern medicine by objectifying the human body through its reductionist approach to health and healing. I will draw on the insights of a physician and a scientist who propose a more integrative and holistic view of health. The last part of this section will offer a synthesis of these hermeneutical perspectives and how they interact with one another.

The Transition from the Middle Ages to Modernity

At the outset, it seems appropriate to identify a few of the characteristics of medieval times. Doing so will help us to understand the context that gave birth to the ideas of René Descartes.

The Middle Ages was a time of relative intellectual stability in the Western philosophical world. Knowledge was primarily disseminated through the works of major thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. Political and religious

institutions were the guardians of thought in a world in which there was little distinction between the self and the cosmos. Humans experienced themselves primarily as part of larger systems that influenced their thought and controlled their behaviour. "Art, literature, and philosophy provided a sense of meaning and relatedness between the human and physical realms."[2] Physicist Fritjof Capra confirms this view of medieval times: "People lived in small, cohesive communities and experienced nature in terms of organic relationships, characterized by the interdependence of spiritual and material phenomena and the subordination of individual needs to those of the community."[3] The earth was referred to as female, birthing and sustaining the life of its living creatures. (Today, our aboriginal brothers and sisters still refer to our planet as "Mother Earth," through centuries of oral tradition and wisdom.) Carol Merchant describes a medieval cosmology in which

> minerals and metals ripened in the uterus of the Earth Mother, mines were compared to her vagina, and metallurgy was the human hastening of the living metal in the artificial womb of the furnace . . . Miners offered propitiation to the deities of the soil, performed ceremonial sacrifices . . . sexual abstinence, fasting, before violating the sacredness of the living earth by sinking a mine.[4]

Bordo paraphrased another passage by Merchant as follows: "A 'stock description' of biological generation was the marriage of heaven and earth, and the impregnation of the (female) earth by the dew and rain created by the movements of the (masculine) celestial heavens (Merchant, 16)."[5] Scholasticism was the prevalent system of thought in philosophy

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[1]Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," in *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987); reprinted in Lawrence E. Cahoone, ed., *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 639.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 53.

[4] Carol Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 4.

[5]Bordo, 642.

and theology in those times; never questioning the fundamentals, it more comfortably relied on traditional wisdom and the Catholic Church.[6]

Significant changes that occurred toward the end of the Middle Ages provided the context for the transition of this period into a new era, which came to be known as *modernity*. The cohesiveness of medieval thinking began to disintegrate. The creation of independent and secular states began to emerge. Science had begun to develop its own laws and principles to observe things as they are, without reference to a preconceived world view; the work of Galileo is an example. The Protestant Reformation, spearheaded by Martin Luther, emphasized the primacy of individual conscience as opposed to the authority and power of the Roman Catholic Church. It is this political, social, and religious context that prepared the arrival of René Descartes and of modernity.

René Descartes and Cartesian Dualism

René Descartes (1596-1650) is considered to be the father of modern philosophy and, in more general terms, modernity. His primary discipline was mathematics. Descartes sought to apply the rigorous discipline of scientific enquiry to philosophic thought. In order to do this, he posited the theory of universal doubt, which negated any preconceived method of enquiry: "N'admettre en sciences que la raison"; loosely translated this means that reason is the only admissible method of scientific enquiry. Descartes posited that in order to arrive at certainty and truth, one must rid oneself of any preconceived idea, including those received in childhood, and begin any enquiry with the notion of *tabula rasa*, a "clean slate," without any *a priori* notions. His point of departure for enquiry and knowledge, which

[6]Stuart F. Spicker, ed., *The Philosophy of the Body: Rejections of Cartesian Dualism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 1.

demonstrated his rigorous consistency, became his famous *Cogito, ergo sum*: "I think, therefore I am."[7]

Descartes thus accentuated the importance of reason as the only norm for enquiry; this he called *res cogitans*, "that thinking and unextended thing," while the rest of the world, including his own body, was identified as *res extensa*, "that unthinking and extended thing."[8] As seen in Meditation VI, Descartes felt that he could not trust his own body, as it sometimes played tricks on him: "It is clear . . . that . . . the nature of man as a combination of mind and body is such that it is bound to mislead him from time to time."[9] He further developed this thought in a discussion of the mind and the brain as they interact with his body in relation to a painful sensation in his foot.[10] Thus, Descartes introduced a split between mind and body, between himself and the world. This split is still known today as "Cartesian dualism" or "Cartesianism".

Throughout history, some followers of Descartes were more rigid than he was in accentuating his dualism. Others sought to bridge the gap between the two poles of this dualism by seeking various compromises. Thus, what is now referred to as *Cartesianism* or *Cartesian philosophy* cannot always be strictly identified with Descartes's own ideas, but rather with the variations presented by philosophers who thought in similar patterns.[11] Nonetheless, Cartesian philosophy and its variations dominated Western philosophical thought for the next three hundred years.[12] Having thus clarified the philosophical and

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[7]Johanna Hodge, "Subject, Body and the Exclusion of Women from Philosophy," in *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy* (Beacon Press, 1990), 152.

[8]Bordo, 640.

[9]Hodge, 161.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Spicker, 9.

[12]Hodge, 152.

cultural context in which Cartesian dualism has developed, we are now ready to critique it from a feminist perspective.

Feminist Critique of Cartesian Dualism

Susan Bordo and Masculinization of Thought

Susan Bordo is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky. In her essay on the masculinization of thought, Bordo sees the transition from the Middle Ages to early modernity as a "protracted birth in which the human entity emerges as separate, not continuous with the universe."[13] Setting the stage for a brilliant parallel with Freud's developmental psychology, Bordo's study of Descartes leads her to this statement: "Childhood was commonly associated . . . with sensuality, animality and mystifications of the body." Because this state can only be revoked through the reversal of the "prejudices" of childhood, one emerges with "reason as one's only parent."[14] The result is a "rebirth" on one's own terms, a "re-parenting" of one's self, in which the repudiation of childhood is required, so that "clear and distinct ideas are released from the prison of the body."[15] Thus for mature and rational adults, secure boundaries are assured between inner and outer, subjective and objective. Self and world are distanced and separated.

What was historically experienced as "interpenetration" and "continuity" between these opposites became "distortions" for Descartes. "Locatedness" in space and time had become more important than meaning.[16] Objectivity, rather than meaning, became the norm for understanding and interpretation.[17] Through Descartes, a new model of knowledge is

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[13]Bordo, 638.
[14]Ibid., 639.
[15]Ibid.
[16]Ibid., 639-640.
[17]Ibid., 640.

conceived through our "ability to transcend the body."[18] The "ontological blueprint is refashioned with the spiritual and corporeal realm having no real connection except to have been created."[19] There is interaction, but no merging between *res cogitans* and *res extensa,* the latter being "totally devoid of mind and thought."[20] Values and significance only reflect what we feel about the world rather than telling us anything about its objective qualities. Thus our "infantile subjectivism" can be overcome by a cool, impersonal, distanced, cognitive relation to the world. Bordo calls this separation from the world "the drama of parturition."[21]

More importantly, Bordo theorizes that Descartes's concepts are grounded in "psychological defense," a defense designed to suppress anxiety and dread. She diagnoses it a "reaction formation" (one of Freud's defense mechanisms), an aggressive reaction to suppress the "cultural anxiety" that arose in response to the increasing number of major discoveries, inventions, and events that were disorienting for him and for the people of his time. This defense mechanism functions as a denial of "loss," that is, of estrangement between self and nature.[22] This drama of parturition is a sort of childbirth pain that is necessary for new life to begin. Bordo posits that Descartes used reaction formation as an "aggressive flight" from the "female cosmos" and "female orientation of the world;"[23] she says that Descartes had to assert "masculinization of thought" in order to suppress the separation anxiety.[24] The resulting shift consisted of restructuring knowledge as objectivist and the world as mechanist and masculine. This was the beginning of modernity.

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[18]Ibid., 639.
[19]Ibid.
[20]Ibid., 640.
[21]Ibid., 641.
[22]Ibid.
[23]Ibid.
[24]Ibid., 641-642.

It is therefore not surprising to hear Bordo say that in objectifying the world, Cartesianism caused it to lose its feminine characteristics. In effect, the "female-soul world" not only died but was "murdered by a mechanist re-visiting of nature."[25] The universe (*res extensa*) became a major machine, "defined by its lack of affiliation with divinity or spirit." On the other hand, human reason (*res cogitans*) is everything that is Godlike, such as spirituality, freedom, will, and sentience.[26] In another section,[27] Bordo draws an interesting parallel between the Cartesian split and the process of individuation in psychoanalytical theory. Because the process of birth and development is essentially one of separation, of individuation from the mother, it involves a mixture of anxiety and assertion to achieve autonomy. This process is drawn in parallel with the cultural separation anxiety that we discussed earlier. Furthermore, since mother is "Other," boys separate "over against" her in order to assert their masculinity. Mother is "body" and therefore, *res extensa!* "'She' becomes 'it'—and 'it' can be understood and controlled."[28] This self-assertion leads to "re-birthing," a "re-parenting" of the self and world.[29]

It will thus come as no surprise to the reader that objectification of women will result and that boys will grow up with a Cartesian view of world. For girls, the individuation process is different: they separate from mother, but identify more readily with female and mother; they experience themselves as "less differentiated than boys, more continuous with, and related to the external object-world."[30]

For the purposes of interpretation, Bordo, supported by a number of feminist authors, suggests "a natural foundation for knowledge, not in detachment and distance, but

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[25]Ibid., 649.
[26]Ibid., 643.
[27]Ibid., 646-649.
[28]Ibid., 649.

in . . . 'sympathy': in closeness, connectedness, and empathy." Indeed, she sees the "failure of connection as the principal cause of breakdown in understanding."[31] As a consequence of the developmental differences between boys and girls, Bordo calls for a recognition of "differing valuations of attachment and autonomy" as well as "different conceptions of morality."[32] Although the association of the cognitive and logical has long been associated with men, and the intuitive with the feminine, she posits that feminism emphasizes gender as "social construction, rather than biological or ontological givens." She further insists that the aforementioned differences are historical and cultural rather than biological.[33] Thus, Bordo's arguments set the stage for the cultivation of new paradigms and values, which in turn set the foundations for insight and change. For example, her analysis provides a stimulating discussion that serves to explain how philosophy has developed since Descartes and how the natural sciences have become so impersonal, cold, and rigorous, as will be further confirmed in our consideration of the biomedical approach to the body. Bordo's analysis is convincing and is supported by a number of feminist and nonfeminist theorists. Additionally, when one considers the various forms of patriarchies and male dominance in many of our political, religious, and social institutions, along with the widespread violence against women in our Western societies, Bordo's analysis offers ample food for thought in regards to what she calls the masculinization of Western thought. The study of another feminist author will help to develop the thesis further.

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[29]Ibid., 647.
[30]Ibid., 653.
[31]Ibid.
[32]Ibid.

Naomi Goldenberg: Psychoanalysis and Religion

Naomi Goldenberg is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Women's Studies at the University of Ottawa, Canada. She rejects Platonic Forms and Jungian Archetypes because of their transcendence, which she identifies as "anti-woman, anti-life." She also rejects any "religious perspectives . . . of disembodied forces."[34] Goldenberg proposes that the separation of mind and body not only damages the earth, but damages women as well, thus leading to a new philosophical discussion spearheaded by feminists and ecologists.[35] Goldenberg describes the destruction of the environment and the depreciation of physical existence (damage to the planet, its plants, and its animals) and parallels this phenomenon with the oppression of women: "Several feminist writers argue that the oppression of women is linked to the identification of women with bodily nature. It has even been suggested that the equation of women with 'mother' nature reveals that the misuse of the environment and the oppression of women have much in common."[36] Because women are often equated with the body, Goldenberg urges that all future feminist theory "be grounded in an understanding of the body's role in cognition."[37] Thus, one understands her reluctance to accept any transcendental notions that neglect or depreciate the body. Her whole epistemological argument can be summarized in the following statement: "Instead of trying to ignore our bodies' relationship to cognitive processes, we should be trying to understand that relationship more profoundly. Only then can we achieve a true comprehension of human thought".[38]

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[33]Ibid., 653-654.

[34]Naomi Goldenberg, *Returning Words to Flesh: Feminism, Psychoanalysis and the Resurrection of the Body* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 71.

[35]Ibid., 78.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., 80.

In developing her argument, Goldenberg relies heavily on the work of two of her feminist colleagues, Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow. "Because women mother," she writes, ". . . we equate them with body and mortality. Our hatred of body is expressed in our hatred of women."[39] Women become scapegoats for our "fear of aging and mortality." Along with Dinnerstein, Goldenberg believes that part of the answer to the "human flight from carnality" lies in ending the monopoly on child care: "If men would share the task of caring for infants, it would become impossible to see them as creatures beyond the concerns of human flesh. Women would no longer be scapegoats for fleshly failings."[40] With Chodorow, Goldenberg declares, "If men also cared for babies, intense physical intimacy would cease to be an experience that both sexes can achieve only with women."[41] With the support of these two authors, Goldenberg concludes, "Women will cease to be disproportionately associated with body only when childcare is in the hands of both sexes."[42]

Goldenberg reasserts the same central idea in the following words: "Grounding our philosophical, psychological, and sociopolitical theory in a firm awareness of physicality will amount to a major change in the orientation of much of Western thought."[43] Goldenberg favors psychoanalysis as a means of achieving this awareness. Although sexist, (it glorifies male anatomy and male social roles), psychoanalysis stipulates that all mental and emotional experiences have origins in the body (Freud's "instincts"). As implied earlier, Goldenberg strongly suggests a rejection of forms and archetypes because of their transcendence:

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[39]Ibid., 81.
[40]Ibid.
[41]Ibid., 82.
[42]Ibid.

> I suggest that feminist theory should radically depart from the Jungian archetype, from the Platonic form, from all systems of thought which posit transcendent, superhuman deities. We should study these outworn theories as history, and not use them as models for new ways of thought. We must seek our inspiration from theories and disciplines which see the body as the nexus of all human experience.[44]

Despite her criticism of it, Goldenberg sees psychoanalysis as an ally of feminism in two ways: "First, psychoanalysis and feminism share the topic of sexuality [and] Freud sees all psychical phenomena as derived from the body,"[45] not only from sex. No less important is the second reason for her choice of psychoanalysis as a means of restructuring philosophical thought: "Freudianism and feminism both stress the theme of childhood."[46] Whereas psychoanalysis emphasizes the importance of childhood in structuring adult life, feminism also focuses on children, as feminists "try to improve the economic, political, and psychological situation of women, the traditional caretakers of children."[47]

Supported by psychoanalysis, Goldenberg links the instinctual, bodily processes of physicality with mental processes. She points out that according to Freud, "the ultimate ground of all intellectual inhibitions and all inhibitions of work seems to be the inhibition of masturbation in childhood."[48] Thus, "free flow of thought depends on the elimination of repressions . . . ; psychoanalysis recognizes that the contents of our minds are continuous with everything that has happened, is happening, and wants to happen in our bodies."[49] Goldenberg defends Freud from his critics when they challenge his emphasis on the body: "Reproaching Freud for his emphasis on sexuality is, in fact, reproaching him for his

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[43]Ibid.
[44]Ibid., 83.
[45]Ibid., 84-85.
[46]Ibid., 84.
[47]Ibid.
[48]Ibid., 85.
[49]Ibid.

emphasis on physicality."[50] And we already know from the preceding discussion how Goldenberg cherishes physicality and nontranscendence! Again, she rejects the notion of Jungian archetypes: "Instead of instincts, Jung identifies archetypes as the essential determinants of human thought and behavior."[51] The reason for this rejection is always the same: it represents a depreciation of the body and a flight from carnality.

What does Goldenberg propose as alternatives? Enough has been said about the need to think through the body while rejecting transcendental norms. Along with Bordo and other feminist theorists, Goldenberg advocates that men should also be responsible for early childcare. Then "women would no longer be seen as the only sex that represents the body. Nor would women be the only sex that mind would tend to reject."[52] With the help of Melanie Klein, Goldenberg examines the relationship between guilt and shame as they apply to sexuality: the resulting emotion is anger. This anger results in "destructive instincts" and "contempt for bodies."[53] Finally, she links this aggressiveness and anger with sex, violence, and pornography.[54] In previous paragraphs, we have seen her emphasis on the body and physicality. Her conclusion is the same argument but expressed in different terms: "In order to stop disparaging the body, we might well have to give up all forms of theism and take our inspiration from ideas that see human beings as nothing more (or less) than human."[55]

In another work, Goldenberg provides some powerful insights to support her rejection of theism. Borrowing from Freud's insights and concern for "what he judged to be an abnormal obsession by men with father figures whom they imagined to be gods [in

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[50]Ibid., 86.
[51]Ibid., 87.
[52]Ibid., 92.
[53]Ibid., 93.

Judaism and Christianity],"[56] she concludes that "religions chiefly concerned with fathers and sons work greater harm on the intellects of women since such religions make resolution of the Oedipal complex even more difficult for women than it would normally be."[57] Consistent with her rejection of transcendence, which I have discussed earlier, Goldenberg asserts that Judaism and Christianity cannot be reformed by a revisionist critique of patriarchy in those religions:

> The distinction between mind and body will begin to wane in Western culture as the women's movement continues to advance. More and more theorists will realize the futility of efforts to reform Judaism and Christianity. Gods who prefer men to women and spirit to body will no longer command respect. It is likely that as we watch Christ and Yahweh tumble to the ground, we will completely outgrow the need for an external god.[58]

Rejecting the universality of archetypes and other transcendent images, she favors immanent images and representations that emerge from one's intuition, along with a plurality of gods and goddesses: "Let us not endorse *one* goddess or *one* image as embodying the ideals of the new age."[59] This plurality is a postmodern paradigm; it could also be considered primitive when seen as an antecedent to monotheism.

Naomi Goldenberg's reflections on Cartesian dualism can be summarized in part by the rejection of the notion of transcendence, which is seen as a contributor to the hatred of the body in general and the hatred and objectification of women in particular. Goldberg finds an ally in psychoanalysis, which emphasizes that all human processes have their origins in the body, and suggests that men should also care for infants as a means of bridging the split between mind and body and of "embodying" men as well as women, thus

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[54]Ibid., 94.

[55]Ibid., 94-95.

[56]Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 29.

[57]Ibid., 32.

[58]Ibid., 25.

improving gender relationships and establishing new ground for philosophical thought. Her rejection of transcendence and of universality—which are replaced by a plurality of images, gods, and goddesses—is definitely postmodern in flavor. She is postmodernist in her critique as well as in her alliance with psychoanalysis, which is itself a critique of modernity.

Johanna Hodge and the Concept of Subjectivity

We have seen how Descartes's views contributed to the objectification of the cosmos, thus leading to the objectification of body, of women, of the environment, and finally, to a depreciation (even hatred) of all of these. But we have not considered the *subject.* Johanna Hodge addresses the issue of the Cartesian split between mind and body with a study of the subject from the point of view of feminist theory. This is a new perspective within this study, because Hodge's contribution lies in her argument that the very notion of subject must be challenged because it is still gendered (that is, male) and as such it excludes women from philosophical discourse: "The Cartesian concept of the subject introduces a separation between rational consciousness and sensual embodiment."[60] Hodge argues that Descartes never refers to gender differences despite his many references to body: "The Cartesian taking-for-granted of a conception of a sexually undifferentiated body is a way of both affirming and ignoring the questions of sexual difference and of gender specificity, whereby men constitute the terms of reference of philosophical enquiry and women are excluded."[61] From the point of view of the political dimension, she challenges what she identifies as "gender blindedness" in the concepts of subject and subjectivity and

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[59]Ibid., 78.

[60]Johanna Hodge, "Subject, Body and the Exclusion of Women from Philosophy," in *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 152-153.

[61]Ibid., 153.

its repercussions for the democratic theories about the "rights of man."[62] The supposedly gender-neutral term *the rights of man* "operates as a mechanism for the exclusion of women and the silencing of feminist critique of that exclusion."[63]

Moreover, Hodge posits that the domains of politics and rationality are construed as masculine and therefore pertaining to men, while the domains of domesticity and sensuality are feminine and pertaining to women.[64] Hodge develops her argument further by calling for the recognition of a "differential relation between men and the body, and women and the body," each having "different meanings and cultural inscriptions."[65] As evidenced in cultural practice in general and pornography in particular, the reification of the female body relegates women to a mechanical structure, "appended" to a rational process.[66] With her feminist counterparts, Hodge asserts that cultural attitudes and expectations play a part in the formation of subjectivity and the development of individuality.[67] Hodge makes a powerful point when she refers to the "two kinds of body in which minds may be embodied," and calls for a new metaphysical reflection concerning "the difference between different kinds of entity and between different kinds of existence."[68] It is this lack of gender specificity in Descartes's philosophy that leads her to the conclusion that subjectivity is not available or at least not specific to women. She goes further: "To women is attributed the kind of subjectivity which must be contained and controlled by prescriptions and by physical and intellectual constraints, in order to prevent women from transgressing the roles and rules laid

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[62]Ibid.
[63]Ibid., 154.
[64]Ibid., 153.
[65]Ibid., 162.
[66]Ibid.
[67]Ibid.
[68]Ibid., 164.

down in cultural expectation and practice by the bearers of full rationality."[69] Thus, her reflection includes metaphysical, ethical, and cultural elements.

Hodge concludes that it is not sufficient to propose that subjectivity be extended to women or that a gender-neutral concept of the subject be made available,[70] because men and women do not (and should not?) enter the political and rational realms on the same terms. The solution does not lie in "a few definitions of terms," but rather in "a thoroughgoing critique of the values implicit in all existing social and cultural practice."[71]

In offering this critique, Hodge brings new perspectives for interpretation by identifying the Cartesian subject as gendered (that is, male), and object as female; these concepts call for a metaphysical and cultural differentiation when considering the embodiment of each gender. According to Hodge's critique, the rights of man could be appropriately interpreted as the rights of *men.* Because women are considered fundamentally different, there has to be a study of the rights of women as well. Therefore a re-evaluation of all cultural, political, and social practices and their institutions is necessary.

Feminist Perspectives on Ethics and Morality

In addition to the analysis of Cartesian dualism and the resulting proposals for reinterpretation discussed earlier in this paper, other feminist perspectives are worth mentioning. For example, Mary Jeanne Larrabee has edited a book that brings together a number of essays discussing whether a theory of moral development should be based on the concept of justice (rational and masculine) as opposed to an ethic of care and responsibility

[69]Ibid., 166.
[70]Ibid.
[71]Ibid., 167.

(embodied and feminine).[72] This debate is not going to be discussed in detail here, but it provides an additional framework for a new interpretation from those perspectives.

Beverly Wildung Harrison summarizes the issues of that debate in a few words: "We do not have a moral theology that teaches us the awe-ful, awe-some truth that we have the power through acts of love or lovelessness to create one another."[73] Given the cold, distancing, and rational epistemology of Cartesian dualism, one would be hard pressed to find such acts of love as an explicit foundation for social ethics. Even in Christian moral theology, such a foundation would likely be based on more rational or masculine concepts such as justice, which I mentioned earlier. Harrison continues: "A second basepoint for feminist moral theology derives from celebrating 'embodiment.'"[74] Thus, feminist authors demonstrate a strong consistency when calling for a new or different epistemology to reinterpret our relationship to nature, to embrace it, and to identify with it. This reinterpretation, as well as an embodied ethic of care, represents a credible and powerful alternative to the philosophical foundations of Cartesian dualism.

Cartesian Dualism in Modern Medicine: A Critique

Scientists are increasingly concerned about the effects of Cartesian dualism on the environment and on our social and political systems. Physicist Fritjof Capra, among others, attributes high inflation and unemployment, the crisis in energy and in health care, pollution and other environmental disasters, and violence and crime to an outdated world view: the mechanistic, Cartesian world view.[75] As implied above, Cartesianism still has a powerful

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[72]Mary Jeanne Larrabee, ed., *An Ethic of Care: Feminist and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[73]Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, ed. Carol S. Robb (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 11.

[74]Ibid., 12.

[75]Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 15.

influence on most dimensions of our Western existence. However, for the purpose of this section, the focus is limited to the influence of Cartesian dualism as it applies to the biomedical approach of modern medicine and its view of the body.

Although from a different perspective, Capra agrees with the feminist arguments that I discussed earlier when considering the Cartesian approach to the body: "Descartes's celebrated statement *Cogito, ergo sum* . . . forcefully encouraged Western individuals to equate their identity with their rational mind rather than with their whole organism."[76] From an epistemological perspective, Capra further states that "we have forgotten how to 'think' with our bodies, how to use them as agents of knowing."[77] Explicitly supporting feminist discussion, he adds that "exploitation of nature has gone hand in hand with that of women, who have been identified with nature throughout the ages."[78] Also as discussed earlier in this section, Capra identifies the premodern view of the environment as female: "From the earliest times, nature—and especially the earth—was seen as a kind and nurturing mother, but also as a wild and uncontrollable female."[79] He continues the discussion by asserting that this "female cosmos" came to be seen as one that was to be dominated and tamed by man. Thus we see a direct relationship between Capra's argument and the earlier discussion regarding the natural kinship between feminism and ecology. The Judeo-Christian religious tradition also supported the flight from the feminine, described earlier by Susan Bordo and Noami Goldenberg, by emphasizing the maleness of God:

> The view of man as dominating nature and woman, and the belief in the superior role of the rational mind, have been supported and encouraged by the Judeo-Christian tradition, which adheres to the image of a male god,

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[76]Ibid., 40.
[77]Ibid.
[78]Ibid., 44.
[79]Ibid., 40.

> personification of supreme reason and source of ultimate power, who rules the world from above by imposing his divine law on it.[80]

Thus Capra eloquently parallels our previous feminist discussion concerning Cartesian dualism. We are now ready to study the Cartesian body as it is viewed by modern medicine.

At the outset, it is useful to remember that the Cartesian and Newtonian[81] world view (which saw the world as a giant machine) involved an investigative method called *reductionism.* Reductionism consists mainly in the effort to understand complex phenomena by "reducing them to their basic building blocks and by looking for the mechanisms through which these interacted."[82] When it is applied to biology and modern medicine, we see the following results: "The human body is regarded as a machine that can be analyzed in terms of its parts; disease is seen as the malfunctioning of biological mechanisms which are studied from the point of view of cellular and molecular biology; the doctor's role is to intervene, either physically or chemically, to correct the malfunctioning of a specific mechanism."[83] This biomedical approach is not only a model for modern medicine, but it has become dogma;[84] it is still largely prevalent in today's practice of medicine. Quoting George Engel, Capra affirms that the current science of medicine is still based on "the notion of the body as a machine, of disease as the consequence of the breakdown of the machine, and of the doctor's task as repairer of the machine."[85]

Descartes's "strict division between mind and body led physicians to concentrate on the body machine and to neglect the psychological, social, and environmental aspects of

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[80]Ibid., 41.

[81]René Descartes is credited for the development of the philosophy of Cartesian dualism. Isaac Newton is credited for applying its principles during the Scientific Revolution. See Capra, 53-74.

[82]Ibid., 47.

[83]Ibid., 123.

[84]Ibid., 162.

[85]Ibid., 123.

illness."[86] As a result, more and more emphasis has been put on technology, thus depersonalizing, if not dehumanizing, the practise of medicine: "Hospitals have grown into large professional institutions, emphasizing technology and scientific competence rather than contact with the patients."[87] Anyone who works in or has recently visited a hospital will likely have no difficulty with this statement.

Larry Dossey, a physician who appreciates the achievements and the limitations of modern medicine (and who will be the subject of the next section of this chapter), shares similar views: "The Cartesian formulation led to the view that the body reflected the machine-like characteristics of the universe itself—machine-like bodies inhabiting a machine-like world. Disease thus arose as a disorder of mechanism."[88] Dossey also holds the opinion that the Church sanctioned the Cartesian approach and the subsequent reductionism: "The Church could take comfort that, in so doing, no violence would be done to the soul."[89]

Because the practice of medicine is mainly a derivative of cell or molecular biology, it is not surprising that a proliferation of medical specialties and subspecialties continue to compartmentalize the body and isolate, if not alienate, the patient. Ironically, the narrowness of the Cartesian approach favours the development of illnesses that cannot be diagnosed by technology or through the lens of a microscope, such as social alienation that leads to depression.

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[86]Ibid., 126.
[87]Ibid., 149.
[88]Larry Dossey, *Space, Time and Medicine* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1982), 14.
[89]Ibid.

What do Dossey and Capra advocate for a new interpretation of body, health, and disease? To replace Cartesian dualism, Capra favours a "systems view," which can be described in part as

> a holistic and ecological conception of the world which see the universe not as a machine but rather as a living system, a view that emphasizes the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena and tries to understand nature not only in terms of fundamental structures but in terms of underlying dynamic processes.[90]

This, of course, would effect profound changes in medicine's approach to the body and health. Larry Dossey, as does Capra in his own context, favours the abandonment of the linear, irreversible concept of time (the "devouring tyrant"),[91] which is psychologically oppressive for all but especially detrimental to health and to a number of patients suffering from pain and a variety of disease processes.[92] When time is experienced as an external reality it becomes indeed burdensome and oppressive. But one can suspend time through visualization, hypnosis, imagery, and biofeedback, and especially through experience: "Health and disease, like space and time, are not part of a fixed external reality. As such, they are not to be acquired so much as to be felt."[93] Dossey contends that psychological stress is translated into diseases of the body: "There is considerable evidence that the psychological effects of urgency [caused by the linear concept of time]—stress, anxiety, tension—do not stay in the psyche. They are translated into the body where they eventuate in physical ailments."[94] Thus, there is a connection between our relationship to the environment and health and disease processes. In contrast, the psychological sense that accompanies the perception of time as static and nonflowing is one of tranquility, serenity,

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[90]Capra, 321.
[91]Dossey, 44.
[92] Ibid., 45-55.
[93]Ibid., 48.
[94]Ibid., 179.

and peace. This is the same perception so well described in mystical and poetic literature. It is the sense of oneness of unity with all there is, the feeling of calm and release. It is the opposite of urgency.[95]

Dossey also uses the concept of biodance to illustrate the dynamism and interrelatedness of all things seen in nature: "*Biodance*—the endless exchange of the elements of living things with the earth itself—proceeds silently, giving us no hint that it is happening. It is a dervish dance, animated and purposeful and disciplined; and it is a dance in which every living organism participates."[96] Thus Dossey dismisses the idea of a fixed, static body, as evidenced by the continual renewal of its cells. He even suggests that the boundary of the body has to be extended beyond the earth itself: "A strictly bounded body does not exist. . . . Our roots go deep; we are anchored in the stars."[97] Dossey concludes that

> no attempts to refine our present medical system will prove ultimately successful unless they address the deficiencies of the most basic assumptions on which the system rests. We have examined these assumptions . . . looking to science for fresh approaches to the fundamental meanings of time, space . . . health and illness. The resulting models exhibited the salient feature of oneness and unity between man and nature.[98]

Thus we witness cohesiveness in the formulation of a new world view, whether it comes from feminists, physicians, or scientists.

For his part, in order to counteract the reductionism of the biomedical model by the "systems view of life," Capra advocates the development of the individual's personal sense of responsibility for health and lifestyles rather than to rely on technology and drugs to cure "the body-machine."[99] However, the systems view of life is much more encompassing: "[This] new vision of reality . . . is based on the awareness of the essential interrelatedness

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[95]Ibid.
[96]Ibid., 74. Italics in text.
[97]Ibid., 75.

and interdependence of all phenomena—physical, biological, psychological, social, and cultural. It transcends current disciplinary and conceptual boundaries and will be pursued within new institutions."[100] The systems view of life and the essential relatedness between all living things is dynamic and process oriented.

A fundamental concept is the *holistic* approach, which is the reverse of reductionism; it is defined as "an understanding of reality in terms of integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units."[101] Applied to health, the holistic view of life integrates everything from ecology to spirituality.

Finally, we seem to have completed a full circle with Capra's affirmation of feminism:

> The spiritual essence of the ecological vision seems to find its ideal expression in . . . feminist spirituality . . . as would be expected from the natural kinship between feminism and ecology, rooted in the age-old identification of woman and nature. Feminist spirituality is based on awareness of the oneness of all living forms and their cyclical rhythms of birth and death, thus reflecting an attitude toward life that is profoundly ecological.[102]

One would be hard pressed to find better words to capture the essence of this study.

Summary

Thus we have come to the end of this section. I am confident that this reflection has provided valuable insights, principles, and world views that can influence our thinking and bring about a different framework for thought—as well as provide opportunities for new perspectives in epistemology—within the context of our world becoming increasingly pluralistic, uncertain, and postmodern.

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[98]Ibid., 224.
[99]Capra, 162-163.
[100]Ibid., 265.
[101]Ibid., 38.
[102]Ibid., 415.

Our journey has brought us from a brief study of medieval times as a historical and cultural context for the birth of René Descartes's philosophy and of modernity. The study of feminist theory and psychoanalysis has provided a valuable critique of Cartesian dualism and offered challenging methods of rethinking our philosophical, social, political, cultural, and religious assumptions. We have seen that a purely rationalistic, universal, and detached approach no longer works. Indeed, it never has. This rationalism has led to the alienation of the human person, disembodiment, and a false sense of universality, along with a negation of the importance of culture in structuring philosophical and theological thought. As we have seen, feminism is in a strong position to challenge the sexist assumptions and practices of the two major Western religions, namely Judaism and Christianity.

Our brief study of the Cartesian body as it is expressed in biomedical science has nonetheless offered different paradigms that challenge current scientific and cultural assumptions about the vast world of health and disease. Larry Dossey's imagery and reframing of linear time and his concept of the biodance, and Capra's affirmation of feminism within his systems world view (along with his insistence on the interaction and interdependence of all living systems), offer an uncanny harmony with the position of feminist theorists. Thus, it can be said that feminism has much to offer in the restructuring of health care as well as in many other spheres of human existence and interaction.

Perhaps the most convincing outcome of this study of Cartesian duality is the realization that a strong convergence emerges among various feminists as well as scientists in restructuring many aspects of knowledge and culture. This convergence is a call for a reappraisal of the human person as a dynamic element who is called to live in harmony, firstly within one's self, and secondly with all other living beings. In order to achieve this,

we must rethink our elevation of the mind and soul and our tendency to depreciate the body. The identification of female with body, nature, and sensuality must also become part of male consciousness as a means not only of achieving harmony within one's self, but also as a means of embodying both genders, bridging the gap between them so they can become whole persons. Whether in the field of philosophical thought or in the field of health and science, unity, respect, and interdependence will bring about wholeness, harmony, and health. Through this study, the student of religion is enriched and better equipped to offer a critical, yet more humane, dialogical and communal perspective to any philosophical or religious discussion.

Finally, Hans Küng offers his own assessment of the Cartesian legacy in these words:

> At the same time as Galileo, the mathematician and scientist René Descartes laid the foundations for modern philosophy. The certainty of mathematics was now the new ideal of knowledge. The foundations of all certainty—specifically in radical doubt—is the fact of one's own existence, which can be experienced in the act of thinking: *Cogito, ergo sum.* This was an epoch-making turning point: the place of original certainty had been shifted from God to human beings. Thus the argument no longer moved, as in the Middle Ages or the Reformation, from certainty about God to certainty about oneself, but in a modern way from certainty about oneself to the certainty about God—if that is possible![103]

The new certainty of science was a threatening development for the Church; it stood to lose considerable prestige and power. Küng puts it this way: "Medieval and Reformation belief in the devil, demons, and magic no longer fit the progressive age of reason. The witch trials and burnings of witches were attacked. . . . And like indulgences,

[103]Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History,* trans. John Bowden (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 145.

pilgrimages, processions, and monasteries, so too compulsory celibacy and Latin as the liturgical language came under fire."[104]

The age of science had a profound impact on the manner in which human body was perceived. In medicine, the split of body, mind, and spirit became more pronounced than ever before. Yet, some medical scientists made great efforts to bridge the gap, as we shall see in the next section.

[104]Ibid., 149.

Larry Dossey: Holistic Medicine Contrasted With Mind/Body Dualism

This section will present and discuss Larry Dossey's views about health and the human body as they are described in two of his earlier works: *Space, Time and Medicine*[105] and *Beyond Illness: Discovering The Experience of Health.*[106] The first subsection will summarize Dossey's analysis of the human body as it is presently viewed by medicine. The second will focus on Dossey's critique of the biomedical model and how his approach differs from the current clinical model of body and health.

Dossey's Analysis of the Biomedical Model

In *Space, Time and Medicine*, Dossey affirms the marvellous advances in biomedical technology,[107] but he challenges modern medicine's "look to the hard sciences as models, hoping to embody the precision and exactness demonstrated most notably by classical physics."[108] He states that medicine has failed to heed the message that the exactness sought by physics has *"never really existed."*[109] Dossey asserts that the current model of health and illness, birth and death are built "around an outmoded conceptual model of how the universe behaves, one which was fundamentally flawed from the beginning."[110] This scientific approach accounts for the "unmistakable sentiment . . . that much of the cold, inhumane, and impersonal qualities of the health care system are a result of a reliance on a science that is itself cold and uncaring."[111] This approach, because it separates rather than unifies the various dimensions of personhood, tends to create new illnesses or make people sicker than they would normally be. Dossey's thesis is, therefore, a critique of an outmoded

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[105]Larry Dossey, *Space, Time and Medicine* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1982).

[106]Larry Dossey, *Beyond Illness: Discovering The Experience of Health* (Boulder: New Science Library, 1984).

[107]Dossey, *Space, Time and Medicine,* xii.

[108]Ibid.

[109]Ibid. Italics in text.

[110]Ibid.

scientific model that has refused to adapt itself to the recent findings of modern physics. The following paragraphs will attempt to summarize Dossey's views, which are largely based on these findings.

From the beginning, Dossey describes the effects of Cartesian dualism, which separates mind from body, and matter from spirit; this dualism resulted in the concept that the human body is essentially and only a machine composed of cells and molecules.[112] Dossey first challenges the traditional notion of time, and more specifically *linear time,* which people in the Western world usually see as a reality external to themselves and against which they must compete. He calls linear time the "devouring tyrant."[113] Using several examples from his clinical practice, Dossey asserts that it is possible to stop time (or to modify our perception of it) in order to transform and unify energy, to eliminate the urgency of time, thereby enhancing the state of wellness of persons who are suffering from pain and a variety of diseases such as cardiovascular dysfunction and cancer.[114] Thus, Dossey strongly questions the modern notion concerning the flow of time. He gives several examples from other cultures and disciplines that contradict this view of time.

Another concept that plays a significant part in Dossey's critique of traditional medicine is that of *unity.* Dossey advocates the human factor as an important part of the healing process. For example, Dossey describes an experiment in which rabbits were fed very high doses of fat and cholesterol. Some of these rabbits were petted, stroked, and talked to when they were fed; the others were not. Upon examination, it was found that the rabbits

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[111]Ibid., xiii.
[112]Ibid., 12-15.
[113]Ibid., 44.
[114]Ibid., 44-45.

that were petted and talked to had a 60% lower incidence of atherosclerosis.[115] Dossey affirms that psychological factors and emotionally charged behavior—such as loving, touching, caring, sharing, and associating—exert enormous effects on health; however, they cannot be accounted for in the present biomedical framework, which focuses solely on the order or disorder of molecules in the body.[116] Similarly, spousal support and positive social systems are important factors for survival.

The *biodance* is another engaging concept in Dossey's thesis. This term refers to the cyclical renewal of energy that is constantly at work in all aspects of the universe: "the endless exchange of the elements of living things with the earth itself . . . a dance in which every living thing participates" and that "simply [defies] any definition of a static and fixed body."[117] Thus, the concepts of unity and relationship with all living and nonliving things must be expanded, not only to the earth itself, but beyond it.

Dossey also studies the concept of *dissipative structures* in physics and applies it to health. This concept postulates that all existing things strive for equilibrium by constantly being transformed within their own structures, from a condition of fragility to a higher complexity. Dossey asks the question, "If we were never perturbed by illness, could we *ever* be healthy?"[118] He pushes the boundaries further by stating that "there is reason to believe that our body *feeds* on illness to create health."[119] Thus he advocates moving with the perturbations of disease, rather than against them. Of course, these perturbations can lead to death, which then represents a higher form of complexity; on the other hand, a disease that is overcome achieves a better quality of life and health than before the illness was declared.

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[115]Ibid., 61-64.
[116]Ibid., 59.
[117]Ibid., 74.
[118]Ibid., 89.

Yet, both scenarios are variations of the same unified whole! Traditional medicine usually attacks symptoms, rather than teaching patients how to work with them creatively and positively to achieve a higher quality of life and health.

Dossey includes the concepts of the quantum theory and the *holoverse* in expounding on the unity of the human body and the unity of humanity with nature and the universe. Explained simply, quantum theory is a theory in physics that postulates that the universe in complete harmony with human consciousness, not apart from it. The mystic's vision of a world in which man participates in a seamless existence, indivisibly united with the universe around him, resonates through a discovery called Bell's theorem.[120] A hologram is a specially constructed image that reveals, under certain conditions, that any part of an object reveals its whole. Thus the information of the whole is contained in each part. According to these theories, the "separateness of bodies, and the absolute distinctions between health and disease cannot be maintained."[121] What are the consequences of these theories for health and disease? "Human beings are essentially dynamic processes and patterns that are fundamentally not analyzable into separate parts—either within or between each other . . . it is their interrelatedness and oneness, not their isolation and separation, which is most important."[122] Illness and health are inseparable from one another. Disease is not an external phenomenon, but is a constitutive part of the body and of the universe as a whole. It is not surprising, therefore, that Dossey advocates doing nothing, in certain circumstances, as opposed to the frenzied effort of the biomedical model to eliminate symptoms and disease at all costs.

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[119]Ibid.
[120]Ibid., 98.
[121]Ibid., 111.
[122]Ibid., 114.

What Is "New" About Dossey's Ideas?

First, it must be evident by now that Dossey attacks the body-mind dualism and the separation of human beings from nature and the cosmos. Many of his ideas are borrowed from the findings of modern physics since the beginning of the twentieth century. His approach, which attempts to heal the mind/body split in modern medicine, calls for a radical change in the practice of medicine. In his *spacetime model* of health, Dossey challenges the notion of *locality,* whereby the body appears as a "mere object surrounded by empty space" and is "separate in space and time from all other physical bodies."[123] With the concept of the biodance, even death becomes "effete . . . for there is no ultimate end to be saved *from.* "[124] In the new view, life is not the property of single bodies, but the property of the universe at large.[125] Dossey provides a stunning comparison between the "traditional view" and the "modern physical view."[126] Among other things, he states that the body is not an object and cannot be localized in space, that the body is in dynamic relationship with all other bodies of the universe, that particles and atoms can only be understood in relation to all other particles. Consequently, health, disease, and therapy are not individual but collective events that extend to and affect all persons. No demarcations in time exist; the notion of the flow of time is only psychological and is not a natural event. "Time urgency" creates disease.[127] Even death is not a final or absolute event, "since it refers to a body that is coextensive with all other bodies and whose matter is not absolute."[128]

Dossey further introduces the concept of the *implicate order,* again borrowed from physics, defined as "that unseen totality that . . . underlies the external world of things and

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[123]Ibid., 142.
[124]Ibid., 143. Italics in text.
[125]Ibid., 144.
[126]Ibid., 148-9.

events and in which all things are grounded."[129] The essence of the implicate order is harmony, which promotes health; when this harmony breaks down in living organisms, there is disease and death. Thus health has a kinetic quality, a constant flow of energy and harmony. This idea is in contrast to our efforts to capture health as a static, crystallized entity.[130]

Dossey also emphasizes that consciousness, or the role of conscious mental activity in the evolution of health and disease, has been seriously undervalued. He postulates that the reason for this separation is the traditional belief that consciousness is a secondary phenomenon, a derivative of physiological processes.[131] Dossey gives several examples, such as biofeedback, to illustrate the effects of consciousness on disease and wellness. Although he advocates holistic health, he cautions against the temptation of holistic health practitioners to objectify the body, thus invoking the same world view as the biomedical model in which human beings are "seen primarily as distinct entities who exist quite apart from other selves and from other physicians."[132] In the hospital context, we occasionally see the devastating effects on persons who have totally excluded the biomedical model in favor of alternative medicines. Dossey advocates that the two models should work together.

Dossey's later work, entitled *Beyond Illness,* is written more clearly and is largely an application of the principles expounded in his previously cited work. Questioning the concept of health and disease as observable only through the instruments of biomedical technology, Dossey affirms that health and disease are flexible concepts that relate

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[127]Ibid., 166.
[128]Ibid., 148.
[129]Ibid., 182.
[130]Ibid., 183.
[131]Ibid., 206.
[132]Ibid., 213

significantly to how persons experience themselves.[133] Thus, a very sick person in biomedical terms may, and often does, demonstrate a tremendously healthy attitude that defies common conceptions of health and disease; this phenomenon is often ignored and unexplained by physicians.

Dossey uses the principles of Zen Buddhism to show the dynamic interplay between opposites such as health and disease.[134] He also challenges the notion of mind over matter as a replication of the dualistic approach.[135] Dossey develops an extensive analysis of traditional and holistic medicine and their strengths and weaknesses.[136] He advocates a dynamic relationship between the two, and he observes again that spiritual health does not necessarily come with a healthy body. For example, while certain mystics demonstrate powerful signs of health due to the integration of body and spirituality, many of them have presented symptoms of poor physical health; this anomaly calls for a redefinition of health that is not centred exclusively on the physical body. Simply put, there are countless examples of "sickly saints and healthy sinners."[137]

Dossey also examines and proposes a change in the common perception of the doctor-patient relationship. The concept of the wounded healer (as opposed to the idea of the all-powerful physician) would do much to encourage persons to take more responsibility for their own health, as well as imparting a healing quality to an archetypal relationship in which the physician is also vulnerable.[138]

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[133]Dossey, *Beyond Illness,* 1-6.
[134]Ibid., 8-28.
[135]Ibid., 105-15.
[136]Ibid., 164-91.
[137]Larry Dossey, *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 13-14.
[138]Ibid., 193-207.

Summary

Dossey's ideas do not reject the traditional approach of modern medicine; rather, Dossey identifies the limitations of modern medicine and proposes measures that are inclusive rather than exclusive of other dimensions. These dimensions are taken from the concept of a consciousness that exerts influence within the body as well as throughout the universe. This energy may be described in terms of the concept of waves (as opposed to particles) in quantum physics: Waves possess a nonlocal and nonmaterial quality, whereas particles are subatomic structures that are both material and measurable. Thus consciousness is a quality that strongly influences not only the body but the whole universe, just as the movement of an atom on earth has repercussions in remote galaxies. This approach is radical compared to modern medicine's insistence that nothing of significance exists outside the scientific realm of measurable cells and molecules within the body. As we have seen, some medical scientists and physicists join feminist philosophers in the effort to redress the mind/body split that exists in science as well as in Roman Catholic sexual ethics.

Finally, this section has illustrated a maverick physician's effort to correct the extreme dualism that exists in modern medicine. His approach is very much toward integration, wholeness, unity, and harmony between all parts of the human body and between all humans and the created world. Medicine has put much emphasis on the analytical study of body parts, sometimes to the exclusion of other parts and values. This has resulted in the reductionism that we see in medical science today. It is not surprising that many people look to alternative medicines that are softer and more respectful of body, mind, and spirit. Feminism also has emphasized a similar direction toward wholeness, unity, and harmony between the sexes and creation.

Postmodernity: A Contemporary Philosophical Challenge to Traditional Sexual Values and Celibacy

This section identifies postmodern philosophy as a contemporary challenge to two thousand years of traditional Christian teachings about sexual morality. The postmodern approach conflicts in almost all respects with the current sexual theology of the Roman Catholic Church. To a lesser extent, it is also in conflict with many conservative Protestant theologies. Ironically, postmodernity (some might call it *post-Christianity*) can be paralleled with the Greek and Roman philosophies referred to in the Introduction, in that it represents a social, secular philosophy for our time. Let us recall that the literature survey concluded that many of the negative views of the Early Church regarding sexuality were not, in fact, Christian or even Jewish; these negative views permeated Christianity almost by osmosis from the prevailing non-Christian philosophies of those times. These philosophies tended to dichotomize light and darkness, body and spirit, and sex and virginity or celibacy. In many ways, postmodernism is the exact opposite of the Greek and Roman philosophies. However, the similarities bring us to the main focus of this dissertation: to ask, If the Church was able to assimilate, without protest, non-Christian philosophies in sexual matters that were prevalent at the time of its humble beginnings and maintain them for two thousand years, why could it not integrate and accept current non-Christian philosophies as new paradigms for change and adaptation to today's culture? Although postmodern philosophy has many approaches that are compatible with religious values, it is basically a secular social phenomenon.

This section is an attempt to describe postmodernism as a challenge to permanently held values. It is followed by a study of Michel Foucault's work on sexuality and the body (including the medical body) as an illustration of the major paradigm shifts brought about by

postmodernism and its consequences for the "permanent truths" of modernity and traditional sexual values.

From Premodernism to Postmodernism

Before I describe the notions of modernism and postmodernism, it will be helpful to add a word about *premodernity* or *premodern* thought. These terms refer to modes of thought in the period in history before the scientific and technical developments of the Cartesian era. Examples of premodern thought that still exist today are the age-old oriental religions such as Zen Buddhism and the wisdom of North American First Nations peoples who have not embraced the dualistic perspectives of Western thought. The First Nations concepts of the body, of healing, of time and space, and of death are eminently nonlocal, integrative, transformative, and unifying of all the elements that have been separated in Western dualism. Consequently, the term *premodern* is understood to mean the cultural and philosophical paradigms of a world in which the concept of the self is not yet separate from nature and the universe; rather, the self is defined by the social, religious, and political systems in which humans live and evolve.

Having described the characteristics of premodernism, it is crucial to also introduce the antecedent of postmodernism, commonly known as modernity or modernism. As Lawrence Cahoone writes, the term *modern* derives from the Latin *modo*, which simply means "of today, what is current, as distinguished from earlier times."[139] The terms *modernism* and *modernity,* however, mean something quite different. They refer to a definite period in the history of philosophy, which, in the words of John B. Cobb, Jr., "typically begin with Descartes in the seventeenth century." Cobb claims that Descartes had

[139]Lawrence Cahoone, ed., *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 11.

an "important role in restructuring philosophy on the basis of the thinking human subject," and for this reason, "philosophers generally regard Descartes as the father of modern philosophy."[140] For Cobb, this modern period refers "primarily to the creative developments in the four hundred years from 1500 to 1900."[141]

For Cahoone, the term *modernity* "refers to the new civilization developed in Europe and North America over the last several centuries and fully evident by the twentieth century."[142] This period, according to Cahoone, saw the emergence of

> a new, powerful technique for the study of nature, as well as new machine technologies and modes of industrial production that have led to an unprecedented rise in material living standards. . . . This modern Western civilization is generally characterized by other traits such as capitalism, a largely secular culture, liberal democracy, individualism, rationalism, humanism.[143]

Although it is a matter of opinion as to when modernity actually began, one thing is generally accepted: This period is characterized by unprecedented scientific and philosophical developments that delineate it from the Middle Ages. Such were the social and scientific developments of modernity.

As for the religious developments of modernity, one could correctly identify the beginnings of modernity with the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. This period includes the Counter-Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church with the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which vigourously affirmed virginity as superior to marriage and reaffirmed the universal requirement of celibacy for priests of the Latin Rite. The Council of Trent remains to this day the essential foundation of Catholic doctrine.[144] The consequence

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[140]Ibid., 3.
[141]Ibid., 6.
[142]Cahoone, 11.
[143]Ibid.
[144]Ranke-Heinemann, 115.

of these strong affirmations is an imposition of celibacy on those who might be called to the priesthood but not to celibacy; a depreciation of marriage as compatible with the priesthood; and its corollary, the depreciation of women and the body. In Cobb's words,

> Traditional Christian theology, preoccupied by the salvation of the soul, warned against yielding to the body's impulses. . . . The resulting tendency has been to view the body as evil. The church encouraged practices that detached the soul from the body's influence. . . . The soul belonged to a realm far superior to that of the body. The identification of oneself with the soul, therefore, inherently involved detachment from the body. . . . This detachment follows from the ways in which both Plato and Descartes distinguished body and soul. The body is in their view an object for the soul.[145]

Not much has changed in Catholic doctrine since the Council of Trent.

Another characteristic of this period is the truth claims, not only of Christianity but of many other religions. Cobb describes the truth claims of Christianity as "the traditional exclusion of all who did not accept Jesus Christ as God incarnate and unite with the church."[146] As we shall see, postmodernism values plurality and rejects these exclusive and universal claims to truth: "The influence of postmodernism on Christian theology is most visible among those who have renounced any universal claims."[147]

What is Postmodernism?

There is no simple answer to this question! Why? For the very reason that postmodernism is an intellectual method that is deliberately confusing and fluid! For example, it refuses to recognize many of the assumptions of modernity, such as the existence of permanent values, truths, and universal norms applicable to all cultures at all times and everywhere. Postmodernists usually deny the view that reality can be known *per*

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[145]Cobb, 86.
[146]Ibid., 37.
[147]Ibid., 15.

se, because what we perceive to be reality is, in fact, simply the result of discourse or language.

Lawrence Cahoone describes postmodernism as "a contemporary intellectual movement, or rather, a not very happy family of intellectual movements" who "not only express conflicting views, but are interested in barely overlapping subject matters: art, communications media, history, economics, politics, ethics, cosmology, theology, methodology, literature, education."[148] He adds that people who are labelled postmodernists have written some very important works that raise deep questions.[149] For the purposes of this dissertation I will use postmodern texts that are relevant to the philosophy and theology of the body in medicine and sexuality.

According to Cahoone, postmodernism refers to an intellectual movement that denies "the possibility of objective knowledge of the real world, or of a 'univocal' (single or primary) meaning of words and texts, the unity of the human self, the cogency of the distinction between rational inquiry and political action . . . even the possibility of truth itself."[150] This description already offers a strong philosophical challenge to the institutions that make claims to permanent truths!

Cahoone goes on to identify other postmodern criteria: "Postmodernism typically criticizes: *presence* or presentation (versus representation and construction), *origin* (versus phenomena), *unity* (versus plurality), and *transcendence* of norms (versus immanence)."[151] The method of postmodernists is to offer an "analysis of phenomena through *constitutive*

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[148]Cahoone, 1.
[149]Ibid.
[150]Ibid., 2.
[151]Ibid., 14.

otherness."[152] The first four concepts are objects of criticism by postmodernists, and the latter is a description of the postmodernist method.

Cahoone offers brief explanations of these complex terms, which I interpret as follows: Postmodernists typically reject the idea of presence, insofar as it refers to the quality of immediate human experience, in favour of representation—the sphere of linguistic signs, concepts, and construction, the products of human invention. They also reject the idea of origin (insofar as this means that humans can discover the source of whatever is under consideration) in favour of observing phenomena without requiring anything deeper or more fundamental. For example, they reject the idea that the meaning of a text may be better understood if we know the author's original intentions. Postmodernists reject the idea of unity in favour of *plurality*—meaning that there is no single meaning for a word or text—because of the multiplicity of factors and relations that resulted in its creation. Thus, a text can be read in so many ways that we cannot attain its complete or true meaning. Cahoone adds that the denial of transcendence is crucial to postmodernism. He affirms that norms such as truth, goodness, beauty, and rationality are no longer regarded as independent of processes they serve to govern or judge, but are rather products of and immanent in these processes. For example, when considering the idea of justice to judge a social order, postmodernism regards the idea itself as the product of the social relations that it serves to judge; this means that the idea was created at a certain time to serve certain interests and thus is dependent on a certain intellectual and social context. According to Cahoone, such a fluid definition of justice greatly complicates any claims about the justice of social relations.[153]

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[152]Ibid. Italics in text.
[153]Ibid., 14-15.

The reader will appreciate that these postmodernist notions have enormous implications for the interpretation of texts (including the Bible), the notion of natural law, the notion of sin, and so on, because all these definitions were—according to postmodernists—created in a certain social context and to serve certain interests! Of course, the notions of celibacy and virginity were also created in response to specific influences and needs to serve certain purposes. The complex application of the four aforementioned themes is used in a strategy that Cahoone calls *constitutive otherness.* For example, what appear to be cultural units—such as human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems, and social organizations—are maintained in apparent unity only through an active process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization.

Such methods and concepts enable an understanding of why postmodernists reject claims to universal truths, for example, that a word or text could have only one (unique) meaning. Everything becomes fluid, uncertain, and understandably confusing. But postmodernism is nonetheless a contemporary approach that is used almost universally (at least in the Western world), and the institutions of modernity must contend with it. For example, although not all feminist philosophies are considered postmodernist, the postmodern feminist critique of patriarchy is strong and effective, as we shall see. According to Cobb, the implication for Christianity is as follows: "Theological postmodernism has the advantage of abandoning all Christian claims to hegemony, of leaving to others the equal right to shape their lives according to their preferred system of meanings. . . . Furthermore, Christians formed in this way can be counted on to serve not only one an other but other neighbors as well without imposing their meanings and values

on them."[154] Finally, there are many methods, concepts, strategies, nuances, and categories of postmodernism that will not be discussed here. These notions, however, offer a glimpse of the magnitude of consequences that postmodernism presents for our times.

[154]Cobb, 16.

Michel Foucault: A Postmodern View of Sexuality and The Body

A previous section discussed how scientific medicine introduced an unfortunate dualism between body and spirit and how some modernist scientists, such as Larry Dossey, attempted to bring body and soul together in an effort to heal the whole person. Feminists contribute perspectives that are more inclusive and holistic as well. We also saw that Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, did not object to such dualism because it is in the business of saving souls; the body is less important than the soul, and in fact the body is viewed as a source of evil. And this is one of the few instances where Catholicism and science seem to agree with one another. Ironically, the Roman Catholic Church is greatly preoccupied with the physical expression of sexuality, sometimes at the expense of the wider context in which these actions take place, such as the presence of love.

In contrast, this section discusses Michel Foucault's postmodern insights into the sexual and medical body. An extensive literature search on sexuality and medicine yields extremely frequent references to Foucault's works. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was an eminent French scholar and philosopher. His influence and reputation became such that during the 1970s and 1980s he lectured all over the world. Foucault did not find the permanent truths of modernity to be either relevant or credible. Instead, he opined that through language and discourse we create categories and values that change throughout history and in various cultures. According to Foucault, the values that we hold as sacred are basically the product of culture and discourse rather than objective truths. In his works on sexuality and the body in medicine, Foucault posits that most of our thoughts on these matters are the result of social construction or simply what we can observe as phenomena. This section uses Foucault's works on sexuality and the body in medicine to

demonstrate that the certainties of modernity—including the quasi-absolute teachings of the Roman Catholic Church—are the result of public discourse more than anything else. Foucault also makes the point that power is not external to that discourse but is contained therein. What if all the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church about sexuality, celibacy, and the body are simply the result of its own enduring culture and immanent power? What if the Church's traditional teachings relating to sexuality are simply the perpetuation of outmoded ways of thinking that belong to another era?

Another reason the study of Foucault's medical body is important is that Foucault describes how medicine became dogmatized. This dogmatization, in turn, led to the medicalization of sexuality through the intricacies of medicine and politics.

The following paragraphs critique Michel Foucault's thought in two of his major works: *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*[155] and *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction.*[156] I will describe how Foucault's postmodernist views strongly challenge the permanent doctrines of church and society regarding sexuality and medicine. Finally, I will attempt to demonstrate that Foucault's approach to reality is definitely postmodern, thus challenging the certainties of modernity and the position of the Roman Catholic Church on matters related to sexuality and celibacy. References to Cahoone's criteria for postmodernism are used.

The Birth of the Clinic

In the very first sentence of *The Birth of the Clinic,* Foucault sets the stage for an unusual analysis of body as it is viewed by modern medicine: "This book is about space,

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[155]Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973).

[156]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

about language, and about death; it is about the act of seeing, the gaze."[157] We immediately have a sense of what his methodology will be: the relationship between language and what he calls *seeing* or *the gaze.* In a poignant illustration, he immediately proceeds to describe how an eighteenth-century physician, Pierre Pomme, treated a hysterical woman (using mainly frequent baths) with startling, unrealistic, and truly impossible results that could not but belong to the realm of myth and superstition.[158] This account is designed to illustrate that clinical observation is (or can be) as much a fantasy of the mind as an objective truth based in so-called reality. Thus, medical knowledge is derived from what can be seen, either in the mind (or imagination) or through clinical observation. Foucault's book, therefore, is an account of what is seen and how it is seen through what he calls the *clinical gaze,* during a relatively short but representative period (1780-1820) of medical history.

In his opening pages, Foucault contrasts Pomme's account with a different one, given by another physician (less than a hundred years later), who describes the brain of a man who suffered from meningitis with a much more realistic clinical description that is reminiscent of the medical observations of today. Foucault calls it a description "from which we have not yet emerged," adding that the difference between the two accounts "is both tiny and total."[159] Foucault pursues the argument, leaving room for the validity of Pomme's fantasy, which lacks "perceptual base," while the other physician's "qualitative precision" belongs "to a world of constant visibility."[160] Actually, both methods are the same: it is a question of perception and of seeing what one wants to see. Foucault proceeds to ask questions concerning the difference between the two gazes. His answer: "What has changed

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[157]Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* ix.
[158]Ibid.
[159]Ibid., x.
[160]Ibid.

is the silent configuration in which language finds support: the relation of situation and attitude to who is speaking and what is spoken about." He further asks, "From what semantic or syntactical change, can one recognize that language has turned into rational discourse?" In discussing "the moment when mutation in discourse took place," Foucault contends that one "must look before 'things' and 'words' have not yet been separated, and where—at the most fundamental level of language—seeing and saying are still one."[161] Thus, his method consists of examining phenomena as they relate to the language or discourse that is used to describe them.

Foucault continues to explain his method by re-examining the "visible and invisible" insofar as they are linked with the discussion between "what is stated and what remains unsaid." Thus, "the articulation of medical language and its object will appear as a single figure."[162] A further example of his method follows: "[This book] is a structural study that sets out to disentangle the condition of its history from the density of discourse." And further, "What counts in things said by men is . . . that which systemizes [their thoughts] from the outset, thus making them thereafter endlessly accessible to new discourses and open to the task of transforming them."[163] The foregoing statements give us a glimpse of Foucault's approach and methodology when analyzing the medical gaze. In the examples previously given, Foucault chronicles the development of modern medicine: Pomme's fantasies were replaced by clinical observation in such a way that "experience" had triumphed over "theory."[164] For Foucault, Pomme's myth had a certain truth as long as it pertained to a certain manner of seeing. This approach is far from the modern, traditional

[161]Ibid., xi.
[162]Ibid.
[163]Ibid., xix.
[164]Ibid.

methods of attempting to grasp reality and, with the help of reason, to capture its essence, to encapsulate or crystallize it. For individuals and for the church, the consequence of this postmodernist manner of seeing is that we see what we want to see, and through language and discourse we create concepts and categories. Although the dimension of faith is always required for believing and living the dogmas and moral teachings of Christianity, Foucault's explanation of the power of language and discourse accounts very well for the scepticism of unbelievers. That words have different meanings for different times and different cultures accounts for the often-heard comments about man-made religion; such comments imply that dogmas and moral teachings belong to a manner of seeing of a given culture at a given time in history.

At the conclusion of his book, Foucault criticizes the historical origin of ideas: "This book is, among others, an attempt to apply a method in the confused, under-structured, and ill-structured domain of the history of ideas."[165] Already, we can identify one of Cahoone's criteria for postmodernism: "It denies the possibility of returning to, recapturing, or even representing the origin, source, or any deeper reality behind phenomena."[166] Thus, postmodernism is "intentionally superficial, not through eschewing rigorous analysis, but by regarding the surface of things, the phenomena, as not requiring a reference to anything deeper or more fundamental."[167] Foucault's rigorous use of the gaze eminently fits this criterion. In a postmodern culture, the denial of the importance of origins accounts for major differences in the interpretation of Scripture and naturally lessens the importance of Church tradition(s). Consequently, for many postmodernists, the perennial truths mediated through religious traditions have little importance, if any at all.

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[165]Ibid., 195.
[166]Cahoone, 15.

Foucault explains the occurrence of disease in the human body as follows: "What was fundamentally invisible is suddenly offered to the brightness of the gaze." Foucault rejects the idea of an "unprejudiced" gaze: "It is the forms of visibility that have changed." And what has made the mutation possible was not "an act of psychological and epistemological purification" but rather "a syntactical reorganization of disease in which the limits of the visible and invisible follow a new pattern."[168] These statements concur with another one of Cahoone's criteria for postmodernism: the criticism of the notion of "presence" and the denial that anything is "immediately present . . . independently of signs, language, interpretation, disagreement, etc."[169] Again, the appearance of (physical) disease is intimately related to the language of discourse. *Sin* is theology's term for the diseases of the soul. Thus, according to postmodern interpretation, the notion of sin is a matter of the gaze as well, that is, a matter of perception and subjective opinion. The same can be said about the postmodernist view of interpretations of Scripture. This seems so true when one considers how various Christian traditions see different things in the same Bible text and come to very different conclusions; or when some of these same religious traditions see sin in certain moral actions such as premarital sex, masturbation, and homosexuality, while others do not see any sin in these at all. These differences in interpretation, which existed before the 1960s, are not the result of postmodernism alone.

Foucault's method is sceptical of history in the modern sense and of modernity's traditional methods of attaining knowledge and establishing objective concepts and categories. His contention is that doctors (and I would add moral theologians) attain knowledge on the basis of what they can "see"; knowledge is transformed in part by the

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[167]Ibid.

[168]Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* 195.

interplay between the visible and the invisible, with the language that is used to describe them as phenomena. Same with our theologies!

Between the introduction and the conclusion of his book, Foucault exposes his methodology through the development of various themes. One such theme is the criticism of certain myths:

> The years preceding and immediately following the [French] Revolution saw the birth of two great myths with opposing themes and polarities: the myth of a nationalized medical profession . . . invested at the level of man's bodily health . . . and the myth of a total disappearance of disease in an untroubled, dispassionate society restored to its original state of health.[170]

Foucault sharply criticized this view insofar as it meant the dogmatization of medicine and the imposition of not only free but compulsory health care, "a sacred task of the doctor" to care for the body, parallel to the care of the soul by priests.[171]

Foucault also establishes a close link between medicine and politics when criticizing such myths: "The first task of the doctor is . . . political: the struggle against disease must begin with a war against bad government. Man will be totally and definitely cured only if he is first liberated."[172] These myths are unrealistic and doomed to failure: "All this is so much day-dreaming . . . —all these values were soon to fade."[173] Another myth that Foucault identifies is the "definitive truth" of medical knowledge: "In the non-variable of the clinic, medicine, it was thought, had bound truth and time together."[174] These statements are Foucault's criticisms of the myths of modernity and of scientific medicine, and they are

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[169]Cahoone, 14.
[170]Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* 31-32
[171]Ibid., 32.
[172]Ibid., 33.
[173]Ibid., 34.
[174]Ibid., 55.

descriptive of another of Cahoone's criterion for postmodernism: the denial of "the possibility of objective knowledge of the real world."[175]

As previously stated, there has been a necessary alignment between politics and medicine in order to establish hospitals regulated by the state, to allow for the sick and the poor to become objects or "spectacles" for the medical gaze and its "tacit violence,"[176] to "police" epidemics,[177] to develop institutions for medical education, and to provide a legitimate place to perform autopsies.[178] Let us remember that autopsies were a crucial way of gaining medical knowledge through the medical gaze. According to Foucault, there is "a spontaneous and deeply rooted convergence between the requirements of *political ideology* and those of *medical technology.*"[179] This requirement frees the space for the medical gaze: "[Liberty must] have a world in which the gaze, free of all obstacle, is no longer subjected to the immediate law of truth: the gaze is not faithful to truth, nor subject to it, without asserting, at the same time, a supreme mastery."[180] These are powerful statements that are consistent with at least another element of postmodernism: the denial of "the cogency of distinctions between rational inquiry and political action."[181]

The above discussion and excerpts from Foucault's work on medicine can be summarized as follows:

> For clinical experience to become possible as a form of knowledge, a reorganization of the hospital field, a new definition of the status of the patient in society, and the establishment of a certain relationship between public assistance and medical experience, between health and knowledge, became necessary; the patient has to be enveloped in a collective, homogeneous space. It was also necessary to open up language to a whole

[175]Cahoone, 2.
[176]Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* 84.
[177]Ibid., 25.
[178]Ibid., 124-148.
[179]Ibid., 28 Italics in text.
[180]Ibid., 39.
[181]Cahoone, 2.

> new domain: that of a perpetual and objectively based correlation of the visible and the expressible.[182]

This concludes the discussion of *The Birth of the Clinic*. We have seen the convergence of a number of postmodernist themes in Foucault's work. It is an account of history that has no precedent. Further insights into Foucault's method will be presented as we study his work on sexuality.

History of Sexuality Vol. I: An Introduction

The following passage provides an apt introduction to Foucault's critique of modernity:

> Briefly, my aim is to examine the case of society which has been loudly castigating itself for its hypocrisy for more than a century, which speaks verbosely of its own silence, takes great pains to relate the things it does not say, denounces the powers it exercises, and promises to liberate itself from the very laws that have made it function. I would like to explore not only these discourses but also the will that sustains them and the strategic intention that supports them.[183]

Also in this work, Foucault utilizes an approach and a method that deny certain fundamental assumptions of Western philosophy, history, and theology, and he lays before us a brilliant and unprecedented critique of modernity. His thesis is that although there is an assumption that sexuality had been repressed in the two centuries preceding the writing of his book in the early 1970s, there has never been as much talk about what supposedly was repressed: "What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the* secret."[184] The proliferation of modern discourse on sexuality is thus

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[182]Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic,* 196.
[183]Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1,* 8.
[184]Ibid., 35. Italics in text.

described: "Whether in the form of a subtle confession in confidence or an authoritarian interrogation, sex—be it refined or rustic—had to be put into words."[185]

It is this putting into words that forms new categories of sexuality, including the word *homosexual,* which did not exist prior to 1869 and came into common usage only in the 1880s and 1890s. This is not to say that there was no homosexual behaviour before that time, but it did not constitute an identity.[186] The obvious implication is that homosexuality and the labelling of persons as homosexuals were, according to Foucault, social constructions that emerged with the development of medicine and psychiatry at the turn of the twentieth century. Such categorization also applies to other forms of sexual "deviation" that do not need to be described here. It is worthy of note, though, that in cultures outside of Europe and North America, the terms *homosexual* and *homosexuality* are not widely known, or homosexuals are purported not to exist. This is not surprising, because homosexuality is a Western construct. Or, shall we say (as people in some cultures do) that homosexuality is simply the product of the decadent West? Of course, this does not mean that homosexuality or homosexual acts do not exist in other cultures, but as long as these and other prohibited sexual acts remain secret (unseen), they are said to be nonexistent. The public avowal of a homosexual identity would be considered abhorrent, reprehensible, and a cause for severe prosecution or punishment in many cultures. This was also the case in the West until a few decades ago and is still the case in some pockets of our culture. In any case, the requirement of secrecy in some Eastern cultures also serves to repress any inclination to exercise public pressure for recognition of, for example, gay rights. It is interesting to note that what remains invisible (unseen) does not have to be dealt with, but when the invisible becomes

[185]Ibid., 32.

visible (seen), churches and societies have no choice but to deal it! The interplay between the visible and the invisible, the seen and the unseen, gives full credit to Foucault's analysis!

The same dialectic applies to the role of feminism in church and society. Until feminism brought to light the abuses, inequalities, and depreciation of women, society did not have to deal with the injustices perpetrated against women. Since then, there has been progress in terms of integrating women in the professions, politics, and many other areas of public life; but the Catholic Church still has to address the issue of the role of women in all aspects of its life and government.

Let us consider another example that confirms Foucault's analysis: the sexual abuse of minors by Roman Catholic priests in North America. As long as the sexual abuses remained a secret, Church and society did not have to deal with them. But as revelations of these abuses came to light in public and legal discourse, there was no choice but to deal with them! And the Church did not deal with these abuses as long as they remained a secret; in fact, if they had not come to light, it is almost certain that the Church would have continued to deal with them by quietly sending priests for therapy or reassigning them to other parishes. The Church saw these abuses almost exclusively as individual sins committed by priests and thus relegated them to the sphere of confidentiality or to the sacred trust of individual sacramental confession (invisible, unseen), while society saw the same abuses as crimes. Each institution has its own culture, and each saw something different in these abuses. The Church forgot that the abuses were both illegal and profoundly damaging to the victims; when society accused the Church of criminal behaviour because of its perceived cover-ups, the Church accused the media, society, and public institutions of persecuting or

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[186]Pat Caplan, ed., introduction to *The Social Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 5.

hating the Catholic Church. This behaviour cost the Church dearly: it fell into unprecedented disgrace, cardinals and bishops were accused of illegal cover-ups, and priests were sent to jail. In July 2007, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles had to pay 660 million dollars to more than 500 victims of abuse within its jurisdiction alone!

We have seen earlier that according to Foucault, the culture of modernity needed to engage in discourse and to confess sexual behaviour to various new and emerging professions such as medicine and psychiatry. With psychoanalysis, sexuality became the object of scientific inquiry and medical categorization. In some cultures, confession is not necessary or even desirable. In fact, Foucault contends that in the last three centuries the relatively uniform Middle Ages view concerning sex (sin and penance), has been "broken apart, scattered, and multiplied in an explosion of distinct discursivities which took form in demography, ethics, pedagogy, biology, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, ethics, pedagogy, and political criticism."[187] It is not surprising, therefore, that Foucault accused modernity of hypocrisy in sexual matters; while talking of repression, the constant discourse and classification of sexual matters kept (and still keeps) sex on the forefront of political and social consciousness.

Of crucial importance in Foucault's analysis of sexuality is the dimension of power. Speaking of power in the context of so-called sexual aberrations, Foucault writes,

> The machinery of power that focused on this alien strain did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality: it was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a *raison d'être* and a natural order of disorder.[188]

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[187]Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1,* 33.
[188]Ibid., 43-44.

This text illustrates how Foucault views the role of power in the development of sexual paradigms, categories, and identities, while accusing modernity of hypocrisy. Here we again see how, through analyzing phenomena, Foucault arrives at his postmodernist conclusions. He adds, "This form of power required an exchange of discourses that extorted admissions, and confidences that went beyond the questions that were asked."[189]

Through Christian confession and the development of various professional disciplines such as medicine and education (which also require a form of confession), sexuality was maintained in a discourse supported by and made possible through power. "The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, electrifying surfaces, dramatizing troubled moments. It wrapped the sexual body in its embrace."[190] Power and sexual pleasure sustained each other: "The pleasure discovered [through confession] fed back the power that encircled it."[191] Contrary to our common way of thinking, power is not external; it is immanent in the sense that it does not come from external sources, but from within the relationships that we construct. This immanent power is in fact "the binding force that traverses the local oppositions and links them together."[192] Power, for Foucault, is not a negative, external, or even oppressive force; power is distributed within structures and gives knowledge its particular, individual shape, through "ceaseless struggles and confrontations," a process that "transforms, strengthens, or reverses them."[193] Thus "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."[194] It is not surprising to hear

[189]Ibid., 44.
[190]Ibid.
[191]Ibid., 44-45.
[192]Ibid., 94.
[193]Ibid., 92.
[194]Ibid., 93.

him say, "Let us not look for the headquarters that preside over its rationality."[195] Power relations are formed in all relations where differences exist.

Two other important concepts in Foucault's analysis of sexuality are *ars erotica* (understood as a practice and accumulated as experience) and without reference to external regulation, utility, or prohibition. On the other hand, Western civilization does not possess this form of eroticism: "It is undoubtedly the only civilization to practice a *scientia sexualis*, the only civilization to have developed over the centuries procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power strictly opposed to the art of initiations."[196] As we have seen, this truth telling consists of the various forms of confession that are present in the Western world. Foucault explains in considerable detail how the sexual confession came to be constituted in scientific terms.[197] There is no need to discuss this further, except to acknowledge that sex has indeed been the object of scientification in most of the professions of the Western world.

Foucault continues his thesis by explaining the rules or methods by which power and knowledge work together to achieve the emergence of sexual paradigms.[198] One is the *rule of immanence,* by which Foucault denies the existence of a "free and disinterested scientific inquiry." According to Foucault, "between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority." One must look instead to the "local centers of power-knowledge, such as the relations between penitents and confessors which provide a back and forth movement of forms of subjugation and schemas of knowledge."[199] Here we see, once again, the theme of immanence, which is crucial to postmodernists such as

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[195]Ibid., 95.
[196]Ibid., 58.
[197]Ibid., 65-73.
[198]Ibid., 98-102.

Foucault. Then there are the *rules of continual variations*; here we see the opposite of the static, crystallized, and rational approach to attaining truth and knowledge that is characteristic of modernity. Foucault explains the *rule of double conditioning* as follows: "No 'local center' or 'pattern of transformation' could function if . . . it did not eventually enter into an overall strategy." And inversely, no strategy could achieve comprehensive effects if it did not gain support from precise and tenuous relations serving as its prop and anchor.[200]

Finally, according to the *rule of tactical discourses,* we must conceive discourse "as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. . . . [There is] a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies."[201] Of the complex interactions between these rules, it will suffice to observe that these "cautionary prescriptions"[202] are not recognizable as modern approaches to knowledge and interpretation.

Having explained the method, Foucault sets out to explain four "great strategic unities which formed specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex."[203] Actually, they are the strategies that led to the production of the very concept of sexuality. They can be summarized as (a) a sexualization of women's bodies because of their role as child bearers (he uses the term *hysterization* to characterize woman's sexual "nervousness" as Mother and educator of children); (b) the pedagogization of the sexuality of children because children must be protected from dangers of sexual activity; (c) a "socialization of procreative behavior," which gives couples a social responsibility to society in terms of

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[199]Ibid., 98.
[200]Ibid., 99.
[201]Ibid., 100.
[202]Ibid., 98.

population growth; and (d) a "psychiatrization of perverse pleasure" in which the sexual instinct was isolated and analyzed in terms of normalization or pathologization of sexual behavior, with resulting technology to remedy its pathological manifestations.[204] Foucault ascribes a positive intent to these strategies. He insists that they were not intended to fight or to struggle against sexuality or even to gain control of it:

> In actual fact, what was involved, rather, was the very production of sexuality. . . . It is the name that can be given to a historical construct . . . in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances are linked with one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.[205]

Here we have the idea that issues concerning sexuality were the result of social construction through discourse and culture, as opposed to modernity's claim to an objective method of arriving at universal truth and knowledge, separated from language and culture. This concept is a tremendous challenge to the perennial moral teachings of Christianity. Foucault's criticism of modernity can also apply to the Catholic Church because, as we have seen, the latter has been singularly preoccupied with questions (and answers) related to sexuality and celibacy for centuries.

In the penultimate chapter of his book, Foucault sets out to demonstrate that social constructs have shifted ever time, in various Western societies, professions, and classes.[206] What is important to retain here is that in the last three centuries, there was no end of inventiveness as to the methods and strategies that would be used to ensure that sexuality be kept in the forefront of social consciousness; this he calls the *deployment of sexuality.*[207]

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[203]Ibid., 103.
[204]Ibid., 104-105.
[205]Ibid., 105-106.
[206]Ibid., 115-131.
[207]Ibid. "The Deployment of Sexuality" is the title of part four (pp. 75-131) of *History of Sexuality, Volume 1.*

Finally, Foucault notes that in recent centuries there was a shift from the power to dispose of the life of one's children and slaves, to a new view of the body as machine and of the body "imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis for the biological processes" related to life and health. This shift led to the formation of rules and regulations that he calls the "bio-politics of the population."[208] The state and the professions replaced the "old power of death that symbolized sovereign power" in favour of an "administration of bodies and the calculated management of life."[209] What are the consequences of this shift? Foucault uses the term *bio-history* to designate "the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfered with one another"; he uses the term *bio-power* for "what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life."[210] Thus we see the continuing threads in Foucault's method, an intricate interplay of language, discourse, culture, power, and politics that he uses to arrive at truth and knowledge in a worldview that is radically different from that of modernity. The consequence is a sort of fluid relativism that directly confronts absolutist claims. Many members of society and church are wary of such absolutist claims; they are influenced, often unconsciously, by postmodern philosophy.

Foucault as a Postmodernist

This section uses Cahoone's criteria to highlight the characteristics of Foucault's postmodernism. It is difficult to find any non-postmodernist themes in Foucault's writings. If there were any, these would appear insignificant in comparison to the overwhelming evidence of his postmodernism.

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[208]Ibid., 139.
[209]Ibid., 139-140.
[210]Ibid., 143.

Foucault belongs to a French school of thought of the 1960s that is designated by Cahoone (and many others) as *poststructuralist*; this school "denies the possibility of objective knowledge of the real world, 'univocal' . . . meaning of words and texts, the cogency of distinctions between rational inquiry and political action, literal and metaphorical meaning . . . and even the possibility of truth itself."[211] All of these criteria are consistent with Foucault's method and approach. Foucault, as we have seen, is very suspicious of universal truths, which he dismisses as myths. He does not accept objective rationality as a criterion to arrive at truth. On the contrary, he asserts that the "truths" of modernity do not really exist; what does exist is the intricate interweaving of power, knowledge, and discourse to arrive at new categories and forms of knowledge that are neither universal or permanent. They change with the course of history and culture. This is the whole point in the medical "gaze" as well as in Foucault's archaeology of sexuality. Furthermore, Foucault rejects that there can be any objective truth that would be separate from power and politics. In fact, power and politics are constructors of knowledge, which shifts with time and culture.

Postmodernism "regards certain important principles, methods, or ideas characteristic of modern Western culture as obsolete or illegitimate."[212] In Foucault's writings there is enough criticism of modernity (not all of which is reported in this discussion) to affirm that his method fits this criterion. Foucault reacts against *foundationalism,* which can be described as "the attempt to establish the foundations of knowledge and judgment . . . since Descartes."[213]

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[211]Cahoone, 2.
[212]Ibid.
[213]Ibid., 3.

Foucault's affirmation of Pomme's myth as having as much validity as the other physician's realistic clinical description is intriguing. This speaks to postmodernism's "recognition of pluralism and indeterminacy . . . a renunciation of intellectual hopes for simplicity, completeness, and certainty,"[214] all of which is characteristic of Foucault's works.

As we have seen, Foucault rejects the traditional, modern approach to history; his methodology is "not really concerned with facts" but with the "meaning" of the facts in medicine and sexuality; he also offers a "historical analysis of how human society and the human self develop over time" and points out "how and why modern civilization had gone wrong."[215] These three characteristics of postmodernism eminently apply to Foucault's method.

Cahoone also names Foucault among influential French intellectuals of the 1960s who "wanted to fight the political and academic establishment" and who used structuralism to focus on the "super-individual structures of language, ritual and kinship which make the individual what he or she is." This method emphasizes that "it is not the self that creates culture, but culture that creates the self." This idea is evident in Foucault's approach to the body in medicine and sexuality. In structuralism, "the study of abstract relations is the key to understanding human existence." Although structuralism offered a way of avoiding reduction to the natural sciences while retaining objective scientific methods, "poststructuralism" rejected these scientific pretences and saw philosophical problems in the "attempt by human beings to be 'objective' about themselves."[216] Cahoone lists Foucault as

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[214]Ibid., 4.
[215]Ibid.
[216]Ibid., 5.

a postmodernist who illustrates poststructuralist methodology.[217] Several characteristics of poststructuralism are identifiable to Foucault's approach and radical departure from modernity: Poststructuralism "seemed to announce the end of rational inquiry into truth, the illusory nature of any unified self, the impossibility of clear and unequivocal meaning, the illegitimacy of Western civilization, and the oppressive nature of all modern institutions."[218] Furthermore, Foucault's poststructuralism also "exhibit[s] hidden paradoxes and modes of social domination operating within all products of reason";[219] we have seen this poststructuralism in his rejection of the myths of the political alliances with medicine and the paradoxes that he highlighted in the hypocrisy of sexual repression in his work on sexuality.

Finally, Foucault's method also applies to the four postmodern themes that are described by Cahoone: *presence* or presentation (versus representation and construction), which we have already discussed; *origin* (versus phenomena); *unity* (versus plurality); and *transcendence* of norms (versus their immanence).[220] We have seen how Foucault uses these themes in his works. For example, he simply observes phenomena in the medical gaze and sexuality, rather than trying to find truth behind what he sees. For Foucault, Pomme's myth—a complete fantasy that has no basis in reality—has as much validity as a clinical description based on experiential observation in clinical medical practice. Immanence is a central rule of his method; also, power is immanent and found everywhere. Plurality is found in the complex analysis of the body in medicine and sexuality.

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[217]Ibid., 270-271.
[218]Ibid. 5-6.
[219]Ibid., 6.
[220]Ibid., 14. Italics in text.

Cahoone also describes the postmodernist method as *constitutive otherness,* which is a complex application of the four themes just mentioned and that have already been described in previous pages. For Cahoone, "what appears to be cultural units . . . are maintained in their apparent unity only through an active process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization,"[221] This method results in the emergence of social constructs.

The Significance of Michel Foucault

It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of Michel Foucault's postmodern analysis of medicine, politics, and sexuality. His work is brilliant and quite original. Victor J. Seidler praises Foucault for his insights but criticizes him for "failing to grapple with gender." Seidler notes one of Foucault's contributions as follows: "Whereas both Newtonian physics and Cartesian rationalism had worked for the establishment of the sovereignty of reason, Foucault showed that this involved an act of exclusion of anything that constituted a threat to its rule. It is clear . . . that Foucault already saw this exclusion as itself a cultural form of madness."[222] According to Seidler, one of Foucault's weaknesses is "his failure to recognize how men and women grow up with a different experience of sexuality." He adds that "feminism has challenged the ways in which women are objectified as sexual objects, maintaining that these indicate much more than the language in which men grow up to think of women. . . . Such objectification is an aspect of a relationship of power which profoundly affects the freedom and autonomy of women."[223] Here we see the limits of Foucault's approach, but many feminist philosophers praise his insights.

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[221]Ibid., 16.

[222]Victor J. Seidler, "Reason, Desire, and Male Sexuality," in Pat Caplan, ed., *The Social Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 82-83).

[223]Ibid., 84.

Foucault's work on sexuality challenges the idea that sex was repressed during the Victorian era. On the contrary, because both Church and state were deeply preoccupied with sexuality in all its dimensions, sex was constantly present in public discourse. The effort to control discussions about sexuality led to even more public discourse and sexual categorization. The result was the need to confess sexual secrets to various professions such as medicine and psychiatry. Until very recently, the Catholic Church required as much detail as possible when penitents confessed sexual sins. Numerous manuals for confessors and penitents confirm this fact. Foucault brilliantly exposes these social and religious dynamics and describes the power relations that are present in the interplay between the visible (discourse) and the invisible (secrecy). "Foucault's *History of Sexuality* has certainly been useful in helping to rethink the concept of repression and the tacit conceptions of sexuality it can leave us with."[224] Foucault also joins the ranks of those who have studied early Christianity and discovered the influence of outside forces in the formulation of Christian ethics: "Foucault maintained that Christianity had not invented its own code of sexual behaviour, but rather that Christianity had accepted an already existing code, reinforced it, and given it a much larger and more widespread strength that it had before."[225] Again, we see how Christianity integrated external influences in the formulation of its own sexual ethics.

Despite the limitations that we have seen above, feminist literature and feminist philosophers also recognize Foucault's influence and his enormous stature: "Few thinkers have influenced contemporary feminist scholarship on the themes of power, sexuality, and the subject to the extent that Michel Foucault has. Indeed, even scholars who dispute this

[224]Ibid., 105.
[225]Ibid., 89.

thinker's claims are compelled to acknowledge the contribution his work represents in these areas. The years since Foucault's death have been marked by intense interest in his writings, feminist or otherwise."[226]

Summary

This study of Foucault's works challenges the writer and the reader to rethink the assumptions of the doctrines, truths, and certainties of modernity. Many Catholics find that their Church lives too much in the past by hanging on to teachings that it continues to hold as absolute truths. Many others hang on to these truths because of their faith in the Church's authority or simply because of the need for security and comfort in knowing that the Church represents God, should be respected, and thus should have the final say. However, the Church cannot continue to remain indifferent to the calls of the modern world (or should I say postmodern world), when its members are calling for a change in thinking regarding sexuality in general and the maintenance of the rule of celibacy in particular. Michel Foucault and many others may appear to be iconoclastic in challenging the Church's authority, but the Church must also consider the prophetic gifts of its own members when they call for a reform of the requirement of celibacy. Finally, the study of secular postmodernism and Foucauldian philosophy are critical to the goal of this dissertation because they offer an alternative to the long-held paradigms of modernity.

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[226]Monique Deveaux, "Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault," in Susan J. Hekman, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 211-212.

The Ethics of Abortion: The Enduring Debate

The themes of postmodernism were described in a previous section. The intention there was to explain how postmodernism is in direct opposition to the assumptions of modernity in relation to dualism and sexuality. Michel Foucault was presented as an influential example of postmodern approaches to medicine and sexuality.

The current section goes one significant step further. The contentious issue of abortion represents the inevitable clash between two worldviews and two very different philosophical constructs. Consequently, the focus of this section is to highlight the basic anthropologies that support the principles used to make ethical decisions related to the themes of sexuality, particularly abortion.

To examine the ethics of abortion in this context may seem odd. Yet, after all, there is a relationship between sex (or abstinence from it) and abortion. Be that as it may, the issue of abortion is one of the most contentious ethical and legal issues of our time. For this reason, I have chosen abortion to account for the radical differences that various secular and religious groups use to fuel the debate.

The progressive liberalization of abortion laws during the late 1960s and early 1970s has led to the widespread legalized practice of abortion, even what has come to be known as *abortion on demand* in many Western societies. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church and a number of more or less prominent Christian debaters radically opposed the relaxation of abortion laws and the practice of abortion.

It is my observation that the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the liberalization of abortion laws, the emergence of feminism, and the development of the gay rights lobby—all of which occurred within the same time frame—are all the result of postmodernism.

As previously noted, postmodern discourse makes room for plurality and diversity, rather than a single meaning or purpose. Thus postmodernists do not adhere to traditional ideas concerning the purpose of sexuality; on the contrary, they have developed the recognition of various sexualities, including premarital intercourse, homosexuality, and the right of women to control their bodies and reproductive choices. Therefore, what is said in this section about abortion also applies to other sexual practices and issues, because the philosophical and theological constructs are basically the same. Taking into consideration certain nuances, we will see that, generally speaking, (a) the groups that strongly oppose abortion also oppose homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and reproductive choice; and (b) those who support abortion rights and practices are usually open to other sexualities.

Nonetheless, the ethics of abortion is a crucial issue because it involves another human being, or at least another potential human being. That is why, at this point, it seems crucial to engage in a deeper study of the issue of abortion.

What Is Abortion?

Abortion is the end of a pregnancy before viability, that is, before the fetus is able to sustain its own life outside the womb of the mother. When this phenomenon occurs naturally, it is usually referred to as *spontaneous abortion* or *miscarriage.* For the purposes of this study, *abortion* means the direct and intentional removal of the contents of a woman's uterus, for any reason, after the fertilization of the female ovum with the male sperm.

The intent of this section is to identify the major perspectives and operative principles that animate the discussion concerning the ethics of abortion in Western society and in the Western religious traditions. It will illustrate how such views and principles serve

to develop the theological and ethical stances advocated by a number of religious traditions such as the Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican traditions and several Protestant traditions. This study will also identify the commonalities and differences that emerge between these groups and determine the major and minor profiles of convergence or divergence among them. Because language and discourse are powerful vehicles for describing concepts and establishing categories, a number of terms will be defined to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding or ambiguity. These terms are consistently present in almost all forums where the question of abortion is addressed.

The Question of Ensoulment

At the heart of the abortion debate is the concept of *ensoulment,* which refers to the moment or process in which the nonmaterial entity of life, or what is commonly referred to as the soul, joins the body of the fetus. For many traditions, God has sovereignty as Creator of the soul and Giver of Life; thus life must not be tampered with or interfered with by humans. But when does God create the soul? Has the soul been transmitted from generation to generation since Adam? Are souls ready made and waiting to be embodied in a human being through the joining of sperm and ovum? Does God create the soul at the moment of conception? Or does ensoulment occur at a later stage of fetal development? If so, at what stage does it occur? There is no consensus in answer to these questions. Yet, the time of ensoulment is fundamental to the religious discussion concerning abortion.

What Constitutes a Human Person?

Closely related to the concept of ensoulment is the controversy surrounding the idea of *personhood.* When does the fetus become a human person? Is it at the time of conception? Is it at the time of ensoulment? Is it at the time of *viability*—the stage of

development at which the fetus can live and breathe on its own outside the mother's womb? A third element of discussion is the scientifically proven fact that when the male sperm joins the female ovum, the result is an entirely new and different entity, distinct from each parent. Does the fetus's distinctness constitute personhood? Also pivotal to the abortion debate is the idea that a woman has or should have the right to choose or dispose of the products of conception in her womb, as with any other piece of tissue. Opponents of this position disagree on the grounds that the fetus is a distinct human being and therefore deserves dignity, respect, and life.

The Secular and Civil Debate

In the past few decades, civil courts in North America have allowed abortion to be performed during the first trimester of pregnancy when the life and health of the mother are in jeopardy. But does the concept of health also include socioeconomic conditions such as poverty, geographical isolation, single parenthood, adolescent pregnancy, rape, incest, and fetal deformity? Legislation has evolved to allow abortion to be performed when any or none of these conditions are present, leading to the concept of abortion on demand for birth control purposes or for other reasons such as convenience.

Closely related to this development is the idea that a woman has the right to control her own body and that abortion is a private matter between herself and her physician. Opponents of this position argue that the fetus is distinct from the mother and, as such, has a right to life. The counterargument is that no one can claim a right to be conceived, nor a right to be born.

Although abortion during the first trimester has been firmly established in our culture during the last few decades, there has been more reluctance to allow abortion to be

performed during the second trimester. One of the reasons for this is that the second trimester is a time when a fetus can be viable outside the womb, either on its own or through technical means. Another reason is that abortion at this stage is more dangerous to the health of the mother. Yet, second trimester abortions are routinely performed when, for example, fetal abnormality is detected and a decision is made to terminate the pregnancy. Of course, abortion is also used at any stage of pregnancy when the fetus is deemed to have died in the womb.

More recently, abortions have been performed when a fetus is in the process of being born. This procedure, which is still uncommon, is called *partial birth abortion*; it consists in crushing the skull of the fetus and extracting the brain while the fetus is in the process of being born. This procedure is supposed to be allowed only in extreme circumstances, when the life of the mother is in immediate peril; however, opponents contend that it has been and will be performed for less serious reasons. Although it is impossible to predict the future with any degree of certainty, this procedure has the potential of leading to the legalization of abortion at any stage of pregnancy, including at the time of birth.

Language and the Issue of Choice

It will not surprise the reader, therefore, that the issue of abortion has been addressed with great conviction and emotion by both those who oppose and those who favour abortion, using a variety of terms to describe their convictions. The term *pro-choice* is used to designate persons or groups that favour abortion under certain restricted circumstances, or who simply promote what has come to be known as abortion on demand. As mentioned earlier, current legislation allows abortion on demand, at least during the first trimester of

gestation. The term *anti-choice* is a derogatory term used by pro-choice groups to identify those who allegedly wish to impose their personal or religious views on the rest of society in order to restrict or eliminate abortions.

Some persons or groups who oppose abortion at the taxpayers' expense do not do so on moral grounds; their objection is usually based on the conviction that abortion is not a legitimate medical procedure, particularly if it is being used as a method of birth control. Others wish to restrict abortions to a minimum, for example, when necessary to save the life of the mother. Still others oppose the procedure at all times because they believe that human life begins at the instant of conception and that one life should not be chosen over another. In varying degrees, all of these persons and groups usually identify themselves as *pro-life*; however, this term is offensive to pro-choicers because it implies that they themselves do not value life. The term *anti-abortion* is increasingly used to designate those who take violent actions against abortion providers or clinics.

The terms *conception, fertilization, implantation, zygote, blastocyst, embryo,* and *fetus* are used to describe the various stages of fetal development from the time of the union of the sperm and the ovum to the time of birth. Whereas the terms *baby* and *child* usually refer to a child that has already been born, they are often used by pro-life advocates to designate the unborn fetus, thereby emphasizing its dignity and right to life.

The preceding sections exemplify the complexity of the debate surrounding pregnancy termination, the ambiguity of the language, the lack of consensus, and the irreconcilable differences that exist between various persons or groups on the issue of abortion. Religion (or the absence of it) plays a pivotal role in the debate. In the next

sections, we will see how the Judeo-Christian traditions participate in or attempt to resolve the complex issue of abortion.

Abortion and the Western Religious Traditions

The secular and civil debate concerning abortion is largely influenced by our religious traditions. As in other spheres of our existence, there is no consensus within these traditions concerning the nature of the fetus and the permissibility of abortion.

Of course, no one denies that the product of conception consists of human cells. The religious discussion centres around the time during pregnancy when the fetus becomes human, that is, when the fetus is considered more than a few undifferentiated cells that can be disposed of at will and without consequence. Some traditions posit that the fetus is unique enough to be considered fully human from the moment of conception. This position usually equates abortion with murder.

For others, to say that the fetus is human is not enough: When does it become fully human in the sense that its life must be protected as much as any other human life? Some people argue that the latter never occurs as long as the fetus is inside the womb, despite the fact that a fetus is usually viable outside the womb at six months' gestation. Of course, such babies are very premature, but their lives can very often be saved, particularly if no other abnormalities are present.

Others argue that the fetus does not or should not enjoy the full protection of the law because, although human, it is not yet a person. Then the debate centres around the time when the fetus acquires personhood. When does a human being become a person? Some say that it is only at the time of ensoulment. Then when does ensoulment occur?

Some believe that ensoulment occurs at the time of conception; others believe that it occurs when the fetus can breathe outside the womb on its own.

At the other extreme are those who contend that in order to be considered fully human, the fetus must be born. In between these opposing views, there is a whole range of beliefs, principles, and pronouncements designed to address and weigh the value of the life and health of the mother against the life of the fetus. From a holistic perspective, socioeconomic conditions can become an adequate reason for aborting a fetus, even if the physical life of the mother is not at risk. Many Christian traditions will honour and respect a woman's decision to seek an abortion in these circumstances. However, it is to be noted that the majority of traditions have wrestled with the issue of abortion with the utmost seriousness. For example, few, if any, would sanction abortion as a means of birth control or for reasons of convenience or expediency. All would agree that the fetus is at least a life *in potentia*, that is, a potential life.

Equally important and operative in the debate is the primacy of individual conscience. Many mainline Protestant churches consider freedom of conscience to take precedence over the conscience-binding pronouncements and sanctions that emanate from highly structured and authoritarian traditions. On the other hand, there are very democratic and loosely organized churches that are adamantly against abortion. These differences often depend on how the Bible is interpreted and how authority is exercised in each church.

Finally, as in any human organization, every religious group has its dissenters. Inclusive churches welcome such opposition as an opportunity for fruitful and respectful discussion, while others tend to exclude or excommunicate their dissenting members. Here it is appropriate to identify certain traditions and to describe their beliefs concerning the

permissibility of abortion. This section does not do justice to the intricate details of the theological and ethical reasoning of each tradition. However, highlighting a few major traditions will help to identify some common threads and divergences. The list does not pretend to be exhaustive, but it is representative of how various Judeo-Christian traditions approach the issue of pregnancy termination.

The Jewish Tradition

Judaism is identified mainly through the Reformed, Conservative, and Orthodox traditions. The Hebrew Bible is interpreted differently within these traditions, especially in regard to the application of Jewish Law. Jews rely heavily on two schools of rabbinical thought for such interpretation. Still, there is a general consensus among Jews that human life begins at birth, when the newborn takes its first breath. Before birth, the fetus is considered to be nonlife, subject to the life of the mother. Thus, the question of ensoulment is a nonissue for most Jews, and because of this, abortion is not considered to be murder. Abortion might even be mandated in cases where the life of the mother could be in extreme danger, because her life takes precedence over that of the fetus. Nonetheless, no Jew would take abortion lightly, because the fetus is considered to be a potential life. For this reason, abortions are not encouraged as a means of birth control or for mere convenience.

The Eastern Orthodox Tradition

The Eastern Orthodox Church is the most ancient Christian religious tradition. Its approach to bioethical questions is based on natural law, Scripture, and Tradition. *Tradition* can best be described as "the mind of the Church," which includes the declaration of ecumenical and local councils, the writings of early Church Fathers, canon law, and the

penitentials. The writings of modern Orthodox ethicists are subject to revisions by episcopal, synodal, and general ecclesial critique.

Central to Eastern Orthodox theology is the affirmation, based in Scripture, that humans are created in the image and likeness of God. The fulfilment of humans is *theosis,* which means "divinization." Each human person is in the process of becoming more like God; therefore, while human nature is acknowledged, human existence is more than conformity to that nature.

Eastern Orthodoxy has had a long-standing opposition to abortion and equates it with murder. This position dates back to the beginnings of the Church. The Orthodox do not make any distinctions concerning the various stages of fetal development; ensoulment is considered to take place at the time of conception. Thus the fetus must not be destroyed under any circumstance, whether it is fully formed or not. Abortions are not sanctioned for economic and social reasons; the argument that a woman can dispose of the contents of her womb because it is her body is equally rejected, because the child is considered to be a human being fully distinct from both the mother and father. Nor is rape or incest a good enough reason to dispose of a fetus; it is recommended that a woman who has been raped immediately avail herself of medical assistance in order to prevent conception.

Finally, the only instance in which an abortion is permissible according to the official teachings of Orthodox Christianity is when the life of the mother is in danger. In such a case, abortion is considered to be an *involuntary sin.*[227]

[227]Information for this section is mainly from Stanley S. Harakas, *For the Health of Body and Soul: An Eastern Orthodox Introduction to Bioethics* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1980), 29-30.

The Roman Catholic Tradition

Although the position of the Roman Catholic Tradition on the matter of abortion has experienced some shifts throughout history, the current position is quite similar to that of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The authority structure of the two churches is also similar, but the approach to ethical reasoning is different. According to the Roman Catholic Church, abortion is not permitted under any circumstance. However, an indirect abortion is permissible when the intent is not to destroy the life of the fetus but to save the life of the mother through a medical procedure that would not attack and kill the fetus directly. This is called the principle of *double effect*; an intervention is made to save the life of the mother, but its consequence entails the death of the fetus.

The Anglican Tradition

The Anglican Tradition is listed in a separate section because it does not identify with Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, or Protestantism. Anglicanism has no central, unifying, universal, or binding authority structure; although Anglicans are present in most countries of the world, consensus on Church matters is achieved through Synods that are independently held in each country. A general conference (Lambeth) is called approximately every ten years, but its deliberations are not binding on its member countries.

Like the religious traditions discussed in previous sections, Anglicans do not take abortion lightly. Anglicans support and encourage responsible sexuality, honour procreation, and herald a new life as a gift from God. Although there could be minor variations from country to country, Anglicans generally support abortion when the physical or mental health of the mother is seriously threatened, when there is reason to believe that the fetus will be born seriously deformed in mind or body, and when the pregnancy occurred as a result of

rape or incest. When abortions are sought or performed for other reasons, spiritual counsel (and when appropriate, penance) is encouraged.[228]

The Protestant Traditions

It is a veritable *tour de force* to attempt only one section on Protestantism, as there are hundreds of Protestant denominations throughout the world. However, these traditions tend to have some common traits, in that they generally have emerged since the Protestant Reformation. Many have developed in the late nineteenth century or during the twentieth century; an important number of these have emerged in the United States.

Contrary to the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, most Protestant traditions reject the concept of Tradition as a source of revelation and affirm the Scriptures (Hebrew and Christian) as the sole authority for doctrine and ethical decision making. This is especially true of evangelicals and fundamentalists, who, although they favour the autonomy of each local congregation, often rely on a strict, literal interpretation of Scripture and tend to be uncompromising in their opposition to abortion. Recent polls have suggested that 95.3 percent of evangelicals view abortion as wrong, except when the life of the mother is in danger. Not all evangelicals are fundamentalists; it is the fundamentalists who are at the forefront of the movement against the liberalization of abortion laws.[229]

Although they are organized in various autonomous conferences, most Baptists, including Southern Baptists (USA), tolerate abortion in cases of rape, incest, fetal deformity, and the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother. Yet, Baptists are divided on both sides of the issue; their conference statements aim at striking a middle ground between abortion on demand and the view that all abortion is

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[228]Ronald L. Numbers and Darrel W. Amundsen, eds., *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the Western Religious Traditions* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 263-264.

murder. A sizable minority of Southern Baptists have tried but failed to amend their church's constitution, which bans all abortion except to save the life of the mother.[230] Some Southern Baptists, along with other extremists, have even advocated the killing of abortionists as justifiable homicide.

Generally, Lutherans affirm human dignity, rights, integrity, and quality of life in the development of their ethical statements. They have developed along more or less conservative lines, but most Lutherans would favour abortion in instances where the life of the mother is in danger, when a woman has no choice but to submit to intercourse (domination, rape, incest), and in cases of fetal abnormality. Roughly 50 percent of Lutheran laity and clergy state that the morality of abortion depends on the situation.[231]

Members of the Reformed Tradition (Presbyterian and Congregational), as well as Methodists, permit abortions to be performed in instances of "tragic conflicts of life."[232] However, Methodists would oppose abortions for reasons of birth control or gender selection. Methodists are organized in more or less liberal and conservative branches; churches with mostly Black members tend to be more restrictive concerning abortion.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) does not encourage abortions but sanctions them in cases of rape, incest, and genetic abnormality, or to save the life of the mother.[233] Another branch of Mormonism, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, tends to be more liberal in that it supports the legality of

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[229]Ibid., 504-505.
[230]Ibid., 310.
[231]Ibid., 196.
[232]Ibid., 345.
[233]Ibid., 416.

abortion as well as women's rights to choose. Mormon theology is evolving; its bioethical statements increasingly reflect prevailing medical and social views.[234]

The United Church of Canada is generally pro-choice. Its ethical reasoning is based on the balancing of four factors: (a) the fetus's right to life, (b) the rights of the mother, (c) the prospects that the fetus has for a good life, and (d) the possible effects on the family's quality of life.[235]

The Christian Science Church does not favour any medical procedure because of its belief that all life is spiritual and that all healing can occur through prayer; thus, a true Christian Scientist would not seek medical assistance for abortion or for any other reason. The Christian Science Church does not have any specific teachings or doctrines that condone or oppose abortion.[236]

The Society of Friends (Quakers) profess a high reverence for all forms of life. However, they regard abortion as a personal, albeit difficult, choice,[237] a decision to be made in consultation with "the Light within" or "the voice of God."[238]

The Seventh-Day Adventists believe that although the human embryo possesses the potential for self-determination, it has less value than a freely acting adult. Thus, they sanction abortion when the developing fetus places the mother's physical, mental, or emotional health in jeopardy; when pregnancy would eventuate in a severely deformed or retarded child; when pregnancy is the result of rape or incest; when the mother is unwed and

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[234]Ibid., 417.

[235]"Contraception and Abortion," in *United Church of Canada Social Policy Positions* (1989, accessed 17 May 2007); available from http://www.united-church.ca/policies/1980/c511.shtm; Internet.

[236]Carl J. Weltz, "The Abortion Question," *The Christian Science Sentinel,* 4 August 1973, 1347-1349.

[237]"Quaker Views - Life & Death - Questions of Medical Ethics," in *Quakers in Britain* (n.d., accessed 21 May 2007); available from http://www.quaker.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=90273; Internet.

below the age of fifteen; or when "the requirements of functional human life demand the sacrifice of the lesser potential human value."[239]

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that abortion is "murder in God's eyes"[240] and do not allow abortion in any circumstance, even when the life of the mother is in danger or when birth defects seem likely. Witnesses believe in the literal interpretation of Scripture, and they affirm that life begins at conception, so the age of the embryo is not considered to be a factor in determining the morality of abortion.

Summary

Several conclusions can be drawn from this overview of Jewish and Christian denominations' stands on abortion. Most Protestant churches allow abortions for the purpose of saving the life of the mother, when pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or when a fetal abnormality is detected. Although all traditions affirm life emphatically, most tolerate abortions for various reasons and do not take a strong stand on the issues of ensoulment and personhood. Traditions that have a participatory and democratic authority structure, and those that value the contribution of women's caucuses within their structures, are more likely to be tolerant or accepting of abortion than those that are highly structured, male-dominated, and hierarchical.

Although they are unlikely allies in terms of their origins, methodology, and ethical foundations, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman Catholics, and the evangelicals are the most energetic opponents of abortion. Black Methodist Churches in the United States tend to be more conservative in their statements than other Methodists when it

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[238]"Quaker Views - Making Decisions," para. 2, in *Quakers in Britain* (n.d., accessed 21 May 2007); available from http://www.quaker.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=90269; Internet.

[239]Numbers and Amundsen, 462-463.

[240]Ibid., 481.

comes to the permissibility of abortion. The Jewish Tradition, although it emphasizes the value of the fetus as a potential life, has a fairly flexible approach to abortion as compared to the more conservative Christian traditions.

Thus we see that there is very little consensus regarding the permissibility of abortion in the Western religious traditions, especially when we consider that the Roman Catholic Tradition is the largest single Christian group in Western society. If a consensus exists, it is mostly within the Protestant Traditions—evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses excepted.

Finally, those who identify with the terms *secular* and *liberal* tend to be pro-choice, while the those who identify more readily with the terms *religious* and *conservative* tend to be pro-life. The debate is far from over. The influences of postmodernism, secularization, pluralism, technology, and liberal social policies will continue to challenge both the secular and religious dimensions of human existence for decades to come.

Thus we see a wide range of differences among churches and in society as to what constitutes a human being, what ensoulment is and when it occurs, and so on. But what are the reasons for such radical and sometimes deeply emotional differences that divide secular groups and churches on abortion and other sexual issues?

Essentialism vs. Postmodernism

To answer the question formulated in the previous paragraph, it is crucial to focus on essentialism, which has not yet been directly addressed in this dissertation. We have already studied the tenets of postmodernism, so there will be less emphasis on this subject here.

What Is Essentialism?

St. Thomas Aquinas defines the term *essence* in several ways, partly with the help of Aristotle, whom he calls "the Philosopher." Aquinas writes,

> Since that by which a thing is constituted in its proper genus or species is what is signified by the definition expressing what the thing is, it can be seen why philosophers changed the name essence to the name *whatness,* and this what the Philosopher frequently calls *that-which-it-was-to-be*—namely, that through which a thing is some thing. It is also called *form,* insofar as form signifies the certainty of anything whatsoever. . . . And it is signified by yet another name, *nature,* —namely, anything the intellect can in any way grasp is called a nature because a thing is only intelligible through its definition and essence. . . . Every substance is a nature. However, the term nature taken in this sense seems to signify the essence of a thing insofar as it is ordered to the thing's proper activity, and nothing is without a proper activity. . . . *But essence means that through which and in which the thing has existence.*[241]

This complex and abstract reasoning is instructive in several ways. First, it is a confirmation by Aquinas himself that he relies heavily on the philosophy of Aristotle, a Greek philosopher who lived in 384-322 B.C. and who is credited for being the architect of Western philosophy. No need to mention that Aristotle was a pagan.

Luther rejected Aristotle's philosophy, which became widely known as *scholasticism, scholastic philosophy,* or *scholastic theology.* By rejecting Aristotle, Luther rejected Aquinas and advocated a return to the study of Scripture instead of adopting a pagan philosophy on which to build a philosophical and theological system. Ironically, as we saw in Chapter I, not very long ago Pope Leo XIII presented the philosophy of Aquinas (and indirectly of Aristotle) as the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church! The above citation also opens the door to the understanding of nature and of natural law according to Aristotle and Aquinas and still endorsed by the

[241]Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Ralph McInerny (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 31-32. All italics in oroginal.

Roman Catholic Church: Because all things have an essence and must be ordered to their proper activity, they must not and cannot deviate from the very reason for their existence.

When this logical reasoning is applied to sex, it is easy to deduct and understand the position of the Roman Catholic Church: If sex is intended for procreation, then all other forms of sexual activity are unnatural and immoral, including the use of artificial methods of birth control. Thus we have doctrinal statements such as the following: "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of its existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life."[242] The Catechism also affirms the historical consistency of Church teaching: "Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable."[243] In matters of cooperation with abortion procedures, we read, "Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life."[244]

The Roman Catholic Church appears to be the most radical of all Christian churches in its opposition to abortion. Its reasoning and the principles behind it are often referred to as *essentialist thinking,* which Cobb describes in the following passage: "The best-articulated arguments that abortion is murder come from Roman Catholics. Their argument is based on essentialist thinking. According to this thinking, an entity either is

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[242]*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994), para. 2250.

[243]Ibid., para. 2271).

[244]Ibid., para. 2272.

or is not an embodiment of an essence. In this case the relevant essence is personhood. If personhood is an essence, then its presence must have a definite beginning."[245]

Not surprisingly, postmodernists reject essentialist thinking. For example, they would not accept the thinking described in the following statement: "[Essentialist thinking] makes absolutist statements about all human beings possible. All have sacred and equal worth, because all participate equally in the essence."[246] Most postmodernists would not agree that abortion is murder: "Within limits decisions about abortions should be left to pregnant women and the others most closely involved. No one culture should impose its views about abortion on others."[247] Even though postmodernism values diversity and pluralism, it must however recognize itself as one position among others.[248] This makes sense; otherwise postmodernists would be making the same absolutist claims that it rejects in others. "Despite the special role of the pregnant woman, a constructive postmodernist cannot absolutize her rights and interests. This must be balanced not only by the rights and interests of the fetus but also by those of other people whose lives will be affected by the decision."[249]

But it is difficult for some Christian groups to allow for plurality and diversity in a secularized society: "Some Christians attempt to establish one set of doctrines as eternally fixed regardless of changing culture, historical study, and natural sciences. These doctrines, they declare, are the essence of Christianity."[250] Of course, when these religious convictions are limited to their own group, postmodernists and modernists alike

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[245]John B. Cobb, Jr., *Postmodernism and Public Policy: Reframing Religion, Culture, Education, Sexuality, Class, Race, Politics, and Economy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 183-84.

[246]Ibid., 184.

[247]Ibid., 182.

[248]Ibid.

[249]Ibid., 188.

must respect their beliefs. However, problems emerge when "some of these subcultures also argue that abortion should be outlawed for all, and they work vigorously to this end. They do not understand themselves as thereby imposing their particular religious beliefs on other communities."[251] I would argue that the same reasoning applies to religious beliefs concerning the social liberalization of homosexual sanctions and same-sex marriage. If postmodernists have their way, "the universal prohibitions and affirmations about human life, to which both the church and modernity have clung, must be either abandoned or justified in nonabsolutistic terms."[252]

The Roman Catholic Church is not without critics from within its own house. According to Sipe, not all Catholics agree with their Church: "Although there is a significant, substantial, and vocal group that supports the Vatican view on abortion, the majority of Catholics do not without reservation endorse it. . . . About 90 percent of Catholics approve of legal abortion, at least under certain circumstances."[253]

There is more: "The Catholic moral teaching on sexuality is based on a patently false anthropology that renders magisterial pronouncements noncredible. . . . The church is at a pre-Copernician stage of understanding of human sexuality. It is using scripture as a basis for explaining the science of human sexuality. This is no more valid tha[n] using the Bible to explain cosmology."[254] Sipe gives elaborate statistics, based on research, that indicate that Roman Catholics are generally at major variance with the official teachings

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[250]Ibid., 19.

[251]Ibid., 182.

[252]Ibid., 184.

[253]A.W. Richard Sipe, *A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1990), 226. Sipe, a psychotherapist and former priest, is noted for his extensive studies of clerical sexual abuse and celibacy.

[254]A.W. Richard Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 323.

of their church in the following matters of sexuality: masturbation, birth control, abortion, homosexuality, and sex between an unmarried couple in a committed relationship.[255]

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XIV: The Dictatorship of Relativism

Before his election as Pope Benedict XIV, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, as the Dean of Cardinals, presided over several ceremonies that led to his election as Pope in April 2005. In one of his homilies, he made it clear that he was annoyed with the many "isms" of our time:

> How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves—flung from one extreme to another: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth. Every day new sects spring up, and what St Paul says about human deception and the trickery that strives to entice people into error (cf. Eph 4: 14) comes true. Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be "tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine", seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires.[256]

Indeed, there are many isms in our society, which all claim to have the truth. Are they the result of postmodernism? The Pope did not specify, but given his enumeration of several "ideological currents," as he calls them, there is certainly an oblique reference to postmodernism in his text. In my opinion, what the Pope calls the "dictatorship of relativism" is a direct reference to the pervasive influence of postmodernism in Europe and North America. Consequently, the relativism of postmodernism clashes with the absolutism of modernity and of the Church as well. The two very different world views

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[255]Ibid.

(of modernity and postmodernity) are analysed critically in this dissertation. The goal of this analysis is to advocate more recent and contemporary paradigms for the revision of sexual ethics in Roman Catholic thought in general, and for the repeal of the law of celibacy in particular. The inclusiveness, diversity, and plurality of postmodern thought provide new paradigms for such revisions.

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[256]Card. Joseph Ratzinger, *Homily* (2005), para. 10 (accessed 25 July 2007); available from http://www.vatican.va/ gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html; Internet.

Principles of Cooperation in Roman Catholic Ethics

"One of the most pressing (and most difficult to understand) issues for Catholic healthcare is the issue of material cooperation."[257] The preceding quotation encapsulates the purpose of this segment, which is to explore the ethics of cooperation[258] from a Roman Catholic perspective. As noted in the previous section, the Roman Catholic Church has very strong principles that oppose abortion and many other sinful or "unnatural" sexual practices. In addition, formal cooperation with abortion procedures can result in excommunication from the Church. In the eyes of the Church, such cooperation constitutes a crime.

What is formal cooperation? What is material cooperation? How many degrees of cooperation are there? This section illustrates the intricate ethical system that delineates how Catholics should act and what principles they should follow when they are working in places such as hospitals that perform abortions or other illicit procedures such as tubal ligations or vasectomies.

The ethics of cooperation is pressing in our current cultural context, because of efforts to restructure health care services across North America. Such restructuring brings about pressures for some health care institutions to merge, in order to save costs and to consolidate designated programs under a common goal and a common administration. Catholic health care institutions are sometimes challenged, or even coerced, to cooperate with secular institutions and governments to offer services that are illicit from a Catholic perspective. These situations occur especially in relatively isolated geographical areas in

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[257]James F. Keenan, SJ, and Thomas R. Kopfensteiner, "The Principles of Cooperation: Theologians Explain Material and Formal Cooperation," *Health Progress,* April 1995, 23.

which the Catholic hospital is the only hospital offering medical services and the general population demands the availability of procedures such as sterilization and abortion. In some large urban centres, budget cuts and the amalgamation of medical services or programs pressure Catholic health care institutions to accept or tolerate a merger with secular institutions that offer medical services that are deemed immoral or simply evil by Catholic teaching.

Where such pressures exist, should Catholic health care institutions simply withdraw from the scene and allow secular, humanistic, and sometimes clearly anti-Christian values to take over? Such a decision would surely deprive the Church of an opportunity to give witness to quality of care and to the value and dignity of human life. Are there instances where a certain form of cooperation would constitute a lesser evil? Thus, the question arises: Under what conditions, if any, can Catholic health care institutions cooperate with governments and other secular institutions in order to be able to deepen their Catholic identity, to abide by their code of ethics, and to avoid causing scandal?

Although the principles of cooperation were originally developed to evaluate the morality of individuals, they have gained considerable acceptance in their application to corporate entities within the contexts previously described. For example, Russell E. Smith seems to admit an effortless transition from individual to cooperate morality: "It is obvious . . . that the theological development of the principles of cooperation has considered the actions of *individuals* who cooperate with the evil actions of others. Contemporary theological considerations are not so insular . . . That is why the analogy

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[258]For the purposes of this essay, the term *cooperation* is used mostly in the context of bioethics or biomedical technology. Catholic moral theology uses the term much more extensively. Thus, the use of the

of cooperation with [non-Catholic partners] is so apt."[259] At issue here is whether this facile transition from individual to corporate morality can be taken seriously or at least without question. One could legitimately ask whether a corporation or an institution could be equated with a person as a moral agent in this context. For example, can an institution actually commit a sin or an immoral act by cooperating with another institution? It might seem that only individuals can be moral agents in that sense. However, the principles of cooperation presented in this study apply to corporations as well as individuals. The goal of this section is to examine the principles that are used to establish moral responsibility of those who cooperate with other agents in actions that the Church considers evil. It also provides a glimpse of how the principles of cooperation are increasingly being used to guide Catholic health care administrators in their efforts to save Catholic hospitals from the pressures of a secular society.

It has been previously stated that the principles of cooperation have been developed to define or to guide the moral actions of individuals involved in the evil actions of others. Individual Catholics who work in a secular health care institution might be tempted or required to cooperate in procedures that are illicit from a Catholic moral perspective. Again, under what conditions, if any, can they cooperate? Are there forms of cooperation that are more acceptable than others? If so, how can they be described?

If we widen the scope even more, we will readily recognize that some form of cooperation with evil is often present, more or less consciously, in our everyday lives. "Cooperation can concern nearly every expression of human activity that intersects with

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term outside the medical context will be mainly for illustrative purposes.

[259]Russell E. Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation and their Application to the Present State of Health Care Evolution," in *Catholic Health Ministry in Transition, Resource 9* (Braintree, MA: The Pope John Center, 1993), 2. Italics in text.

other human activity."[260] The examples in the following paragraphs will show how pervasive and inevitable the concept of cooperation actually is!

Now that the theme of this section has been clarified, let us discuss the areas that will be covered. In the development of the theme, it will be necessary to document the origins and historical development of the principle of cooperation and its corollaries. The ensuing subsections will address several instances in which cooperation becomes an issue and how the principles of cooperation can be applied with integrity and conformity to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Origin and History of the Principle of Cooperation

As Russell E. Smith confirms, "the name of St. Alphonsus de Liguori is most often associated with the theological refinement of the principles of cooperation."[261] This development occurred during the last half of the seventeenth century, when theologians and the Vatican sought to "avoid the extremes of rigorism and laxism."[262] Charles Curran describes the historical context in these words: "The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Catholic moral theology witnessed a struggle between laxists and rigorists which was marked by papal intervention condemning extremes on both sides."[263] By means of example, one such condemnation involved the moral responsibility of a servant "who knowingly helped his master to climb through a window to ravish a virgin."[264] Curran also identifies St. Alphonsus Liguori as "the outstanding moral theologian of the eighteenth century, who . . . thus presents the framework within which cooperation has

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[260]Keenan and Kopfensteiner, 23.

[261]Russell E. Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation in Catholic Thought," in *The Fetal Tissue Issue: Medical and Ethical Aspects*, ed. Peter J. Cataldo and Albert S. Moraczewski, OP (Braintree, MA: The Pope John Center, 1994), 83.

[262]Ibid.

[263]Charles Curran, "Cooperation in a Pluralistic Society," in *Ongoing Revision in Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides/Claretan, 1975), 210.

been discussed in Roman Catholic theology to the present."[265] Consequently, St. Alphonsus is credited with the development of principles designed to guide moral actions in doing good and avoiding evil. These principles were developed to help avoid the extremes of rigourism and laxism mentioned above.

Of course, since the time of St. Alphonsus the principle of cooperation has been further developed and refined through the works of many Catholic theologians. The historical development of the principle of cooperation was focused mainly on the actions of individual persons. In the contemporary context, the principles of cooperation are increasingly used to study the moral activities of groups or corporations. We shall now address the major concepts associated with the principle of cooperation.

Key Concepts of Cooperation in Catholic Moral Theology

It has already been said that cooperation applies to almost every aspect of human activity. Ethically speaking, cooperation can be defined as "the participation of one agent in the activity of another agent to produce a particular effect or joint activity."[266] Another source offers the following description of cooperation: "Questions of cooperation arise when a person—either an individual or moral person—works together with another in producing a particular action."[267] Simply stated, cooperation always involves some form of participation in the activity of another. Of course, cooperation can be either positive or negative. This section does not seek to address the morality of actions that are universally acclaimed as being morally good. Indeed, the purpose of this study can be aptly summarized as follows: "[Cooperation] becomes ethically problematical when the action

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[264]Ibid., 216.
[265]Ibid., 216-217.
[266]Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation in Catholic Thought," 82.
[267]Curran, 216.

of the primary agent is morally wrong."[268] It is important to note that, according to Catholic moral theology, there are moral actions that are considered to be objectively evil or intrinsically evil, at all times and in all circumstances. Such actions are always wrong, regardless of the intent of the moral agent. Many of these intrinsically evil acts pertain to human sexuality and reproduction, such as masturbation, sterilization, direct abortion, and euthanasia.[269]

The concept of intrinsically evil acts that are considered to be always sinful, underlies this whole study of the principles of cooperation. But what happens if the goal to be achieved in a moral act is considered to be immoral or evil by one individual and not by another? It is such conflicts of ethical beliefs or actions that the principle of cooperation seeks to address.

Formal Cooperation

At this point, further discussion of the principle of cooperation assumes involvement of individuals or groups in an activity which, at some level, is subjectively or objectively considered to be evil. *Formal cooperation* always requires an assent of the will in the completion of an evil act, whether or not a person actually participates in it. Curran describes formal cooperation as follows: "Alphonsus distinguishes between formal and material cooperation, describing the formal as concurring with the bad will of the other which is always wrong."[270] Consequently, "formal cooperation always involves

[268]Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation in Catholic Thought," 84.

[269]The principle of double effect allows for indirect sterilizations or abortions, provided that the fetus is not attacked directly. In such a case, therapeutic interventions aimed at (a) saving the mother's life or (b) treating a diseased organ, which might result in the death of a fetus or which might result in sterility, are permissible when there is a proportionate reason. In all cases, the intent should be to heal, i.e., not to attack the fetus directly or to sterilize a person when no physical pathology is present.

[270]Curran, 217.

an influence on the will of the principal agent."[271] Ashley and O'Rourke agree: "To actually intend the evil purpose is *formal cooperation* no matter how small one's share in the actual physical execution."[272] Russell E. Smith puts it this way: "The formal cooperator has the same intention as that of the principal agent. Therefore, the culpability of the formal cooperator is identical with that of the principal agent."[273] The foregoing statements reinforce the point that formal cooperation is always wrong. This idea is further confirmed as follows: "Formal cooperation in the morally evil activity of another is not morally permitted. Such cooperation is itself immoral since the cooperator intends that the evil action should occur."[274] Formal cooperation can be subtler than is often realized. "Advising, counseling, promoting, or condoning an evil action, even when sometimes done merely by remaining silent when one has duty to speak up or express an opinion, is formal cooperation because such actions signify agreement with evil."[275] Formal cooperation can also be *implicit.* According to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States (NCCB), "Since intention is not simply an explicit act of the will, formal cooperation can be implicit. Implicit formal cooperation is attributed when, even though the cooperator denies intending the wrongdoer's object, no other explanation can distinguish the cooperator's object from the wrongdoer's object."[276] Two conclusions can be drawn from this discussion on formal cooperation: (a) It is always wrong, and (b) It can lead to moral rigidity, if no further distinction is made

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[271]Ibid.

[272]Benedict M. Ashley and Kevin D. O'Rourke, *Healthcare Ethics: A Theological Analysis*, (St. Louis, MO: The Catholic Health Association of the United States, 1989), 188. Italics in text.

[273]Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation in Catholic Thought," 85.

[274]Ibid.

[275]Ashley and O'Rourke, 188.

[276]NCCB, "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services," *Origins*, 15 December 1994, 449-62.

when a person does not *intend* the moral action but is somehow involved in it. This question of intention will be discussed in the next section.

Material Cooperation

The concept of material cooperation involves several subtle distinctions, which, although complex, provide valuable guidance for ethical decision making. Material cooperation in its simplest form can be said to be any participation in an evil action, which is not directly or clearly intended. "*Material cooperation* is any form of concurrence in which the cooperator desires neither the sinful act for itself nor as a means to anything else, but rather permits the sinful act to occur."[277] Ashley and O'Rourke concur: "*Material cooperation* . . . is any type of cooperation in which one does *not intend* the evil effects, but only the good."[278] Now that it is clear that a material cooperator does not intend anything evil, let us look more closely at the various levels of moral responsibility of a material cooperator.

Immediate material cooperation. What if I say that I do not intend an evil action, while actually participating in that action in such a way that the action would not or could not take place without me? Or, is it even morally licit for me to participate in an activity for which I do not intend the bad effect, but only the good effect? "When such material cooperation is *immediate* (e.g., nurses who assist physicians to perform an abortion which they personally disapprove), it amounts to the same as formal cooperation because it is a direct contribution to an evil act in which the cooperator shares responsibility for the

[277]Gary Atkinson and Albert Moraczewski, *A Moral Evaluation of Contraception and Sterilization: A Dialogical Study* (St. Louis, MO: Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Center, 1979), 86. Italics in text.

[278]Ashley and O'Rourke, 188. Italics in text.

act."[279] Using different terminology, Sydney Callahan asserts that "moral evil involves persons freely choosing acts that should not be chosen. . . . Even if the people making choices are, or were, morally sincere, I know that the choices are, or were, wrong. I cannot judge the hearts and minds of others, but I can judge what they do or have done."[280] However, the Catholic Bishops of the United States distinguish between formal cooperation and immediate material cooperation as follows: "Immediate material cooperation is wrong, except in some circumstances of duress. The matter of duress distinguishes immediate material cooperation from implicit formal cooperation."[281] In this context, *duress* can be broadly interpreted as a physical or psychological coercion of one's will upon another person, without the latter's consent. This makes perfect sense when one considers that formal cooperation is to *intend* the same object as that of the wrongdoer. When duress is not present, immediate material cooperation is identical to formal cooperation.

If immediate material cooperation is basically the same as formal cooperation, even though the intent to do evil is not present, can cooperation ever be legitimate? The answer is yes: "Sometimes it may be an ethical duty to cooperate 'materially' with an immoral act (i.e. one does not intend the evil effects, but only the good effects) when only in this way can a greater harm be prevented, provided (1) that the cooperation is not immediate and (2) the degree of cooperation and the danger of scandal are taken into account."[282] These concepts are addressed in the following sections.

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[279]Ibid.
[280]Sydney Callahan, "Cooperating with Evil," *Health Progress,* May 1989, 12.
[281]NCCB, 23.
[282]Catholic Health Association of Canada, *Health Care Ethics Guide*, 1991, 15.

Mediate material cooperation. The concept of *mediate cooperation* is most relevant to this study, because it offers not only the opportunity but, in some cases, the necessity of cooperating with other agents. "*Mediate* material cooperation, which can be proximate or remote, under certain conditions is sometimes justified and even necessary."[283] Indeed, if one does not participate directly in an immoral act, cooperation can be justified for proportionate reasons. "When the object of the cooperator's action remains distinguishable from that of the wrongdoer's, material cooperation is mediate and can be morally licit."[284] In other words, if my action is different, distant, or remote from the wrongdoer's, then my own actions can be justified: "Moral theologians recommend two other considerations for the proper evaluation of material cooperation. First, the object of material cooperation should be as distant as possible from the wrongdoer's act. Second, any act of material cooperation requires a proportionately grave reason."[285]

Another source uses a slightly different and possibly more precise terminology to explain the same concepts: "Forms of mediate material cooperation are distinguished as *proximate* or *remote*," according to how closely the act of cooperation is associated with the sinful act. "*Necessary cooperation* is cooperation without which the sinful act could not occur; *contingent* (or *free*) cooperation is cooperation not necessary for the sinful act."[286] Thus, the notion of mediate cooperation encompasses a whole range of legitimate moral agency. However, some principles and conditions must still be carefully considered. "First, the more remote the cooperation, the easier it is to justify. . . . Second,

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[283]Ashley and O'Rourke, 188. Italics in text.
[284]NCCB, 23.
[285]Ibid.
[286]Atkinson and Moraczewski, 86. Italics in text.

the good achieved by the cooperation must outweigh the contribution of the cooperator to the evil and the degree of evil."[287]

Many examples can be enjoined to illustrate these points. The manufacture of morphine is remote from drug abuse because morphine has legitimate medical uses, but the sale of morphine is closer to actual abuse and thus must be regulated. Persons whose livelihoods depend on a job are justified in working in institutions where abortion is performed, provided they disapprove and do not immediately cooperate with an abortion. In such institutions, the nurse who materially cooperates with an abortion has more responsibility than the janitor of the building whose responsibility is more remote. Each person must decide, however, whether sufficient reason exists to justify their material cooperation with the destruction of innocent persons.[288]

Closely related to the above examples is the degree of scandal often associated with material cooperation. "Prudence guides those involved in cooperation to estimate questions of intention, duress, distance, necessity and gravity. In making a judgment about cooperation, it is essential that the possibility of scandal be eliminated."[289] The imperative to consider the need to eliminate scandal is documented elsewhere as follows: "The effects of scandal, that is, the bad example that can be set, must be weighed. Even the appearance of cooperation with evil helps this evil to continue. The Christian has a serious duty to take a stand against destructive actions and to share in them as little as possible."[290]

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[287]Ashley and O'Rourke, 188.
[288]Ibid.
[289]NCCB, 23.
[290]Ashley and O'Rourke, 188.

This section elucidates the complexities of mediate material cooperation. The following section illustrates situations that are commonly used to explain various forms of material cooperation.

Three Classic Examples of Material Cooperation

Having outlined the principles used to guide the moral agents in material cooperation, it is fitting to illustrate them through examples used by many moral theologians. These examples—the hostage, the accomplice, and the taxpayer—are often found in the literature because the situations involve differing degrees of culpability and moral responsibility of the cooperator in terms of pursuing the goals of the principal agent.

The hostage. The hostage is forced to do something against his will. Because the hostage is threatened if he or she does not cooperate, culpability is diminished. "Fear on the part of the cooperator more or less compels him to cooperate. This diminishes the culpability of the hostage and in some cases diminishes it completely."[291] Although the hostage may participate directly in wrongdoing, that person's cooperation can only be immediately material (as opposed to formal cooperation), because the intent to do wrong is absent.

The accomplice. Because the accomplice intends the same thing as the wrongdoer and wishes the same result, that person's action is described as formal cooperation. Culpability "is imputed fully . . . because cooperation in this instance is free and willed (directly intended)."[292] The legal system uses this reasoning to convict accomplices who

[291]Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation in Catholic Thought," 84.
[292]Ibid.

cooperate with criminal agents. On the other hand, cooperators who act under duress or fear (as in the case of the hostage) are not convicted, or they or receive lighter sentences.

The taxpayer. The taxpayer cooperates with a principal agent (the government) in an important and essential mission, that is, societal governance for the common good. However, if the government engages in some form of immoral activity with the taxpayer's money, the taxpayer contributes in some way to this immoral activity.[293] Taxpayers who withhold a portion of their taxes because they refuse to contribute to illicit procedures such as abortion use this argument. Obviously, their contribution to the immoral act is practically nonexistent, but their conscience dictates that any form of cooperation, however remote, must not take place. These persons can be likened to conscientious objectors who refuse on religious grounds to take oaths, join the military, go to war, or participate in abortion procedures.

The preceding section sought to identify the various principles of cooperation in order to provide guidance and to determine the degree of moral responsibility of the cooperator. We have seen that the notion of cooperation always involves the participation of an individual or group in the activity of another, who is the principal agent. The notion of cooperation is closely related to the *principle of double effect,*[294] which guides moral agency in avoiding direct participation in actions that are considered to be intrinsically evil, even if some good is purported to result from the action. Cooperation focuses primarily on one's degree of participation in the immoral act of someone else. However, the principle of double effect also offers guidance to the cooperator who is confronted

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[293]Ibid.

[294]The principle of double effect has not been clearly discussed in this section, but it is implied. For a more thorough study of this principle and its relationship to the principles of cooperation, see Ashley and O'Rourke, 184-90.

with having to choose between two evils; in such cases, the person is encouraged to choose the lesser evil while taking into consideration the possibility and degree of scancal that may result from that choice. Finally, a useful encapsulation of the principle of legitimate cooperation follows:

> *To achieve a well-formed conscience, one should always judge it unethical to cooperate formally with an immoral act (i.e., directly to intend the evil act itself). But one may sometimes judge it to be an ethical duty to cooperate materially with an immoral act (i.e., only indirectly intending its harmful consequences), provided (1) that the cooperation is not immediate and (2) that the degree of cooperation and the danger of scandal are taken into account.*[295]

The following sections will illustrate how the principles of cooperation are applied in various situations related to bioethics and health care.

Cooperation and the Use of Fetal Tissue for Research and Therapy

In recent years, much has been said, written, and researched about the value of fetal tissue for research and therapy purposes. Such tissues are increasingly heralded as providing a new avenue for curing and alleviating major diseases. Accompanying this debate is a review of the conditions under which such tissues can be harvested, especially in light of the fact that the tissue must be as "fresh" as possible. The need for fresh and noncontaminated tissue for transplant purposes is so imperative that in some cases the direct abortion procedure itself must be modified in such a way as to ensure that the tissue will be suitable for research or transplantation.[296] In such a case, the two objectives (intents), are so intimately intertwined that they are indistinguishable from one another,

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[295]Ibid., 189-190. Italics in text.

[296]For a more detailed account of these techniques and a moral evaluation of same, see James Bopp, JR, "Fetal Tissue Transplantation and Moral Complicity with Induced Abortion," in *The Fetal Tissue Issue: Medical and Ethical Aspects,* 61-79.

and the procedure itself achieves both ends in the same act. Consequently, the nature of the cooperation is formal, and thus illicit.

However, some cases are not as black and white, especially when the intention of the abortionist and the intention of the researcher are separate in space and time, and, contrary to the previous case description, the technology used does reflect the difference between those intentions. Consider the argument that the use of fetal tissue from electively aborted fetuses should be put to good use, that is, for research and therapy. Would this not be a helpful humanitarian gesture, given that the tissue would be lost anyway? Russell Smith poses that question in the following manner: "Assuming that elective abortion is morally wrong, is it morally permissible to obtain fetal tissues and organs from electively aborted fetuses?"[297] In attempting to answer this question, one must first determine whether the cooperation is formal or material. Can the intention of the researchers be separated from the intention to abort the fetus? The answer is yes, it is possible. Assuming that the researchers are only interested in their research, it is indeed possible to separate the intention of the researcher from the intention of the abortionist. In that case, one can argue that the cooperation is material, because the researcher does not participate directly in the procedure and does not necessarily intend the abortion. The researcher's interest and activity is after the fact and would only be contingent in the sense that such activity would not put an end to the abortion industry (although there is a possibility that the use of fetal tissue might increase the number of abortions for "humanitarian" reasons).

Hence, the next step is to determine the degree of material cooperation that is involved in the researcher's activity. Smith argues that the researcher's cooperation

would be proximate because of the necessity of modifying the abortion technology and procedure in order to ensure the harvesting of acceptable tissue and organs. Smith argues that three factors must be balanced for the justification of material cooperation: (a) the value of innocent human life that is sacrificed in abortion, (b) the value of the research being performed, and (c) the scandal involved in such cooperation. It would be difficult to avoid, at least, the appearance of formal cooperation and thus the possibility of a major scandal. The value of the life of the fetus would be further undermined and denigrated by rendering it a mere tool for medical progress. Smith concludes that when contrasted with the notion that human life is a basic, inalienable, and inviolable good, such material cooperation cannot be justified.[298]

Daniel P. Sulmasy eloquently defends the vulnerability of the living previable fetus, argues against becoming pregnant for the sole purpose of producing organs ("organ farms"), and raises the question of legitimate consent for such practices.[299] On the question of legitimate consent, James T. Burtchaell objects thusly: "But the very agent of someone's death would surely be disqualified to act on the behalf or stead of the victim . . . And in the case of a human abortus, it is the very guardians of the unborn who have collaborated in his or her destruction."[300] He adds, "There are then two sturdy ethical objections to experimentation upon the remains of fetuses aborted electively: absence of informed consent by anyone who could rightfully act on behalf of the unborn;

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[297]Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation in Catholic Thought," 90.

[298]Ibid., 91-92.

[299]See David P. Sulmasy, "By Whose Authority? Emerging Issues in Medical Ethics," in *Theological Studies* 50 (March 1989), 95-119.

[300]James Tunstead Burtchaell, "Case Study: University Policy on Experimental Use of Aborted Fetal Tissue," in *Institutional Review Board: A Review of Human Subjects Research* 10 (July/August 1988), 8.

and complicity in the elective destruction of the unborn by the researchers themselves."[301]

Without engaging the reader with the technical language normally used in discussing the principles of cooperation, Sydney Callahan expresses an equally convincing argument:

> Some have recommended using fetal tissues from deliberate abortions to bring some good from what cannot be helped. This view—which implies that good can come from moral evil—may soften, excuse, and further entrench the ongoing practice of abortion. . . . Fetuses may be further dehumanized when society sees them as tissue sources; women may be less likely to see their fetal offspring as a human life with its own unique dignity. . . . The idea of benefiting society can mitigate the moral seriousness of the decision to abort, and women may volunteer to conceive to make more of these valuable tissue products. If we do not resist the use of deliberately aborted fetal tissue (one part of the action we can control), we become morally complicit with what we cannot control.[302]

Of course, the use of fetal tissue from naturally aborted fetuses (miscarriages) is quite another matter. This process is sanctioned by the Church, according to the guidelines established for the donation of tissue or organs after death.[303]

Cooperation and Health Care Partnerships

In the introduction, I made reference to the fact that the principles of cooperation have been used to guide not only the moral activity of individuals but also the activity of corporations. Catholic health care institutions are corporations (moral persons) as well.[304] They can be challenged to cooperate with other moral agents to offer services that may

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[301]Ibid., 10.

[302]Callahan, 13-14.

[303]For a more complete discussion of this subject, see Maria Micheda, "Fetal Tissue Transplantation: Miscarriages and Tissue Banks," in *The Fetal Tissue Issue: Medical and Ethical Aspects,* 1-14.

[304]The idea that corporations or institutions are moral persons can legitimately be challenged. As stated earlier, the transition from individual to corporate morality is open to question, especially when applying the principles of cooperation, which were developed mainly to guide the ethical actions of individuals. The study of the legitimacy of such a transition is beyond the scope of this paper.

not be sanctioned or approved by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Such cooperation may be required for two compelling reasons: federal funding and the rights of non-Catholics.[305] There are other reasons inherent to the nature of health care restructuring and policies, program amalgamations, advanced medical technology, reduction of beds, the increase in outpatient procedures, shorter hospital stays, home care alternatives, market competition, and physician shortages. In this section, we study under what conditions, if any, Roman Catholic institutions can engage in cooperative networks, alliances, and partnerships that offer services that are considered immoral.

At the outset, a significant point can be made in defense of non-Catholic health care institutions as well as in defense of Catholic cooperation with them. "It should be remembered that not all, and in fact very few acts of the non-Catholic partner are morally wrong, and the rest is quite good. Their provision of health care is not intrinsically evil!"[306] This is a valid reason—not to mention the Roman Catholic Church's commitment to ecumenism and involvement in the modern world, two major teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

Catholic health care is a significant presence and witness to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church around the world. When studying the possibility of health care partnerships with non-Catholic parties in the United States, the Vatican held that "no Catholic health care facility could ever formally cooperate in providing sterilizations—that is, no facility could perform sterilizations on the basis of an institutional policy that

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[305]Curran, 212.

[306]Russell E. Smith, "The Principles of Cooperation and their Application to the Present State of Health Care Evolution," 1. Smith goes on to remind the reader that the basic assumption in tradition's formulation of the principles of cooperation is the "unquestioned acceptance of an objective moral order and the conviction that some actions are 'intrinsically evil,' that is, are never justifiable regardless of the circumstances of the act." Charles Curran questions this view. See Curran, 220, in which the author questions "what, if anything, is intrinsically wrong."

welcomed and sanctioned routine sterilizations."[307] Again, once the matter of negative intent is established, one may ask whether material cooperation in such procedures can ever take place and, if so, under what conditions? When considering material cooperation, one considers the action rather than the intention. In order to be licit, as we have seen earlier, material cooperation requires that we be able to distinguish our activity from the wrongdoer's. Thus, "If a non-Catholic partner in an alliance were providing morally unacceptable reproductive technologies, the Catholic partner should be able (with proportionate reason), to participate in the alliance so long as the Catholic partner does not deliver the illicit reproductive services."[308] If the Catholic partner provided the service, it would be either formal cooperation or immediate material cooperation; both would be illicit, except, in the case of the latter, under the conditions of duress.

Charles Curran disagrees: "Since no innocent persons would be hurt by such a procedure and since the society as such would not be hurt, I see no reason why Catholic hospitals could not in good moral conscience make the decision to allow people to have sterilizations in Catholic hospitals. The cooperation of the hospital is less proximate than that of the doctor doing the sterilization.[309] Curran adds other considerations to support his position: "[O]ne can argue that the Catholic hospital in no way approves the particular action taken but acknowledges the right of the individual to act in accord with conscience provided that the rights of other innocent persons and of society are not harmed."[310] Curran pushes his point further by emphasizing that there is considerable discussion, even dissent, among many Catholics about the morality of sterilization. This implies that

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[307]James F. Keenan and Thomas R. Kopfensteiner, 24-25.
[308]Ibid., 25.
[309]Curran, 225.
[310]Ibid.

the issue of scandal would be lessened if Catholic hospitals allowed sterilizations to be performed in their institutions. However, Curran clearly distinguishes between the morality of sterilization and that of abortion, which involves the taking of an innocent life.[311] Although the object of this section is to study the principle of cooperation in Roman Catholic traditional teaching, it is also important to note that there is considerable dissent from these teachings among theologians and lay people alike.

The Pope John Center in the United States has suggested five principles to guide Catholic health care institutions that are considering partnerships with non-Catholic partners:

1. Cooperation must be mediate material, never formal or immediate material.
2. Partners can only do together what all partners agree to be appropriate to safeguard the corporate conscience of the Catholic partner.
3. Morally illicit procedures cannot be performed in the Catholic institution.
4. Such procedures must be excluded from the alliance through separate legal incorporation and billing procedures.
5. All publicity and promotional literature must clearly state the reasons for the partnership (e.g., the survival of the apostolate and the good to be achieved by the partnership), and must specify that the Catholic partner will not participate in illicit procedures.[312]

Through these guiding principles, the integrity and mission of Catholic health care institutions are preserved and safeguarded, allowing the institutions to avoid scandal, provide a valuable service, and contribute to society as a whole.

The foregoing section has provided us with an insight into how the principles of cooperation are used in the corporate dimension of moral decision-making. It has also

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[311]Ibid., 225-227.

illustrated the relevance of these principles in today's cultural, religious, and ethical context. By extension, they can also be applied to many other types of partnerships, including business mergers. The next section will illustrate how the principles of cooperation are discussed in relation to a specific difficulty between the Vatican and the German Catholic Church.

Cooperation and German Counselling Centres

Since 1998, an unusual debate has been brewing between the Vatican and the German Catholic Church over the issue of abortion and German counselling centres. German law allows a woman to have an abortion only after obtaining a document from a state-approved social services centre, showing that she received counselling at least three days before the procedure. Catholic organizations operate 259 of the 1,685 such centres in Germany and issue such certificates. Pope John Paul II instructed the Bishops of Germany to stop Catholic organizations from issuing those certificates.[313] It seems that these state-funded, Church-run counselling centres do not necessarily support or condone abortion, but they offer pregnancy counselling for women who need help. In a letter to Bishop Karl Lehman, who at the time was president of the German bishop's conference, Pope John Paul II stated that he did not want "to leave pregnant women alone in their need.[314] Yet, the Pope requested that the German bishops find a solution to the issuing of the certificates. Bishop Lehman sought a compromise, hoping that it would satisfy the Vatican and, at the same time, save the counselling centres. This compromise was to add

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[312]Smith,"The Principles of Cooperation and their Application to the Present State of Health Care Evolution," 4.

[313]"On File," *Origins*, 5 February 1998, 4.

[314]Ibid.

a notation to the certificates, stating that such certificates could not be used to seek an abortion.

The umbrella organization for Germany's Catholic counselling agencies also issued a statement. They interpreted the Pope's concern "to mean that there is a need to correct the appearance of ambiguity of this certificate, so that not only is it viewed as proof of pro-life counseling, but also cannot be misunderstood as the justification for terminating a pregnancy."[315] The centres defended their involvement by stressing a pro-life stance in their counselling. But was this enough to justify the dispensation of the certificates? The attempt to compromise by adding a statement to the certificate to the effect that it could not be used to obtain an abortion "backfired because the state decided to ignore this addition."[316] This caused controversy and division in the German Catholic Church, and the situation is still not resolved.

Another publication's announcement of the possibility that the Catholic Church in Germany might well withdraw entirely from the counselling system caused further anger and controversy.[317] Finally a pointed headline in the Guardian Weekly documented the deep divisions that this issue was causing in Germany.[318]

The issue, of course, is that the German counselling centres, and by implication the Catholic Church in Germany, appeared to be condoning or even cooperating in abortions, thus compromising the Church's staunch opposition against abortion and causing a serious scandal. What kind of cooperation might be involved in this case? If the counselling centres intended that abortions be performed by dispensing these certificates,

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[315]Ibid.

[316]Andrew Grimson, "German Bishops Try for Abortion Compromise with Vatican," *National Post,* 21 September 1999.

[317]"Abortion Debate Divides Germany," *Prairie Messenger,* 27 October 1999, 24.

the cooperation would be formal. But this did not appear to be the case, as the counselling centres emphasize a pro-life stance in their advice to women.

We have seen that, although one might deny having an evil intention, cooperation can be implicitly formal if no other explanation distinguishes the cooperator's object from the wrongdoer's object. In this instance, an argument could be made to the effect that the counselling centres might be engaged, at least on the surface, in implicit formal cooperation by issuing counselling certificates. On the other hand, material cooperation implies that the cooperator does not intend the evil effects, but only the good effects. One could not say that the counselling centres were engaged in immediate material cooperation (which is always wrong, except under duress); yet, they do not directly participate in the act of abortion.

Can we say that the counselling centres were engaged in mediate material cooperation? To this question, one might answer yes, because such cooperation, if it existed, was certainly very remote. But in order to justify mediate material cooperation, there must be a proportionately grave reason, and the possibility of scandal must be taken into consideration. In this case, did such grave reasons exist? Was the possibility of avoiding scandal eliminated? It seems that the Pope and the Vatican would answer negatively to these questions.

On the other hand, one could emphasize the need for the Church to exercise its responsibilities in a pluralistic society and to affirm the apostolate of the counselling centres. Would the withdrawal of the Catholic Church from operating pregnancy counselling centres be a greater or a lesser evil? One could also advocate for the primacy of conscience for all persons involved, but this solution could not be justified because

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[318]"Catholics Angry and Divided over Abortion," *Guardian Weekly,* 14-20 October 1999, 29.

direct abortion is considered to be an intrinsically evil act. The claim of conscience in these circumstances could be the object of another study.

Finally, it seems that, if one follows the traditional principles of cooperation as explained in this section, the involvement of the German counselling centres in giving out the certificates can hardly be justified. Although they are not involved in the actual act of abortion, the issuing of the certificates presents the possibility of a serious scandal. This reasoning, however, did not satisfy all parties, and the German Church was divided: "The Vatican's meddling . . . suggests that the Church pines for the days when it was able to impose its moral code, and is strongly reminiscent of the authoritarian methods used before Vatican II. Rome would prefer the German Catholic Church to withdraw into its ivory tower rather than to pursue a partnership with society at large."[319] The controversy continues to this day! Lifenews.com, a pro-life organization, in a report dated March 19, 2007, reported that "the participation by the German Catholic church in an abortion counseling program is again the subject of debate between them and the Vatican. Now the German bishops have been instructed by Pope Benedict XVI to distance themselves from the abortion counseling group so they're not seen as sanctioning the practice."[320]

Cooperation and Health Care Workers in Secular Institutions

The previous sections have examined the cooperation of groups (or corporations) and their involvement in partnerships with other institutions or with society at large. But what about health care workers who earn their living in secular institutions that offer services considered immoral in Roman Catholic moral theology? Such workers do not

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[319]Ibid.

[320]Steven Ertelt, "Vatican Wants German Catholic Bishops to End Abortion Counseling Ties," Lifenews.com, 19 March 2007 (accessed 4 August 2007); available from http://www.lifenews.com/int221.html; Internet.

enjoy the moral safeguards provided by the Catholic institutional code of ethics, which protects the worker's conscience against unwilling participation in illicit procedures. Especially in secular, high-tech, tertiary, teaching, and research centres, these workers must often walk through a minefield of moral dilemmas. Such dilemmas are the object of study in this section, particularly in relation to the physician and the nurse, who most often are the primary agents in administering procedures that have serious ethical dimensions.

The Physician

The Canadian Medical Association clearly states that physicians are not obligated to perform procedures that they believe to be immoral. "Inform your patient when your personal values would influence the recommendation or practice of any medical procedure that the patient needs or wants."[321] The Code adds that the physician who wishes to withdraw from, or refuse the care of a patient must do so by following appropriate guidelines, so that the patient will not suffer unduly in time of urgent need.[322]

But what about the student physicians who might be coerced or somehow obligated to observe or assist in the performance of a procedure that they consider to be immoral or illicit? Many physicians are trained in large, secular teaching and research centres that to do not honour the Catholic moral guidelines. Philip C. Hébert, who has written a book to guide medical students in matters of medical ethics, supports their claims of conscience: "The claims of one's conscience and emotion can be reasonable defences of one's own identity and integrity. For example, one can in good conscience

[321]Canadian Medical Association, *Code of Ethics* (2004), item 12 (accessed 4 August 2007); available from http://www.cma.ca/index.cfm/ci_id/2419/la_id/1.htm; Internet.

[322]Ibid., items 18, 19.

refuse to go along with a practice, such as abortion, that one finds morally objectionable."[323]

Despite the foregoing safeguards, "Doctors may serve as first assistants at an illicit operation if they fear that otherwise they might lose their positions, provided that they do not do the actual illicit operation itself."[324] Thus, medical students or licensed physicians seem to enjoy a reasonable amount of protection from having to perform illicit procedures in their private offices or in any health care setting. Should they be somehow coerced to participate in such procedures, the principles of cooperation would apply. If they were against the procedure, they obviously would not be formal cooperators at the level of intent. Their Code of Ethics would protect them from having to engage in immediate material cooperation. However, should they experience duress, they could cooperate materially as long as such cooperation would remain as remote or as mediate as possible, and for proportionate reasons (e.g., the threat of losing their license to practice or of being prevented from graduating from medical school).[325]

The Nurse

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) has organized its Code of Ethics (revised August, 2002) around eight primary values, indicated by the following headings: Safe, competent and ethical care; Health and well-being; Choice; Dignity; Confidentiality; Justice; Accountability; and Quality Practice Environments.[326] Conversations with officials of the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses

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[323]Philip C. Hébert, *Doing Right: A Practical Guide to Ethics for Physicians and Medical Trainees*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 18.

[324]Curran, 214.

[325]Note: Even in cases of duress, immediate material cooperation can be legitimate.

[326]CNA, *Code of Ethics* (2002), 6 (accessed 4 August 2007); available from http://www.clicshop.com//stores/salescna/files/codeofethics2002_e.pdf; Internet.

(MARN)[327] confirmed that there is no formal provincial or federal legislation to protect the rights of nurses who might find themselves in a conflict of conscience for religious reasons. Where there would be objections of conscience on a permanent basis, nurses are encouraged to request a transfer, which should be granted without prejudice or penalty. However, a nurse would not be justified in claiming an exemption of conscience if she sought permanent employment in a trauma centre (or operating room) and refused to administer blood transfusions on religious grounds. In this case, the life of the patient could easily be jeopardized, and the nature of the work is such that employment should be sought elsewhere. We are not talking here of a rare occasion in which a nurse from another department is asked to help out in the trauma department. Here she could claim a conscience exemption, and her colleagues should accommodate and support her objection while assigning her to other tasks.

According to some nursing officials, a nurse who objects to abortion simply should not request to work in that environment. Abortion is a legal procedure, and patients and providers have the right to participate in the procedure, even if others disagree with the procedure itself and the reasons for having it done. If a nurse would be required to assist in an abortion, the same the principles of cooperation would apply. If she intended the object of the procedure, she would be engaging in formal cooperation. If she cooperated in the essentials of the procedure, her cooperation would be immediate material and therefore illicit, except under duress. Again, the principle of mediate material cooperation would apply (and this would be licit)—remembering that the more remote her activity is, the more justified it is, when a proportionate reasons exists.

[327]The MARN is the professional regulatory body for all registered nurses in Manitoba.

It is important to note the distinction between a conflict of conscience for religious reasons and a conflict of conscience relating to the unethical behavior of other nurses or other health care professionals. In such instances, and especially if the care or safety of the patient is in jeopardy, the nurse has a duty to report.[328] Similarly, "Nurses individually or in partnership with others, must take preventive as well as corrective action to protect persons from incompetent, unethical or unsafe care."[329] As a profession, nurses are less explicit than physicians in matters of conscientious objection. However, their code of ethics does have some safeguards to protect them from having to engage in illicit procedures. These safeguards are summed up as follows: "The CNA Code of Ethics also states, "If nursing care is requested that is contrary to the nurse's values, the nurse must provide adequate care until alternative care arrangements are in to place to meet the person's needs."[330] Also, The Code stipulates that "Nurses should be sufficiently clear and reflective about their personal values to recognize potential value conflicts."[331] In other words, it is the nurse's responsibility to avoid making employment choices that would jeopardize her personal ethics.

Cooperation and Genetic Screening and Counselling

The last item in this section is the sensitive issue of genetic screening and counselling. This issue has been a thorny one ever since medical technology has been able to investigate the possibility of identifying certain genetic defects in a fetus while it is still in the mother's womb. The purpose here is not to describe the various diagnostic procedures but to examine the benefits, the intent, and the possible detrimental effects of

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[328]For more on this subject, see "I See and Am Silent/I See and Speak Out: The Ethical Dilemma of Whistleblowing," *Ethics in Practice for Canadian Registered Nurses,* November 1999.

[329]CNA, 17.

[330]Ibid., 12.

such procedures. These procedures can be very useful for a variety of purposes. "Individuals may participate voluntarily in a genetic screening program for research, education or genetic counselling, as long as their informed consent is obtained and there are no disproportionate risks involved."[332] As in the case of prenatal diagnosis, such procedures are permitted with free and informed consent, "as long as they respect the life and integrity of the embryo or fetus and are directed toward its protection or healing as an individual."[333] The article adds that the anticipated benefits for both the parents and the unborn must outweigh the risks involved in the diagnostic procedure. Of course, there is no difficulty in any procedure that would benefit the parents and the child as long as no disproportionate risks are taken to achieve the benefit.

The difficulty arises when a diagnosis of fetal abnormalities becomes the equivalent of a death sentence for the unborn child. Every parent wants a "perfect," healthy child, and that is understandable! Yet, even healthy children are especially vulnerable in our North American society. A handicapped child could be unwanted or might represent too great a burden to already overstressed parents. Thus the intent of the parents and of the providers who engage in genetic screening is of crucial importance. "The presentation of any diagnostic information is to be complete and objective. It is to be communicated with no deliberate attempt to link prenatal diagnosis to direct abortion."[334] However, the objective presentation of such information is difficult to achieve. Michel Foucault has eloquently demonstrated how, in the Western world,

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[331]Ibid., 9.
[332]Catholic Health Association of Canada, *Health Ethics Guide* (2000), 39.
[333]Ibid., 39.
[334]Ibid., 55.

medicine and political power have become aligned in an attempt to control the future of world populations.[335]

Genetic screening with the intent of directly aborting a fetus would be illicit from the Catholic perspective. This applies both to the parents and to the genetic counsellor: "If the parents declare a firm intention to abort, the counselor should not cooperate in any way with them."[336] However, it would be unethical for the counsellor to withhold information regarding the prenatal diagnosis, and a counsellor who did so could be prosecuted for a breach of professional ethics, as well as in civil law. "Parents, however, have a right to such information, which has good as well as bad uses, and the counselor who supplies it cooperates only materially and remotely if the parents use it for a purpose the counselor considers unethical."[337] Thus, the right to objective and complete information is firmly established. "In sum, if abortion is in question, the counselor should respect the conscience of the parents while doing everything possible to protect the child."[338] Obviously, parents who are carriers of a defective gene can benefit from competent, professional genetic counselling and pastoral support. They also deserve respect, freedom, and support in their efforts to achieve responsible parenthood.

Summary

This study of the principles of cooperation in Roman Catholic ethics undertakes to demonstrate the complexity of ethical decision-making regarding one's involvement in actions that have been declared intrinsically evil by the Church. Such actions are

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[335]Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

[336]Ashley and O'Rourke, 324.

[337]Ibid.

[338]Ibid.

absolutely forbidden in all circumstances, contrary to the tenets of many postmodernists who would deny that such evil and such absolutes even exist.

The introduction to this section identified and mapped the signposts that would serve as guides to explore the various components of the principles of cooperation according to the traditional teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. A brief history of the origins of the principles of cooperation revealed that St. Alphonsus of Liguori was the originator of its major tenets. This was followed by an exploration of the definitions of the principles of cooperation. This research revealed that the general categories of cooperation could be described as formal, immediate material, and mediate material, depending on the intent of the moral agent and the degree of involvement in the actual moral act. Once these principles were clarified, effort was made to explore how they could apply to a variety of contemporary ethical questions and dilemmas. This section demonstrated that according the traditional teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, the use of fetal tissue taken from directly aborted fetuses was immoral. However, Catholic health care institutions could be encouraged to engage in mergers and partnerships by adhering to certain principles and conditions that respect the Church's moral teachings.

The study of the dispute between the Vatican and the German counselling centres highlighted an incident of international proportions, which is eminently related to any study of the principles of cooperation as well as to the moral imperative to avoid scandal. This incident also highlighted that, despite the fact that the principles of cooperation reflect official Catholic teaching, there is dissent as to their validity, or at least as to their practical application in certain instances. The study revealed that such dissent is present even at the highest levels of Church government.

Because Catholic health providers work not only in religious institutions but also in secular institutions, this study explored the moral dilemmas that these employees often face, sometimes under duress, because of values that are not shared between church and society. The study then led to identify the rights and responsibilities of physicians and nurses as they relate to their cooperation in procedures that they consider illicit.

Finally, the sensitive and thorny issue of genetic screening and counselling has illustrated the profound ethical dilemma that parents face when they are confronted with the prospect of being the parents of a severely deformed or handicapped child. It was confirmed that, according to Roman Catholic teaching, any investigative procedure to determine fetal abnormality must be done with the intention of helping the fetus, rather than to eliminate it, if such defects are diagnosed.

The study of the principles of cooperation in Roman Catholic ethics illustrates a number of points that are related to the themes of this dissertation. As stated earlier, essentialist thinking presumes that there are evils such as direct abortion and other related sexual issues such as masturbation and homosexuality that can never be justified under any circumstance. These are absolutist claims to universal truths. Therefore, it seemed necessary, through the study of the principles of cooperation, to evaluate the degree of responsibility, intent, and eventually guilt that Catholic agents incur when they engage in acts or cooperate with acts that the Church considers intrinsically evil, or simply evil. Such evils often revolve around reproductive issues and actions related to sexuality. As we have seen, postmodernism disagrees with the absolutist claims that certain actions are forbidden at all times, everywhere, and for all cultures. Even the doctrine of the Catholic

Church has evolved in time. It is relatively recently that the Church has taught that life and personhood unequivocally begin at conception.

The study of the ethics of abortion provide a compelling study of the Roman Catholic objection to abortion, which it considers an "intrinsically evil" procedure; that is, it is never justifiable under any circumstance. This study of abortion is presented as an extreme example of essentialist or absolutist thinking, while the study of the principles of cooperation is presented to clarify the moral responsibility of persons and corporations who participate in such intrinsically evil acts. Postmodernism does not accept the premise that anything is intrinsically evil. In the next chapter, a section on failed celibacy and abortion will provide a useful link to the present study.

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL REVIEW OF ARGUMENTS FOR THE REPEAL OF THE CELIBACY REQUIREMENT FOR DIOCESAN PRIESTS OF THE LATIN RITE

The preceding chapters amply demonstrate the pros and cons of legislated celibacy for priests of the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church. In the first chapter, through the study of Augustine and Aquinas, we encounter the sex-negative theology that persists to this day in the moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

The second chapter reveals that Luther and Calvin provide a more positive evaluation of sexuality. Both also reject celibacy as a requirement for priests, as well as for themselves and their ministers. Although influenced by Augustine, both men have a more positive view of sex and marriage than Augustine and Aquinas. Both reject any Biblical interpretation that could militate in favour of a legislated celibate priesthood. Consequently, the Reformers restored clerical marriage, which had been banned since the twelfth century by the Roman Catholic Church.

The third chapter brings the discussion to a contemporary critique of Cartesian dualism, which is credited for the major scientific progress of modernity that is particularly evident in Europe and North America. Cartesian dualism and scientific progress do not come without cost. Because of the various and serious dichotomies introduced by modernity, people have suffered and the environment has been abused. Dualism is pervasive; it permeates almost all aspects of life in the Western world: mind-body, male-female, subject-object, material-spiritual, and so on. The study of scientific medicine uncovers the almost complete dualistic split that exists between the medical body and the human spirit. Larry Dossey's approach to medicine attempts to restore the unity of body, mind, and spirit in contemporary medicine, with only partial success.

The study of postmodernism provides new paradigms that are antagonistic, if not hostile, to the assumptions of modernity. Postmodernism is sceptical of universal truths, dogmatic pronouncements, even the possibility of attaining truth at all. Postmodernism does not recognize most of the cherished religious, social, and even scientific dogmas that were developed during the period of modernity. Michel Foucault's analyses of the body in medicine and the social construction of sexuality provide unique insights into postmodernism. The study of abortion as an example of essentialist versus postmodernist thought explains the large variety of interpretations related to the issue of abortion in contemporary society. Finally, the study of moral cooperation with procedures that the Roman Catholic Church considers evil identifies the degrees of responsibility and sinfulness of Roman Catholics who cooperate with such procedures.

This fourth and final chapter is a critical review and evaluation of the many facets of mandated celibacy that we have encountered during the course of this dissertation. This chapter confirms and evaluates the weakness of the arguments used to support a celibate priesthood and brings forth several arguments in favour of abandoning the antiquated requirement of celibacy for diocesan priests of the Latin Rite. Such arguments can be critically analyzed by asking the following questions: Was mandated celibacy introduced primarily as a result of theological and spiritual considerations, or was it introduced for more mundane motives? Is it realistic to identify celibacy as a gift from God and at the same time legislate it as a requirement for priesthood? Can God's grace be legislated? What are the consequences of prohibiting marriage for priests, and what are the consequences of excluding women not only from the priesthood but also from all levels of church government? Many Catholics argue that the requirement of celibacy

causes a decline in vocations to the priesthood. Is their argument valid? What is the relationship, if any, between sexual abuse and celibacy? What are the ecumenical consequences of requiring that Roman Catholic priests be celibate? This chapter endeavours to discuss these questions in greater depth.

As we will see, much of the literature concerning the origins of celibacy reveals several less than Christian—or less than purely spiritual—motivations for the gradual imposition of universal celibacy for priests of the Latin rite. On the contrary, issues such as cultic purity, family inheritance, and the strong influence of non-Christian and non-Jewish philosophies all contributed to the development of celibacy. According to some authors, celibacy was introduced as a means of controlling the clergy. Others are convinced that theological and scriptural justifications were sought after the fact in an attempt to give the rule of celibacy an honourable place in theology and spirituality. Examples to illustrate the foregoing affirmations abound. A critical review of the sexual theologies of Augustine and Aquinas provides an explanation for the ongoing, sometimes blatant (and sometimes subliminal) misogyny that persists in the Roman Catholic Church; these theologies account for the exclusion of women from church government and ordained ministry.

The Origins of Celibacy

Scripture and Tradition

In this dissertation, I have purposely avoided lengthy discussions concerning the biblical foundations that support or discredit the discipline of celibacy. One of the reasons for this decision is the wide variety of interpretations of scriptural texts related to sexuality and celibacy. For example, some authors and church traditions interpret certain passages as merely cultural and therefore not relevant for today. Other traditions and theologians interpret the same passages as having a theological, and therefore binding, significance for all. Consequently, my comments in this section are restricted to general considerations.

Even the strongest proponents of celibacy might admit that there is really no mandate for perpetual celibacy in Scripture. Of course, God chooses to offer his grace to a few individuals whom he calls to a life of perpetual celibacy and virginity. No one can argue against God's sovereignty and freedom in offering such gifts. Whatever else can be found in Scripture to support celibacy is highly tenuous at best, apart from the alleged celibacy of Jesus and Paul—and even their celibacy is disputed today.

In the second chapter, we saw that Martin Luther did not find any basis for celibacy in Scripture. In fact, he argued that celibacy was contrary to the Scriptures. Today, Michael Crosby, a vowed religious celibate, titles a chapter in one of his books "The (Ab)use of Scripture and Tradition in the Roman Catholic Church Regarding Celibacy."[1] As the chapter title indicates, Crosby finds no grounds for a celibacy mandated by Scripture. On the contrary, he opines that the church abuses the Scriptures

[1]Michael H. Crosby, *Rethinking Celibacy, Reclaiming the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 1.

to support its position on celibacy. Referring to one of Pope John Paul II's texts on celibacy, Crosby writes, "Thus I found just one more example of a selective interpretation of the scriptures, misusing them to promote something far removed from their real meaning. Later we will see church teaching condemns such a practice."[2]

For his part, Hans Küng sounds a bit like Luther: "The law of celibacy is in contradiction to Holy Scripture, which does not say of celibacy, 'Let anyone accept this who cannot,' but 'Let anyone accept this who can' (Matthew 19.12)."[3] Of course, Matthew 19, 12 is one of those texts often quoted to support the discipline of celibacy, and it is often misinterpreted to suit various agendas. A.W. Richard Sipe confirms that sexuality, as the Roman church understands it today, does not have any basis in Scripture. "Sexual sin has progressively been incorporated into the celibate/sexual system to the point where it—lust—has become the preeminent, uncompromised, and dominant moral concern for clergy and layperson alike. This emphasis is not consistent with Scripture or the earliest concerns of the Christian community."[4]

During his long pontificate, Pope John Paul II often reaffirmed the wisdom and the need for clerical celibacy. Crosby challenges John Paul's position: "In his effort to find some Scriptural text to support his demand that priests be celibate and that there be no discussion against his position, the Pope seems unwilling to consider at least one other text indicating that the one our Tradition calls the 'First Pope' and some of the other apostles appear to have had normal genital relationships with their wives *throughout their*

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[2]Ibid., 9.

[3]Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History,* trans. John Bowden (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 210-211.

[4]A.W. Richard Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power: Anatomy of a Crisis* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1995), 98-99.

ministry."[5] Therefore, the discipline of celibacy is not based in the early tradition of the church either.

Pagan and Dualistic Philosophies Infiltrate Catholic Sexual Ethics

> *Sadly, perhaps tragically, the church has one ear cocked to hear the word of God, the other attuned to the pagan, dualistic anthropologies (spirit versus matter) that have influence even to this day. The church continues to insist on its own cult of vestal virgins.*
>
> Donald Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*

In the Introduction to this dissertation, the point is made that the Early Church was significantly influenced by philosophies that were foreign to the Scriptures in matters of sexual ethics. These philosophies were quite dualistic and sex-negative. The study of Augustine and Aquinas strongly confirmed the fact that both men were influenced by philosophies that were foreign to Christianity.

Mary T. Malone is very eloquent in her description of the pagan dualism that infiltrated Christianity:

> The model [of household and imperial rule] was taken from the notion of the priority of the soul over the body. This dualistic way of thinking makes its home in Christianity from this time forward. The world was seen as a system of graded dualities – soul/body, reason/emotion, divine/human, heaven/earth, spiritual/earthly, master/slave, culture/nature, male/female and husband/wife. Eventually the dualities of white/black and a host of other racist and classist dualism were added.[6]

It is difficult to comprehend how the Christian church managed to integrate these dualisms without identifying them as unscriptural, even heretical.

Edward Schillebeeckx, a celebrated Roman Catholic theologian, also confirms the notion that one of the origins of the requirement of celibacy was rooted in pagan practices:

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[5]Crosby, 8. Italics in text.

> According to Edward Schillebeeckx, in his book, *The Church with a Human Face*, celibacy has its origins in a partly pagan notion of ritual purity. . . . 'At the origin of the law of celibacy,' Schillebeeckx says, 'we find an antiquated anthropology and an ancient view of sexuality. . . . One does not approach the altar and the consecrated vessels with soiled hands' had been the pagan view, now enshrined by the Christians in their law of celibacy.[7]

Here, we see the double influence of cultic purity and a defective sexual anthropology intertwined in the Church's theology of the priesthood and celibacy.

As is the case with many theologians and historians, Donald Cozzens also confirms the existence of foreign philosophies that influenced Christian ideas about sexuality:

> Beneath the weighty issues of property and money reinforcing mandated celibacy lay long-held pagan and early Christian convictions about sex shaped by Manichean, gnostic, and other dualistic philosophies popular in the first millennium. . . . Both spiritual and philosophical excellence, according to these systems of thought were to be found . . . especially in sexual abstinence. The influence of these dualistic philosophies can be traced down through the ages to John Paul II."[8]

David Rice concurs: "The clerical caste is steeped in Gnosticism, one of the oldest and most persistent of all heresies, which sees the body as evil and only the spirit as good. It results in a hang-up about people taking their clothes off, instead of a concern for putting clothes on those who have none, which is what mattered to Christ."[9] It is paradoxical that the church has declared gnosticism to be a heresy, while at the same time incorporating this same heresy in its own spirituality and sexual ethics. Mary T. Malone speaks to this issue with eloquence and aplomb: "What Christianity condemns as heresy in Gnostic

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[6]Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity Volume One: The First Thousand Years* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2007), 72.

[7]Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face: A New & Expanded Theology of Ministry* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 240-249; quoted in David Rice, *Shattered Vows: Exodus from the Priesthood* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1991), 219-220.

[8]Donald Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 37-38.

dualism returns to haunt it in the Christian adoption of dualistic asceticism."[10] Such asceticism is often referred to as *sacrificial love* in spiritual literature; it is based on Christ's sacrifice of his life for the redemption of humanity.

As could be expected, Augustine's sex-negative views are pervasive and ever present in any study of Christian sexuality. Historian Leonard Swidler has this to say:

> Augustine was without question the greatest of the Latin fathers and the most influential of the Doctors of the Church. . . . Before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine became a devotee of Manicheism, an explicitly dualistic philosophy-religion, which greatly stressed the essential evil of matter, which notion Augustine largely carried over with him into Christianity, and, through his massive influence, into the rest of Western Christianity.[11]

No one will be surprised that the literature on Christian sexual spirituality consistently refers to and critiques Augustine's sexual pessimism. Swidler continues:

> Augustine also had severe difficulties with his sexuality, which is reflected in his Christian writings about sex and about women. . . . The basic dualism that Augustine had absorbed from his years as a Manichee turns up in his problem of what to do with his sexuality. When teetering on the edge of embracing Christianity, Augustine was plagued by what appeared to him as an obvious either-or choice: either choose Christ or choose sexual satisfaction. For Augustine the two were mutually exclusive; sexual desire was a disorder engendered by sin (see Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition*, p. 115).[12]

Again we see a noted historian's affirmation that Augustine's sexuality, and thereby the sexual ethics of the whole Christian world, were tainted by a pagan philosophy. Swidler is one of a long line of theologians and historians who agree on "Augustine's dualism, his fixation on sex, and his consequent abhorrence of women."[13] Such fear of sex and of

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[9]Rice, 188.

[10]Malone, 94.

[11]Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979), 348-349.

[12]Ibid., 349.

[13]Ibid.

women is indelibly embedded in the subconscious, collective mind of the Roman Catholic Church.

Donald Cozzens also indicts Augustine: "Christianity, of course, has long been suspicious of sexuality and quick to praise those who explicitly forego active sexual lives. We find the roots of this suspicion in the spirit/matter dualism that influenced St. Augustine's negative judgment on sexuality—even in the context of married love."[14]

The pervasive presence of Augustine in any scholarly discussion about Christian sexuality continues to this day. As Raymond Lawrence has said, "One can never quite dispose of Augustine. For the sake of the redemption of eros, the malevolent aspects of Augustine's influence on Western Christendom cannot be minimized. . . . Sexual renunciation in Augustine was both very real and very problematic, and its curse still permeates Western culture, for which Augustine is summoned before the bar of history."[15]

In Chapter I, we saw that Aquinas's theology is still the major foundation of Roman Catholic theology. And it seems that we cannot dispose of Aquinas either: "Great numbers of Roman Catholics, inspired by John XXIII, boldly have challenged Thomist sex ethics by calling for such further changes as clerical marriage and the decriminalization of birth control. Those who openly have challenged Thomist principles of sex ethics have either been silenced, ignored, pushed to the outer fringes of ecclesia, or have left the Church."[16]

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[14]Cozzens, 11.

[15]Raymond J. Lawrence, Jr., *The Poisoning of Eros: Sexual Values in Conflict* (New York: Augustine Moore Press, 1990), 131.

[16]Ibid., 199.

Thus, the two pillars of Roman Catholic theology that we studied in Chapter I are still alive and well in Roman Catholic sexual ethics. In fact, eight centuries after Augustine we encounter Thomas Aquinas who also was tainted by a pre-Christian, pagan philosophy on which he built his theology and sexual ethics. Aquinas displays the same contempt for sexuality and the same misogyny that we saw in Augustine. Unfortunately, the Catholic Church continues to maintain that the sexual views of Augustine and Aquinas are appropriate for our times.

Finally, if the church made some progress under the papacies of Pope John XXIII and Paul VI, the dualism that we have documented throughout this dissertation has endured, up to and including the papacy of Pope John Paul II. Many critics blame Pope John Paul II for turning the church backward instead of forward, and for effectively putting to rest the internal reforms brought about by the Second Vatican Council. Jane Anderson evaluates John Paul's papacy thus: "The papacy of John Paul II has endeavoured to curtail the emergence of the modern worldview by promoting a classical worldview in which people are constituted by the opposing characteristics of body and spirit. This view is located in the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultural heritage of the church."[17]

Pope Benedict XVI shows no sign of engaging in a reform to heal the wounds of dualism. Consequently, the dualism that was present at the beginning of the church is still with us at the beginning of the twenty-first century! Mary T. Malone sums up: "Christian

[17]Jane Anderson, *Priests in Love: Roman Catholic Clergy and Their Intimate Friendships* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 176.

history is a wonderful illustration of the maxim that whatever is not faced in one period of history, will return to haunt us in another."[18]

For his part, Hans Küng names some contemporary philosophies that must be faced, and not only in negative terms. His thesis is in keeping with the central thesis of this dissertation: "Western secularization, individualization, and pluralization are spreading everywhere. This is not just negative, nor is it to be lamented in a criticism of culture."[19] I would add postmodernism and feminism to Küng's list. This is not to say that postmodernism and feminism must replace modernism and become two other tyrannical philosophies for centuries to come. I am simply saying, as I have said before, that there are positive values in postmodernism and feminism that cannot, and should not, be ignored. They offer a valuable rereading of history, new paradigms for reflection, and an alternative interpretation of written texts.

Church Property and Hostility to Marriage

The literature frequently mentions the issue of church property as a major factor in the development of celibacy: "There was a real danger that legitimate children of priests could inherit, thus depriving the Church of its property. It became critical, as many of the clergy were nobles, some even royalty. Hence a further (economic) motive for retaining celibacy for priests, since illegitimate children could not inherit."[20] Today, the ecclesiastical landscape, of course, has changed. Candidates to the priesthood may be considered noble because of their altruistic motivations, but a priest belonging to royalty is virtually unheard of. However, it is obvious that the church has succeeded in safekeeping its properties.

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[18]Malone, 101.
[19]Küng, 195.

Former seminary rector and professor of pastoral theology Donald Cozzens also reports the financial motivations underlying the imposition of celibacy: "From the beginning, financial and property concerns played a significant role in the development of institutional or mandatory celibacy. When married priests died, their wives and children in many cases were reluctant to leave their home, the parish house or rectory. Land held by the church was in some cases claimed by the priest's family with embarrassing legal battles ensuing."[21]

Whether it was because of ritual purity or simply the beginning of the war against married clergy for the sake of retaining church property, the church harshly intruded in the marital intimacy of priests and their wives: "The first efforts at celibacy were, therefore, legislation to prevent priests from having intercourse with their wives, either before celebration of the Eucharist, or when they were promoted to bishop or after the birth of an heir. Only much later (in the twelfth century) would clerical marriages themselves be declared invalid."[22] The universal imposition of the law of celibacy in the twelfth century did not change mentalities overnight: "The 1139 celibacy law did not end the matter, but in many cases merely changed marriage into concubinage."[23] Even some popes had wives and concubines, and fathered children long after the law of celibacy was imposed.

The imposition of the law of celibacy introduced great suffering for priests, their wives, and their children:

> Incredible harshness was at times used to enforce the law of celibacy. The Council of Toledo, in 655, had decreed the enslavement of the offspring of

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[20]Rice, 220.
[21]Cozzens, 36-37.
[22]Garry Wills, *Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 132-133.
[23]Rice, 220.

> clerics, which was incorporated into general Church law, along with the enslavement of the wives of clerics. Much later, that law was put in ferocious effect . . . when the marriages of priests were savagely broken up and priests' wives and children were made into slaves.[24]

If Jesus had required celibacy from his apostles and disciples (which, as we have seen, he did not), he unquestionably would not have employed these incredibly mean tactics! Raymond Lawrence also refers to the harsh measures that were introduced to impose clerical celibacy: "The middle of the eleventh century witnessed the bloody campaign to abolish clerical marriage, a campaign that lasted two centuries. Clerical celibacy and widespread monasticism were the results."[25] More of these abuses of power are discussed later in this chapter.

Today, although the motivation to maintain celibacy for financial considerations is never mentioned by church officials, it definitely has its advantages. A few years ago, I was in conversation with a married Anglican priest who wished to become a Catholic priest. Upon inquiry, he found that the church would have found it very difficult to integrate him and his family within its celibate structures. A celibate parish priest's salary would not be sufficient to provide for his wife and children. Therefore, if this priest converted to Catholicism, he would have to seek ministry in a different setting such as education, health care, or another institution in order to earn enough means to support his family. However, there was a serious dilemma: This candidate felt called to parish ministry, a ministry that he loved. He did not wish to minister anywhere but in a parish. The Church was not prepared to accommodate his wishes and to allow him to minister in a parish. It would have been too complicated! Raising the (married) parish priest's salary to accommodate the needs of his family would have caused mayhem among the celibate

[24]Ibid.

clergy and even the laity. Consequently, the priest never converted to Catholicism, although he said he remained a Catholic in his heart. Therefore, financial motivations for maintaining celibacy are as pertinent now as they were in the beginning of the Church. "And compulsory celibacy is, or was, incredibly efficient—the ultimate management technique, giving total control and total mobility of personnel, and rendering priests independent of this-wordly interests and free of lay control. . . . If married priests and families enter the picture, Church authorities fear it would entail a drastic restructuring of Church finances."[26] Need we say more?

Monastic Popes and Bishops

Another factor that accounts for the historical development of celibacy is that "more and more bishops began to be appointed from the monks, who had vows of chastity, and these gradually imposed monastic notions of virginity as suitable for all priests, even those not living in monasteries."[27] To this day, as part of priestly formation, seminaries require some form of community living in which the students gather for study, prayer, and activities of daily life, in order to facilitate the supervision of candidates and to shelter them from the world. The prayer of the breviary, introduced centuries ago as the official prayer of the church, is imposed on diocesan priests; yet, it is a monastic prayer that is still chanted in monasteries throughout the world! However, once they leave the seminary, and after ordination, most diocesan priests live alone. Communal seminary living is therefore an artificial, temporary environment that does not prepare the diocesan priest for life on the outside; it does not prepare him to live on his own or for the

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[25]Lawrence, 2.
[26]Rice, 229.
[27]Ibid., 220.

solitary life that awaits him. Conversely, monks have a regulated and supportive community life to sustain them in their vowed commitments.

Celibacy: Gift or Law?

One of the questions that was raised in the Introduction to this dissertation was whether it was realistic or possible to assert that celibacy is a gift from God and at the same time legislate it into law. How does the Church deal with this inconsistency? Answer: Church officials are sure that God will grant the grace of celibacy to those who ask for it. Such an answer presumes that priests who are not given the grace of celibacy are somehow at fault because their prayer is not sincere enough or because they do not pray often enough or hard enough.

Celibacy as a Divine Gift or Charism

> *There should be no question about this: Celibacy is not proposed as a natural phenomenon. . . . The priesthood may be an option for every Christian; celibacy is not. Celibacy is a highly specialized gift that presumes an awareness of existence and reality beyond the ordinary as well as a charism—that is, a special gift of grace and of spiritual witness. . . . Priests believe in grace. A charism is a grace and not a product of nature.*
>
> A.W. Richard Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited*

Some authors even question the imagery of the giftedness of celibacy, especially when such concepts are no longer the result of a fruitful, contemporary dialogue, but simply an undisputed assumption: "The papacy's repetition of its mantra—'celibacy is a gift of God'—is proving less and less effective. Challenging and questioning images is part of the dialectical process by which humankind seeks a better understanding of truth."[28] Many Catholics wonder why church officials forbid even the discussion of mandated celibacy. Bishops are not even allowed to bring up the issue during their *ad limina* visits when accounting for their administration at the Vatican and sharing their pastoral concerns for their respective dioceses.

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[28]Anderson, 144.

A.W. Richard Sipe, a former priest and current psychotherapist who has written extensively and researched the area of priestly celibacy for decades, explains: "Theologically, a charism is an unmerited gift of God. Such is the grace of celibacy and the perceived experience of the recipient of this divine favor. A man who presents himself for ordination to the priesthood is expected to be the object of this grace. The charism is distinct from the ideal just as it is separate from the law. After all, grace cannot be legislated. Neither can a spiritual gift thrive without cultivation."[29] Sipe describes eloquently and with great admiration the characteristics of those who have truly achieved celibacy. In his opinion, those who have the gift and allow it to flourish are few: "At any one time, 2% of vowed celibate clergy can be said to have achieved celibacy – that is, they have successfully negotiated each step of celibate development. . . . These truly are the eunuchs of whom Christ spoke in the New Testament (Matthew 19:12)."[30]

For his part, Michael H. Crosby defines celibacy as "the embrace of a divinely offered gift inviting one to freely choose a life-commitment of abstention from genital intimacy which expresses itself in an alternate intimacy with God and others. The celibate is a person who freely embraces the divine offer to refrain from genital intercourse, who finds ways to be warm and intimate with others and who has a place in his or her heart only for God."[31] Crosby is a vowed celibate and a member of the Capuchin Order who writes passionately and positively about gifted celibacy, but incisively against mandatory celibacy.

Both Crosby and Sipe propose that the only way to achieve a healthy celibate life is through nongenital intimacy. In other words, intimacy is essential to a successful

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[29]Sipe, 59.
[30]Ibid., 67.

celibacy. Crosby offers interesting insights into the hearts of true celibates who are given the gift of celibacy and respond to it freely and joyfully. This inner freedom "involves an embrace of Jesus' words about making themselves 'eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 19:12). It means that we 'make ourselves' celibate in a way that empowers us to simply say—not as much in resignation but in gratitude: *this is who I am.*"[32] Explained this way, celibacy becomes the very identity of the person who has received the gift, and others readily sense such an authentic call and response to the gift of celibacy.

When one receives the divine gift of celibacy, one has the knowledge within oneself that he or she has been given this gift. With it comes another gift: that of freedom of will to either accept it or not. "In the end, the choice for celibacy must represent a choice freely and unconditionally made to oneself, to God and to the world. Such a celibate freely says: 'Not only is this who I am; this is how I am going to be; this is the way I will relate.'"[33] Crosby contends that this manner of relating is not selfish, nor does it express loneliness; rather, it expresses a special and selfless kind of intimacy. "The celibate way of relating intimately represents a way free of control, manipulation, domination, exploitation or abuse."[34] Such an intimate way of relating affirms the divine gift of celibacy through ethical and moral behaviour toward self, other, and God. "For the celibate the other is viewed as a person to be cared for with deep commitment rather than someone that can be used for pleasure."[35] Contrary to popular opinion, true celibacy requires deep, generous, nongenital intimacy that reveals profound inner freedom.

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[31]Crosby, 199.
[32]Ibid., 178. Italics in text.
[33]Ibid.
[34]Ibid.

Awareness and recognition of oneself as having accepted the gift of celibacy allows one to deal with temptations for genital gratification from a place of respect for self and others.[36] Crosby possesses unique insights into true celibacy and confirms the very existence of the gift of celibacy. There is, indeed, a profound joy experienced in the total gift of self in the service of others!

The gift of celibacy is also a true calling to the dedication of oneself to a life in God and for God. Cozzens writes, "Some few men and women appear to possess the charism of celibacy, a graced call from God to pledge themselves to celibate living for the good of others and for the building up in history of the reign of God. For these individuals, celibacy is their *truth*—the right way for them to live out their lives."[37] Cozzens describes the authentic call to celibacy as a "mysterious pull of grace toward singleness that seems to fit with their inner life and spiritual journey. . . . It is a pull—like being drawn by a magnet—because it is not necessarily, at least in the beginning of their discernment, their choice. As the Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx once said of the celibate: he or she has an 'existential inability to do otherwise.'"[38] Sipe also confirms the existence of an authentic call to celibacy. He writes, "Some people are biogenetically and psychologically suited for marriage; others are just as strongly suited for celibacy. . . . These predispositions are not interchangeable at will. Not every man is capable of marriage. Not every man is suitable for celibacy."[39]

Gifted celibates or charismatic celibates are distinguished by certain characteristics that emanate out of their presence and set them apart from others. Cozzens

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[35]Ibid.
[36]Ibid.
[37]Cozzens, 21.
[38]Ibid., 21-22.

identifies some of these characteristics as passion for life, freedom of soul, peace with self, nonjudgmental acceptance of others, unconditional gracious hospitality, consistent reverence, a spirit of gratitude, the perception of celibacy as a blessing, and the ability to see God's grace in everything.[40] Only a select few can claim such giftedness. The divine charism visibly radiates from those celibates, making them readily identifiable when one is in their presence. Being endowed with the gift, one is naturally suited to living life in truth and integrity to oneself, and therefore to the Church and God. Two examples of the radiance of authentic celibacy come to mind: Mother Teresa and Jean Vanier. On the other hand, priests who do not have the gift or charism of celibacy and attempt to observe it as obedience to a law, place themselves and others at considerable risk, as we shall see in the next section.

Celibacy as Law

> *If we concede that healthy, life-giving celibacy is a charism given by God to relatively few individuals, mandatory celibacy emerges as an oxymoron. Gifts that are grounded in the grace of God simply cannot be legislated.*
>
> Donald Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*

As seen in the previous section, celibacy is a gift from God. This is clear in the teaching tradition of the church and in the lives of many who live an authentic call to celibacy. Yet, this gift is offered to relatively few persons. In the Introduction to this dissertation, the question was raised as to whether such a charism or gift from God could be transformed into law.

Donald Cozzens borrows from the terminology of philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich to describe the character of sexual desire as "*daimonic*—a reality having the

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[39]Sipe, 117.
[40]Cozzens, 26-29.

ability either to lift and transport the human spirit or to wound, even destroy it." The daimonic, according to Cozzens, and as described here, is not restricted to the sexual realm; other examples include wealth, power, fame, ambition, and religion. "All of these aspects of life must be addressed with care."[41] This daimonic characteristic manifests itself when celibacy is not authentically from the place of the heart. In other words, when celibacy does not come from the depth of the heart as a divine gift, but is, instead, chosen to satisfy a law, it can, and indeed often does, become detrimental to the person who attempts it, as well as to those whose lives are touched by that person.

As Sipe has noted, the gift of celibacy must be nurtured and cultivated. If celibacy basically refers to the state of being unmarried, that in itself does not mean or guarantee the virtue of chastity. David Rice makes that point clearly: "Celibacy is not chastity. . . . Celibacy is merely the permanent state of being unmarried. Chastity, for an unmarried person, means abstaining from genital sexual activity. The tragedy begins when a priest is celibate but not chaste (which can easily happen when celibacy has not really been freely chosen by the priest)."[42] Truly, this is the tragedy of many priests who, perhaps naively, but with great sincerity and faith, promise celibacy but do not have the gift to carry it through. They have been told that God will give them the gift of true celibacy if they pray for it. It is assumed that God would not refuse such a wonderful gift. However, many priests who pray sincerely and fervently for God to give them the gift of celibacy or chastity experience bitter disappointment. As everyone knows, God does not always answer one's prayers, even if the prayer is a request for the gift of chastity. Ironically, and considering all that has been written about him or against him, Augustine is

[41]Ibid., 12.
[42]Rice, 156.

purported to have prayed thusly: "Lord, give me chastity, but not yet." Assuming that he *did* pray in this manner, it is refreshing to see that, despite his inner turmoil, Augustine could still manage a bit of humour!

Be that as it may, let us remind ourselves that the priests who do not have the gift of celibacy or chastity are not bad persons; they are sincere in their prayer and willingness to serve. But they suffer needlessly. Many have been trained to believe that nothing is impossible to God and that God answers our prayers as long as they are for our own good and the good of others.

> By assuming that celibacy is absolute and bound up with eternity, the papacy puts the onus on each and every cleric to remain faithful to celibacy. Garnered with the assurance that God wills this practise for priests, that priests are praying for the grace to live celibacy, and that those prayers will be answered, the pope, the curia, and those bishops who support this practise remain confident in the validity of compulsory celibacy. . . . This approach enables the pope and the curia to avoid addressing historical circumstances, social and cultural complexities, and the character of the priest, all of which affect his ability to practise celibacy.[43]

Anderson's comments are crucial for understanding the essentialist thinking of the Catholic Church when it applies the inflexible rule of celibacy at all times, for all cultures, and for all personalities. Again, we see the absolutism that ignores specific social cultures and the unique personalities of individuals. Some Roman Catholic bishops' conferences have long petitioned Rome to allow married men to become priests so that they could serve as pastors in specific cultural contexts such as the Canadian North. This is particularly relevant to cultures in which celibacy has no cultural value, or where an unmarried man is deemed to be only half a person and thus unworthy to be a community leader. There are many such cultures around the world. Rome has

[43]Anderson, 12.

consistently refused to consider these requests to ordain married men, even as exceptions to the universal rule. For example, the request to ordain married Aboriginal Elders is systematically ignored by the Vatican. Consequently, these communities continue to be subjected to a form of pastoral colonialism: priests from other cultures must serve these mature communities, but they are still foreign missionaries. Having worked with Canadian Aboriginals for many years, I can attest to the fact that these cultures, even if Christian, do not value the ideal of celibacy.

When a priest does not have the gift of celibacy or chastity, he experiences great spiritual distress in his own life and causes the same in the lives of other persons. He does not have the gift, yet he must forge ahead through the force of the law. David Rice has biting words to describe such distress:

> Compulsory celibacy does not work. And it is being rejected by priests all around the world. Silence has been imposed by Rome, but these men are voting with their feet. . . . The fruits of compulsory celibacy are those thousands of men leading double lives, thousands of women leading destroyed lives, thousands of children spurned by their ordained fathers, to say nothing of the priestly walking wounded, the psychiatric cases, the alcoholics and the workaholics, the grey lonely faces, the cars, the bars and the whores that make wretched the lives of so many priests of Jesus Christ. Only Satan could invent such a sieve for the priesthood.[44]

Rice paints a grim picture, indeed! And the reference to Satan is eerily reminiscent of the invectives of both Luther and Calvin against mandatory celibacy.

Sipe, in his book *Sex, Priests and Power: The Anatomy of a Crisis,* states that "Celibacy requires a level of maturity that can sustain a professional stance in all ministry and a degree of spirituality that can ensure sexually appropriate, responsible, and honest relationships with all women, men, and children."[45] With celibacy forced onto those who

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[44]Rice, 172.
[45]Sipe, 130.

have no divine charism, and little or no experience with social skills gleaned through the relationship process from the adolescent years onward, priests address life situations with an underdeveloped mind-set that remains at the adolescent level. This psychosexual underdevelopment sets the stage for future tragedy.

Many men who become priests naïvely believe that they have received the charism of celibacy, when they have not. Crosby identifies some of the unhealthy behavioural expressions of those who claim to be celibate: "Some symptoms of the sick ways we express our celibacy involve asexuality and 'careerism,' intellectualization and disassociation, workaholism and perfectionism, repression and acting out, and–probably most frightening of all–a kind of codependency which can best be described . . . [as] being . . . a 'pope's man.'"[46]

Some sexually repressed seminarians or priests try, unsuccessfully, to short-circuit sexual awareness through prayer and selfless dedication. Seminary training is of little help. In fact, the seminary often provides an ideal setting for sexual denial and repression. Through his many years of research, Richard Sipe discovered that training programs and the seminary system failed in three ways: "There was an avoidance of direct and open *discussion and debate* about sexuality. A system of secrecy surrounded all personal exploration of sex and celibacy. There were only abstract assumptions, no personal, explicit witnesses of celibacy, its struggles and achievements."[47] Few faculty members in Catholic seminaries are capable of leading and modeling a frank discussion about sexuality and celibacy. Most are not comfortable with sexual discourse except when studying or teaching moral theology within an impersonal, academic framework.

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[46]Crosby, 93.

Sipe argues that "celibacy cannot be practiced without confronting one's own sexuality." He adds, "Sociologist Father John L. Thomas told me, 'A celibate should know everything there is to know about sexuality short of experience.'"[48] Sipe stresses that when seminarians experience sexual tensions or temptations—or when they simply have questions or issues regarding sexuality—they are too often relegated to secrecy and dealt with either in the confessional or in counselling. If sexual acting out occurs, it is dealt with in the "most clandestine manner possible to avoid scandal."[49] Most often, those who are responsible for priestly formation are not themselves comfortable enough to discuss issues of sexuality with their students. The same is true of priests in general, except among very close and trusted friends or within the safety and secrecy of the confessional.

Priests who do not have the gift of celibacy and try to live it nonetheless, are in a difficult situation. Cozzens writes,

> God, I believe, takes no pleasure in human suffering—especially suffering that is not necessary, not inherent to the human condition. And much of the emotional suffering linked to mandated celibacy is unnecessary. Nor does it seem that God takes pleasure in institutionalized celibacy. If God did, we would not have had the long, twelve-hundred-year tradition of married clergy in the Latin rite; we would not have the witness of two millennia of married clergy in the Orthodox communion and Eastern rite Catholic churches. We would not have listed in the canon of saints numerous married popes who with their wives established families and raised children.[50]

Cozzens describes the destructive nature of a celibacy that is not gifted: "When the church presumes a charism in individuals presenting themselves for consideration as

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[47]A.W. Richard Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 285.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Cozzens, 54-55.

priests, it breaks the rhythm of grace. And like most things that are forced, demanding celibacy where the charism is not present unwittingly wounds not only the candidate but also puts the people to whom he will later minister as priest at risk"[51] Cozzens challenges the church's presumption that priests who do not think they have the gift of celibacy should simply ask God to grant it, because God could not refuse such a noble request: "Grace simply refuses to be controlled—for in attempting to control grace we attempt to control God. When we enter these waters we face grave spiritual danger. . . The burden of obligatory celibacy easily disturbs the equilibrium of any individual not possessing the charism."[52]

Without experiencing normal male-female relationships in dating and friendship, without experiencing the support, love, friendship, and encouragement of marriage, without expressing healthy sexual intimacy, the celibate who is living a forced way of life in the priesthood becomes fraught with issues that are detrimental to his health and well-being. Cozzens points out that celibates who do not have the divine gift "often fail to ring true. Not at home with themselves, their spiritual and psychological awkwardness keeps them from connecting with others, the very foundation skill of ministry . . . their relationships tend to be superficial and formal or strained and immature. . . . Sooner or later these shadow forces lead to compensatory behaviours and attitudes of privilege and power."[53] The last sentence should retain our attention. Forced or false celibacy often leads to compensations not only in addictions or excessive work, but also in seeking positions of power in what is called careerism—that is, social climbing within church structures, the idea of being special because set apart from others, and the need to

[51]Ibid., 55.
[52]Ibid.

exercise power over others. All this, of course, is in marked contrast to the generous and unselfish gift of oneself that we have seen in those who have the charism of celibacy.

Cozzens also contends that although the discipline of celibacy has been very much a part the Catholic unconscious or subconscious for centuries, many Catholics are now challenging the rule of celibacy. "Celibacy, it must be conceded, has been the defining mark, the *signature* of ordination for the past nine centuries. As such it has been engraved in the Catholic collective unconscious—where it has rested more or less uncontested for almost a millennium. But no longer. Both laity and clergy now see that the *law* of celibacy is, at best, counterproductive for the life and mission of the church."[54] It remains to be seen whether such a movement from the unconscious to the conscious will influence church officials to reform the law of celibacy.

Donald Cozzens again makes an interesting point when he asks us to imagine a church law requiring all candidates to the priesthood to be married before ordination. In this scenario, the church would tell those who do not think they have a calling to married life to pray God to give them such a charism. This law would be oppressive for those who feel called to both celibacy and priesthood, because they would not have the gift of marriage. "In this imagined scenario," Cozzens adds, "the church would be presumptive at best, and arrogant at worst, to assume that it is the broker of divine grace—the dispenser of charisms."[55] The last point cannot be overstressed; we may have assumed too much and too long that God automatically grants celibacy to those who ask for it. And those unanswered prayers could well be one of the reasons for so many failed

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[53]Ibid., 57.
[54]Ibid., 104.
[55]Ibid., 86-87.

celibacies attempted by well-meaning and sincere, but somewhat naïve, seminarians and priests.

Michael H. Crosby confirms that very few people have the gift of celibacy:

> I am convinced that when celibacy is no longer imposed, only a few, and especially only a few males will accept it as their life-choice. . . . When people freely choose celibacy their decision will have little or nothing to do with the tradition, law or practice of past centuries regarding a requirement for priesthood. It will not be connected to ministry or to orders. Rather it will result from a free choice arising from one's understanding of the force of God's reign in ones' life and how that presence can be expressed wholeheartedly in the world. This will occur when celibacy becomes a "gift" rather than a "given". Then it will cease being used as an instrument of control to reinforce a patriarchal system that in today's world, provides less and less meaning and even less justification.[56]

The ravages caused by ungifted celibacy, or celibacy accepted to conform to a law, are thus clearly exposed in this section. Finally, it seems appropriate to conclude this section with Donald Cozzens's words of wisdom:

> Celibacy, I have argued here, is truly liberating for the individual who possesses the charism of celibate discipleship. And, as our experience confirms, it is a blessing for the church. For the individual without the charism, however, mandated celibacy is anything but liberating. It is an unnecessary restriction and burden for thousands of priests and a source of suffering for the church itself. The time is right. Catholics everywhere await the freeing of celibacy."[57]

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[56]Crosby, vii.
[57]Cozzens, 92-93.

The Decline of Vocations to the Priesthood

> *If the official Church could admit its own discomfort with sexuality, as inseparable as the blood is from the wound, and could take even a small, undefended and therefore healthy step toward understanding it, the priest shortage would vanish, the sacramental life of the Church as Mystery would be guaranteed, and respect for the authority of the Institutional Church would begin to rise immediately.*
>
> Eugene Kennedy, *The Unhealed Wound: The Church and Human Sexuality*

In the wake of revelations of sexual abuse of minors by priests, and even before then, several surveys revealed that Catholics at all levels hoped for a change in the law requiring celibacy. One of the reasons for requesting optional celibacy was the decline of vocations. "Still, the issue of optional celibacy in the Latin rite, in spite of the drastic drop in the number of priests over the past fifty years, in spite of half the world's Catholic parishes bereft of a resident pastor, remains off the table. Throughout his long papacy John Paul II made it clear that the discipline of celibacy was nonnegotiable."[58] David Rice attributes this refusal to discuss any reform of the law of celibacy to a wish to preserve institutional concerns rather than to fulfill the needs of parishioners:

> The clerical institution puts its own survival first, and the needs of the People of God, second. Just one instance: because of a shortage of priests thousands upon thousands of parishes round the world do not have the Mass, the centre point of the Faith. If priests could marry, sociologists estimate that vocations alone would quadruple. But faced with a choice between the Eucharist for which people are crying out, and obligatory celibacy, which might shore up clericalism, the institution opts for celibacy, and will not permit even discussion on it. Bare altars, priestless communities and hungry sheep are thus among the fruits of clericalism.[59]

No one knows for sure whether or how much vocations to the priesthood might increase if celibacy was optional. From my own discussion with many potential candidates, I tend to agree with David Rice. Many Catholics love and respect their church as a beacon of

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[58]Ibid., 45.

hope and as a necessary countercultural institution that has something pertinent to say to our broken world. But celibacy is certainly one of the serious obstacles to a full engagement in ordained, priestly ministry. There are also thousands of priests who have received dispensations from celibacy, who have never lost their faith or their respect for the church, and who would readily serve as married priests. Instead of drawing on such resources, the church has reduced them to the lay state and forbids them to serve as priests. In addition, since the Second Vatican Council, thousands of married men have been ordained as deacons; many of these men could readily and ably serve their communities as priests if only they were allowed to be ordained.

In recent years, the solution to the dilemma of declining numbers of priests has been to import priests from other cultures and countries to minister to the People of God who are in need of the sacraments of the Church. The Vatican encourages diocesan bishops to engage in such pastoral exchanges. However, such a solution cannot but be temporary, and it remains unsatisfactory. Many, if not most, of the countries that supply priests to others are themselves experiencing a shortage of priests. More importantly, this solution denies the opportunity to open a frank dialogue on the issue of mandated celibacy.

Hans Küng describes the priest shortage in these terms: "The law of celibacy is clearly having a catastrophic effect on recruitment to the priesthood. The decline of priestly vocations means that soon only half of all parishes will have a resident pastor."[60] Küng, like many others, does not put much faith in the regrouping of parishes into larger units: "Combining several parishes into 'units of pastoral care,' which has become

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[59]Rice, 183-184.
[60]Küng, 211.

customary in many countries, disguises the crisis, alienates the faithful from the church, and in the longer term will mean the collapse of pastoral care."[61] In fact, such regroupings of parishes are already taking their toll on an aging clergy who experience an ever-increasing workload. Some communities grieve or are torn apart because they no longer have a resident pastor. The growing involvement of lay people at the parish level does not help much either. Most lay people offer their services on a volunteer basis; parishes are not equipped or prepared to pay an adequate salary, even to those who are properly trained. And, of course, lay people cannot substitute for the priest when sacraments need to be celebrated.

Several years ago, Karl Rahner challenged the church to adjust its pastoral, rather than its institutional priorities: "If the church everywhere or in certain areas is unable to find enough clergy unless she abandons celibacy, then she must abandon it; for the obligation to provide pastors for the Christian people takes precedence over the ideal, legitimate in itself, of having a celibate clergy.[62]

Donald Cozzens confirms that some bishops have petitioned the Vatican for a change: "Bishops' conferences from various parts of the world have called for the ordination of married men to meet the pastoral needs of their people. These bishops understand that forced fasting from the eucharist is itself a form of oppression and remaining silent in the face of such fasting a form of complicity in injustice."[63]

This section makes it clear that the pastoral needs of the People of God can no longer be ignored. The survival of the Church depends on a much-needed reform of the

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[61]Ibid.

[62]Karl Rahner, "The Celibacy of the Secular Priest Today," *The Furrow* 19 (1988): 64; quoted in Crosby, 27.

[63]Cozzens, 90.

celibacy requirement for priests. Left to fend for themselves, the faithful will gradually lose knowledge of their faith, become ignorant through the lack of faith education for adults and children, or become indifferent and disillusioned. Many of them are already experiencing these symptoms.

Celibacy as a Means of Control and Power

> *Every discussion of a celibate versus married priesthood throughout the centuries—regardless of the theological grounds expounded—has, in fact, included three eminently practical elements: progeny, property, and power. Sociologically and economically men are more easily controlled if single. A single-sex power system has proven to have cultural durability whether or not men practice celibacy.*
>
> A.W. Richard Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited*

The section on the origins of celibacy alluded to the manner in which celibacy was imposed throughout history. Many of the methods used had overtones of excessive power, lack of respect, and direct control of married priests, and even enslavement of their wives and children. This section documents how celibacy was and still is a means of institutional control.

Donald Cozzens compares mandated celibacy with slavery and incarceration. Just as an individual prisoner or slave can experience inner freedom, so can a priest thrive spiritually and personally by living a mandated celibate life. However, Cozzens insists, "This does not justify the institution of celibacy any more than a personally liberated slave justifies the institution of slavery." He also asks: "Is it fair to assert that mandatory celibacy as a manifestation of oppression is a violation of justice? The case has been made."[64] Thus, Cozzens makes optional celibacy not only a question of freedom, but also a question of justice. Richard Sipe also accounts for the gradual emergence of the interrelationship between power, control, and sex: "As the questions of power and control were fought out, more and more attention was given to sex and celibacy; greater and greater power over sin and forgiveness was taken by the priest."[65] Again, we see that the

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[64]Ibid., 87-88.
[65]Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power,* 99.

development of celibacy as a discipline was correlated to the issue of power and control. This is not an accident of history!

Cozzens asserts that the Apostle Paul chose celibacy, although Paul knew and claimed that he had the right to marry. On the other hand, Peter was married and remained so throughout his ministry. "The 'right' Paul claims but does not exercise is indeed claimed and exercised by Peter, the apostles, and the Lord's brothers—a right Latin rite diocesan priests have been denied since the twelfth century. When rights are restricted, limited, or denied without due cause, we are confronted with injustice."[66] Some priests invoke this concept of injustice by refusing to leave the priesthood even if they become sexually active. The concept of injustice comes to play when they realize that leaving the priesthood would prevent them from exercising the profession or the ministry that they love and deprive them of their livelihood. Marriage or asking for a dispensation from celibacy would mean becoming a layperson again and having to earn a livelihood in another field. Subjectively, they consider that being deprived of the opportunity to marry would have too many destructive consequences. Thus, they remain in the priesthood and continue to be sexually active—all of this, of course, in secrecy.

Raymond Lawrence expresses the power issues related to celibacy in these terms:

> The campaign against clerical marriage and the subsequent celibacy rule were simply part and parcel of the campaign for papal power. It is significant that the particular Gregorians who were the most insistent of the celibacy issue were also those who were the most absolutist in their use of power. . . . Celibacy was the instrument of control, the tool by which the bureaucracy exercised its power over the whole body and finally the arcane mark of the clerical class whereby it distinguished itself from the laity. . . . The campaign against married clergy was an ecclesiastical bloodbath. The resistance was fierce and continuing.[67]

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[66]Cozzens, 88-89.
[67]Lawrence, 144.

The term *Gregorians,* according to this author, refers to the popes who worked at centralizing power in the papacy and at establishing universal jurisdiction over all individual churches. Lawrence identifies these popes as Gregory VII, Calixtus II, Alexander III, and Innocent III.[68]

A.W. Richard Sipe imparts the circumstances that finally culminated in the consolidation of papal power into the universal law of celibacy: "At the Second Lateran Council in 1139, Rome consolidated sexual control over its priests by imposing celibacy as a requirement for ordination. It is a law that has never been well observed, but it has been an essential part of the functioning of the clerical system since that time."[69]

The centralization of power in the office of the papacy and in the Vatican persists as much as ever. Referring to John Paul II, his insistence on celibacy, and his refusal to open it to discussion, Hans Küng writes, "Even the pope cannot dispute that the law of celibacy was imposed by his predecessors in the eleventh century in very dubious circumstances, by spiritual force."[70] Another interesting insight is the identification of the term *church* with the church as an institution, particularly the power vested in the clergy. This nomenclature usually excludes the laity, who have very little, if any, real power as members of the church. Michael Crosby expresses this clericalism as follows: "The identification of 'church' with the interests of the clergy has been used to sustain the clerical control for centuries."[71]

The imposition of the law of celibacy has the effect of controlling one's sexuality, a fundamental dimension of one's identity as a human person. As we have seen, Donald

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[68]Ibid.
[69]Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power,* 98.
[70]Küng, 211.
[71]Crosby, 32 n. 10.

Cozzens speaks to this issue in terms of freedom and justice. Now, he writes about it as an issue of control and power: "From an administrative point of view, and here we are talking power, mandated celibacy is arguably the linchpin of the ecclesiastical system. No one is more controlled than when his or her sexuality is controlled. Control another's sexuality, and you control his center of vitality, the core of his identity and integrity."[72] The seminary system provided an ideal fishbowl in which to observe and report on the social behaviour of seminarians. During summer vacations, the seminarian had to report periodically to the local parish priest so that the former's activities could be monitored. The parish priest then reported his observations to the seminary faculty at the end of the vacation period.

A priest who is celibate is much more mobile than he would be with a wife and family. I remember a time when priests learned of their pastoral assignments by listening to the radio or reading the local Catholic newspaper. The promise of obedience to the bishop at ordination greatly facilitated the bishop's task when assigning a priest to a different parish. Fortunately, there is now a little more flexibility and consultation (at least in our culture) when assigning priests to another pastoral charge. "Celibacy, of course, has been the control factor *par excellence.* Bachelors are, quite simply, easier to manage. There is no family to care for or to pay for; there is no wife to counsel disobedience or to stiffen resolve; there is no danger of nepotism or of children inheriting Church property."[73]

Of course, a frequent means of control for the Vatican is to disempower and humiliate Catholic theologians who dare to disagree with church policies concerning

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[72]Cozzens, 77.
[73]Rice, 182-183.

celibacy or other teachings. This has happened to countless eminent professors who used to teach in Catholic institutions. One only has to think of Hans Küng, Leonardo Boff, Charles Curran, and many others—not to mention theologians (like Karl Rahner) whose publications were or still are under Vatican scrutiny. Jane Anderson explains this abuse of power: "Church bureaucrats also protect the images of celibacy by silencing or revoking the teaching licences of dissident priests and theologians who promote alternative views about celibacy and sexuality."[74] She adds that the same silencing happens at the local level, where diocesan bishops suppress the rhetoric of priests and lay persons who express similar dissenting views.

Donald Cozzens agrees that

> from an administrative point of view, there is little doubt that mandated celibacy for priests has proven to be efficient. Church authorities are able to move or transfer priests with almost military precision and efficiency. At ordination, the newly ordained priest . . . in a rite adopted from the feudal ritual of allegiance . . . in effect acknowledges the bishop as his liege lord. This pledge of loyalty and obedience on the part of the priest/vassal to his lord/bishop establishes and confirms what has proven to be one of the world's best systems of authority, of command and control.[75]

Church officials seldom, if ever, mention these mechanisms of control. Rather, the official texts and biblical references related to celibacy present it as a theological and spiritual ideal to enable serving God and the church with an undivided heart.

This section on celibacy, power, and control is best concluded with Diarmuid O'Murchu's penetrating insights:

> Currently, the Catholic Church universally consists of 1.1 billion members, 99 per cent of whom are lay people of non-clerical status. Yet, anywhere and everywhere I turn, I find that the church is both defined and activated primarily according to the rules and expectations of its governing

[74]Anderson, 144.
[75]Cozzens, 39-40.

clerical body. . . . Innate to such clericalism is a patriarchal, subconscious driving force which is much more about power in the name of religion, rather than about service in the name of spirituality.[76]

[76]Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Reclaiming Spirituality: A New Spiritual Framework for Today's World* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 29.

Celibacy and the Place of Women in the Church

> *Assuming that there will be another Vatican council in this century, as there has been in the past two, hopefully the agenda will feature replacing mandatory celibacy and male-dominated autocracy with the best practices of early Christianity. Then, when Vatican IV meets in the twenty-second century, one can imagine that most bishops will be married and some of them will be women. . . . Removing the celibacy debacle cannot be accomplished without adopting some of the radical egalitarianism of the New Testament community.*
>
> William E. Phipps, *Clerical Celibacy: The Heritage*

Few would share Phipps's optimism, even for the twenty-second century. But who knows? There has been a Vatican II and a John XXIII! The Holy Spirit might surprise us again! Meanwhile, the Roman Church must face the problems of this century. What are the consequences for the women of the church when the church requires the celibacy of an exclusively male priesthood? What subliminal messages does the requirement of celibacy send to these women, not only about sexuality in general, but also about their gender in particular?

In the first chapter, we found that both Augustine and Aquinas were sex-negative and misogynist. Aquinas has even been accused of worsening the condition of women in the church after Augustine: "Recently Thomas has been criticized not only for failing to diminish Augustine's *scorn for women* but for actually heightening it."[77] Interestingly, Küng also attributes the negative influence of Aristotle's philosophy in shaping Aquinas' views of women.

For her part, Arlene Swidler joins the consensus concerning Thomas Aquinas and his views on women: "It is from Aquinas that many of our Catholic ideas on women come, for Thomas is to this day the pre-eminently official theologian and philosopher of

[77]Küng, 103.

the Church. . . . His ideas on women thus combine the attitudes of the Church Fathers and the theories of Aristotle; both strains are misogynist."[78]

As Phipps has said, women were more respected in the Early Church than they were in later history. Consider Mary Magdalene, who is often considered an apostle to the apostles. She was the first to encounter the resurrected Christ. Unfortunately, her status has diminished with centuries of male domination of the Christian churches. In the words of Mary T. Malone, "The lack of any ecclesiastical structures testifying to [the] spiritual equality of women and men, eventually led the churches to forget this basic truth. Hence, later theologians like Augustine and Thomas . . . could wonder why God had created women at all."[79]

Even in the social and religious context of the sixteenth century, the reformers Luther and Calvin provided a perspective that was more positive toward sexuality and women. However, Luther is credited with a more aggressive stance for sexual liberation. According to Raymond Lawrence, Luther, in his "exuberant affirmation of sex . . . promoted marriage for the clergy and celebrated sexuality as a delightful divine gift."[80] It is not surprising, therefore, that Protestant women would be among the first to advocate for women's rights. Through their study of the Scriptures (which was forbidden to the Catholic laity), they found that there was no support in the Scriptures for the exclusion of women. According to Mary T. Malone,

> The first wave of the feminist movement is associated with the mid-nineteenth century search for women's rights culminating in the demand for suffrage. Protestant Christian women, in their study of the scriptures, found no support for the religious and cultural restrictions on women, and began to challenge many facets of conventional living

[78]Arlene Swidler, *Woman in a Man's Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), 12.
[79]Malone, 132.
[80]Lawrence, 184-185.

> arrangements, from the use of 'masculine' language to the exclusion of women from political and religious leadership.[81]

Leonard Swidler did not find in the Scriptures any basis for the marginalization of women either. On the contrary, decades ago, he found that "Jesus was a feminist" and published an article bearing that very title.[82] The emergence of postmodern philosophical feminism offers a challenge to the marginalization of women that can no longer be denied or ignored: "The clerical attitude to women is being met by a powerful feminism: as woman's status rises, it becomes harder and harder to see her as the medieval temptress, the Eve to be guarded against. And as woman takes her full place in society, she is demanding it too in Church."[83] The latter statement is but another indication that the much-maligned secular humanism is more inclusive of women than is the church.

Donald Cozzens also makes a clear *rapprochement* between mandated celibacy, male clericalism, and the relegating of women to the fringes of the church. He writes,

> Consider the oppressive force of mandated celibacy on women in the church. Celibate ecclesiastics, especially those wielding the greatest power, speak with unbridled confidence when insisting on the necessity of celibacy in the ranks of the clergy. In doing so they sustain a clerical culture which in turn creates an ethereal brotherhood that inevitably marginalizes women. It is in the company of men that the church's vision is articulated, its canons confirmed, its theology sanctioned, and its policies defended. All done with the supreme confidence that this is the state of affairs determined by the divine will.[84]

Many Catholics would deny that exclusion of women from its government and its priesthood indicates that their Church is misogynist. Some have simply accepted this situation without questioning, and as Donald Cozzens has said, they believe that this is

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[81]Malone, 258 n. 7.

[82]Leonard Swidler, "Jesus was a Feminist," *Catholic World* 212 (1971): 177-183. See also: Leonard Swidler, *Jesus was a Feminist: What the Gospels Reveal about His Revolutionary Perspective (Landham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 2007).*

[83]Rice, 192.

[84]Cozzens, 91-92.

God's will. As I have alleged before, there has been a subliminal, unconscious misogyny in the Church since Augustine.

According to Sipe, "one can trace the progressive and massive idealization of the image of virgin/mother and the denigration of lover, wife and sexual equal. The system could not endure or function in its current mode if the place of women within systemic functions were altered. Equality of women is the single most threatening factor to the homoeostasis of the system as it now exists and operates."[85] The official church has taken some steps to assuage the anger and alienation of people who feel that women are treated unfairly by the church. But none of those steps are really inclusive of women, who are described as simply having a different calling from that of men.

As the secular society is increasingly inclusive of women in all spheres and a certain social consciousness is emerging, more people are questioning the Church's own stance toward women. As Arlene Swidler states, "People are becoming increasingly aware that the Catholic Church is excessively clerical. All the functions of the organization—executive, judicial, and legislative, as well as the allotment of monies and official theorizing—are done almost exclusively by priests and bishops. The entire Church, clergy and laity, has gone along with this system for so long that it's ingrained in all of us."[86]

Not much has changed. Exactly thirty-five years after Swidler's publication, Mary T. Malone provides her own rereading of history and notes how women have been excluded and marginalized within their own church. "For most of the Christian tradition . . . Christian history was written entirely from the perspective of male and

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[85]Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power,* 101.
[86]Arlene Swidler, 65-66.

clerical concerns. This version of the Christian story is so much part of our mindset that we hardly notice the virtually total absence of women."[87]

David Rice goes a step further: "The clerical caste is notorious for its hostility to women. It ranges from the quite pathetic banning of girls from serving Mass to the refusal even to discuss the ordination of women to . . . women [being] used sexually and then discarded for the sake of the institution."[88]

Hans Küng is equally incisive. Speaking of Pope John Paul II, he remarks: "This pope has waged an almost spooky battle against modern women who seek a contemporary form of life, prohibiting birth control and abortion (even in the case of incest or rape), divorce, the ordination of women, and the modernization of women's religious orders."[89] In a cryptic, sad, and yet almost humorous paradoxical statement, David Rice muses, "The institutional church is steeped in fear or sexuality and women. That is why it is kinder to clerics who use women than to clerics who marry them."[90] Unfortunately, priests who love women do not always treat them lovingly. Sipe writes, "Dedicated religious women are increasingly vocal about their right to be heard—certainly when issues touch them directly and essentially. There is a theme of disregard for women—from gentle neglect to flagrant abuse—that runs through many accounts of the practice of priestly celibacy-sexuality."[91]

A reading of the previous paragraphs might convince the reader that it is futile to even discuss the ordination of women. Yet, the issue of the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church has gained considerable momentum among ordinary Catholics in

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[87]Malone, 28.
[88]Rice, 186.
[89]Küng, 194.
[90]Rice, 246-247.

the last few decades. Many Protestant churches now ordain women as a matter of routine. So does the Anglican Church. But the Roman Catholic Church does not wish to discuss even the possibility of allowing married men to become priests, let alone the possibility of ordaining women to the priesthood. What are the reasons for this systematic exclusion? Are they theological, biblical, traditional, or simply a question of power and control?

I have already argued that the exclusion of women from ordination and from the governance of the church have no foundation in Scripture. As far as tradition is concerned, we have also seen that misogyny in the church was a gradual process that coincided with increasing institutional control and the consolidation of papal power. The biological dimension could be added as one more reason to exclude women from the priesthood, because women are said to be unable to represent the male Christ at the altar. This means that they are excluded simply because they happen to be women, that they are of the wrong gender. Therefore, half of humanity cannot represent Christ! From the point of view of institutional control and authority, it will suffice to say that church officials simply decided that it is impossible to ordain women. Rarely do we read anything related to the ordination of women without stumbling on this famous passage from Thomas Aquinas: "Since any supremacy of rank cannot be expressed in the female sex, which has the status of an inferior, that sex cannot receive ordination."[92] Given that much of Catholic theology is based on Aquinas, one can legitimately wonder, once again, whether and how much the Church is directly or subconsciously influenced by Aquinas's misogyny. His influence is probably one of the main reasons for the exclusion of women.

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[91]Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis,* 129.
[92]ST Suppl. q. 39r; quoted in Wills, 107.

Of course, his misogyny is not part of the official theological discourse; it is only part of the collective unconscious of the Church.

Leonard Swidler, however, does not give up. He makes an interesting point when considering the access of women to the priesthood. Swidler writes, "*Roma locuta, causa finita?* . . . *Roma locuta, causa stimulata!*[93] In other words, should the prohibition of women priests in the Catholic Church no longer be questioned because Rome has spoken? On the contrary, says Swidler, the prohibition rather stimulates the discussion and brings it to new heights, precisely because Rome has spoken! He argues for the ordination of women to the priesthood by referring to the transcendence of God, in whom there is no gender but in whose image we are created: "With a proper stress on the core Judeo-Christian tradition of the transcendence of God beyond all sex, plus a recovery of the balancing feminine imagery of God in the Bible and Christian tradition . . . the Catholic Church can now move to the creative step of making the priesthood reflect more fully that God (*Elohim*) 'in whose image we are made, male and female' (Genesis 1:27)."[94]

As might be expected, Hans Küng expresses dismay at the fact that Pope John Paul II rejected "the ordination of women for time and eternity, which is also explicitly declared to be infallible. This whole development is deeply disturbing." Küng ponders further: "What is the deeper cause of the revival of authoritarianism? It is the Roman will

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[93]Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler, eds., *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 3.

[94]Leonard Swidler, "Goddess Worship and Women Priests," in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration,* ed. Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 173.

for power and the doctrine of an alleged infallibility of church teaching and papal decisions."[95] Two decades earlier, Rosemary Radford Ruether remarked,

> But the last ten years, and particularly the pontificate of John Paul II, have seen increasing evidence of a reactionary backlash in all areas of the church, but particularly in matters having to do with sexuality and the status of women in the church. This increasingly reinforces women's perception that patriarchal domination and sexual repression are a deepseated pathology in Catholic Christianity that is all but incurable. The present pope seems to sum up this pathology in his personal attitudes. The personal misogyny of the pontiff makes a vivid impression on women."[96]

Many have observed Pope John Paul II's excessive use of authority, particularly in his dealings with internal issues in the church. Many, including Küng, have also noted some of John Paul's inconsistencies. Küng remarks,

> So the chain of papal contradictions is never-ending. There is eloquent talk of human rights, but no justice is practiced toward theologians and religious orders of women. There are vigorous protests against discrimination in society, but discrimination is practiced within the church against women, in particular in matters of birth control, abortion, and ordination. There is a long encyclical on mercy but no mercy is shown over the remarriage of divorced persons and the ten thousand married priests.[97]

Another factor that is hardly mentioned in the present dissertation is the church's devotion to the Virgin Mary. Of course, the Virgin is a beautiful and powerful symbol of femininity, but Mary is also presented as idealized, asexual, and somewhat less than a real woman. Cozzens has something compelling to say about that: "At the present, the hierarchic church draws on the power of the feminine through its idealized and iconic devotion to the Virgin. What it desperately needs is the voice and influence of the feminine embodied in the lives of today's women of the church. A married clergy would

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[95]Küng, 189.

[96]Rosemary Radford Ruether, "John Paul II, and the Growing Alienation of Women from the Church," in *The Church in Anguish: Has the Vatican Betrayed Vatican II?* ed. Hans Küng and Leonard Swidler (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 279-280.

bring us closer to that reality."[98] As all those who are familiar with Marian devotion know, the Blessed Virgin is proposed to Christians as the Mother of all believers. However, "idealization of a mother image—that reaches its psychological perfection in devotion to the Virgin Mary—is often purchased at the price of devaluing all other women."[99]

Catholic theologian and feminist author Rosemary Radford Ruether has even more pointed remarks:

> The Virgin Mary has been the primary representative of the idea of the feminine as faithful receptivity to God and moral perfection. But this image of Mary as ideal femininity has generally been used by Catholic spirituality to heighten the disparity between this exceptional woman, born without original sin, and all real women who are daughters of Eve. In the light of this perfect woman, real women are simultaneously disparaged and called to an impossible ethic of sexual repression and total submission to male authority. Thus Mary does not become a model of woman as autonomous person, but rather appears as a fantasy by which celibate males sublimate their sexuality into an ideal relationship with a virgin mother, while projecting the hostility caused by this sexual repression into misogynist feelings toward real women. [John Paul II] seems to be a particular example of this combination of Marian piety and misogyny.[100]

The question of the place of women in the church does not rest solely on the degree of comfort that individual celibate males have toward them. We are talking about a systemic problem that has developed over centuries. A.W. Richard Sipe describes how the system influences indidividuals: "Although a substantial number of priests have a healthy attitude toward women, the male celibate/sexual system functions with a deep ambivalence—even hostility and fear—toward them. The basis of this attitude is not scriptural, nor does it have a foundation in earliest Christian experience. The subjugation

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[97]Küng, 195-196.
[98]Cozzens, 92.
[99]Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis,* 84.
[100]Ruether, 282.

of women did not evolve; the place of women was carved out and constructed by the assemblage of the celibate/sexual system."[101] This is simply another description of the systemic misogyny that plagues the church.

Finally, Mary T. Malone does not despair, at least not completely: "Finally, today, as the voice of women is being heard as exegetes, preachers, and teachers in some churches . . . women are finding ways to voice their concerns and to begin to celebrate their journey toward full inclusion in the Christian community."[102] One can only hope that this full inclusion of women in the Catholic Church will happen in the years to come.

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[101]Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power,* 101.
[102]Malone, 28.

Celibacy and Homosexuality in the Priesthood

One thing is clear: the celibate/sexual system has always benefited from a large proportion of homosexually oriented men. History is proof.
A.W. Richard Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power: Anatomy of a Crisis*

This section is written without prejudice toward persons of homosexual orientation. Some people believe that it is easier for a homosexual seminarian or priest to conceal his sexual orientation within the brotherhood of a male, celibate clergy. Heterosexual clergy, if sexually active, would have more difficulty concealing their orientation because such sexual activity, of course, involves women. Women are not members of the clerical caste, and being seen in public with a woman might raise more eyebrows than being seen in public with another priest or another male.

Statistics

Since the many revelations of sexual misconduct by priests have become public, the clergy is more under scrutiny than ever before. Some members of the clergy and laity have expressed concern that there might be a significant number of homosexual seminarians and priests. In fact, research shows that there is a high percentage of homosexual seminarians and priests in the Catholic Church. Donald Cozzens examines a number of research statistics that attempt to establish the number of clergy who have a homosexual orientation. One study found that between 23 percent and 58 percent of priests are gay; another study found that about half of priests have a homosexual orientation; a third study concluded that approximately 48.5 percent of priests and 55.1 percent of seminarians were gay. Interestingly, the percentage of gay priests appeared to be higher among those under forty years of age. These studies were conducted between

1989 and 1991.[103] Such percentages of homosexuals in the clergy are clearly higher than in the general population. The following paragraphs explain why this is so.

Cozzens affirms that there is "broad agreement among seminary rectors and faculties, as well as bishops with extensive experience in seminary formation, that there were and are large numbers of homosexually oriented men in the priesthood and in our seminaries. Indeed, some of the best and brightest of our seminarians, priests, and bishops are gay. And like their straight brothers in ministry most strive—and sometimes struggle—to lead chaste and holy lives."[104] At this stage of the discussion, the sexual orientation of seminarians or priests does not really matter. What is more important is that they strive to live their commitments and to serve generously.

Cozzens joins the ranks of those who think that the Catholic priesthood could become a gay profession: "Should our seminaries become significantly gay, and many seasoned observers find them to be precisely that, the priesthood of the twenty-first century will likely be perceived as a predominantly gay profession."[105] For some, this is an unacceptable situation, because the high incidence of homosexuality in the priesthood appears to inhibit heterosexual men from becoming seminarians and priests.

Gary Wills is concerned that any reform of the requirement of celibacy, if it ever happens, might occur for the wrong reasons: "The higher salience of gays in the seminary has led some homophobic men to avoid entering the seminaries or to withdraw from them. In fact, the admission of married men and women to the priesthood . . . may well come for the wrong reason, not because women and the community deserve this, but

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[103]Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood: A Reflection on the Priest's Crisis of Soul* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 99.

[104]Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*, 65.

[105]Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood,* 103.

because of panic at the perception that the priesthood in becoming predominantly gay."[106] Whether Wills is right remains to be seen.

There is no doubt that homosexual priests can fulfill their vocation with a high degree of integrity and faithful service:

> I have worked with priests in spiritual direction and during priests' retreats who know and say they are homosexual in orientation. They are living out a life of celibacy and are exemplary priests. They serve well. . . . However, seminary rectors and bishops along with seminary faculty and members of the presbyterate need to be vigilant that a gay subculture does not form within seminaries or presbyterates. Such subcultures are divisive and unhealthy among those seeking to live a chaste, celibate life.[107]

But why is the celibate priesthood attractive to homosexuals? The following paragraphs probe some possible reasons.

Why Does Celibacy Attract Homosexuals to the Priesthood?

Homosexual men who are confused or embarrassed by their sexual orientation might chose to join the celibate clergy with the hope or the illusion that, by doing so, they will not have to grapple with their sexuality. Donald Cozzens has lengthy experience as a seminary professor and rector. He reflects that for some, "aware of the church's teaching that a same-sex orientation is objectively disordered, the very celibacy of the priesthood was appealing. . . . As celibates, they imagined—and hoped—there would be no need to deal with the issue [of sexuality]."[108] Men who deny or ignore their sexuality often appear naïve or asexual. They do not seem to be in touch with the emotional dimensions of their being, and they often lack a clear sense of personal identity. Some take refuge in a disembodied or ethereal spirituality that confirms their desire to escape the "lower"

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[106]Wills, 195.

[107]Most Reverend Gerald F. Kicanas, "Toward a Renewed Priesthood" in *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood: Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century,* ed. Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 155.

dimensions of human life. Thus, they are very pious and often seek the higher forms of asceticism. At the same time, they appear to be unrealistic and prone to imagine that God favours them with special graces. This portrayal is especially true of those who have espoused the sex-negative and repressive nature of the Church's teachings about sexuality.

Another experienced educator of future priests asserts his opinion concerning a healthy celibacy: "For a future priest to be able to live a celibate commitment in a healthy way, he needs to know himself and be able to talk freely and openly about his sexuality to the appropriate people. Sexuality cannot be a hidden, secretive area of his life, but needs to be opened to the light allowing the grace of God to sustain the priest in living a chaste, celibate commitment."[109] There is no doubt that some church officials have learned a hard lesson from the sexual misconduct of priests. And there seems to be a willingness to reform the parameters of seminary formation in order to establish better methods of screening candidates to the priesthood.

A celibate, whether homosexual or heterosexual, is called to chastity, so sexual orientation should not matter at all. However, like heterosexuals, "gay priests . . . are expected to teach clearly that a homosexual orientation is intrinsically and objectively disordered. . . . They are further charged to instruct gay people that their orientation calls them to lives of perfect continence as the church calls all who are unmarried to perfect sexual continence."[110] In this sense, homosexuality presents an uneasy quandary for the gay candidate to the priesthood; yet, some people believe that this quandary is effectively resolved with celibacy.

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[108]Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*, 69.
[109]Kicanas, 155.

Jane Anderson is an Australian researcher who has interviewed dozens of seminarians and priests over a long period of time. She is not convinced that homosexual priests would advocate for the repeal of the requirement of celibacy. She writes, "Some homosexual priests are also unlikely to vote against celibacy. Vatican officials believe that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and that therefore these people should remain chaste. This places homosexual men in a cultural predicament, which can be effectively solved if they join the priesthood. Celibacy can put an end to questions about sexual orientation and provide a pragmatic rationale for their dilemma."[111] At least until recently, same-sex marriage was unheard of, so for many homosexual seminarians and priests, celibacy appeared to be a practical response to any social pressures to marry.

Many celibates, as we have said, do not have the gift of celibacy. And this situation presents serious difficulties for all who expect that celibate priests, no matter what their sexual orientation, should be chaste. The next section researches the ravages of sexual abuse of minors by clerics.

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[110]Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*, 68.
[111]Anderson, 56.

Sexual Abuse and Celibacy

> *Keeping celibacy mysterious and part of a secret system fosters corruption. Secrecy and accountability cannot coexist. Vagueness and imprecision are enemies of truth. Open discourse on celibacy and an examination of the relationship of the celibate/sexual system to child abuse have great implications for a church that stabilizes its power around a reality it refuses to examine.*
>
> A.W. Richard Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power: Anatomy of a Crisis*

Many persons, particularly church authorities who defend the celibate system, deny that there is any connection between celibacy and sexual abuse of minors. They use feeble attempts to deflect the issue by referring to the fact that sexual abuse of minors also exists among married people and among coaches, teachers, Protestant ministers, and scoutmasters. Personally, I have always been convinced that there is a connection between pedophilia (sexual attraction to prepubescent children) or ephebophilia (sexual attraction to adolescents) and celibacy.

Hans Küng admits that "of course, there are also pedophiles in other churches and other professions, but not in such proportions as there are in the Catholic Church (and not just in the United States)."[112] A.W. Richard Sipe establishes a direct link between sexual abuse of minors and mandated celibacy: "Church authorities are adamant that (the rule of mandatory) celibacy has nothing to do with sexual abuse of children. Of course it does. Sexual abuse is always noncelibate activity. Noncelibate behaviour by those who profess celibacy is the main ingredient of the stew in which the Catholic clergy find themselves today."[113]

How can we account for this higher incidence of pedophiles among celibate Catholic clergy? One cannot negate the fact that many priests were brought up and

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[112]Küng, 211.
[113]Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis,* 261.

trained at a young age under the controlling sex-negative influence of the Christian church. Several years ago, a Vatican official who was visiting seminaries in Canada was proud to reveal that he had worn the cassock ever since he was eleven years old. By relating this fact, he was setting himself up as an example of a good-quality education and preparation for the priesthood. Beginning to wear the cassock at eleven years old is not unusual; in many countries, it is customary for the Catholic Church to establish educational institutions in which prepubescent boys are groomed to become priests. But how can an eleven-year-old boy make a free choice for celibacy in an all-male environment, sheltered away from the world and from women, in an almost certain institutional suspicion of anything sexual?

Donald Cozzens, who has extensive experience in the formation and spiritual direction of priests, deplores the unfortunate psychosexual immaturity of some priests:

> Sadly, it is not uncommon to find middle-age celibate priests preoccupied with an adolescent curiosity about sex that borders on obsession. Often fixated in their psychosexual development at the adolescent stage, their sexual interest mirrors their arrested maturation. These priests find themselves drawn to attractive teenagers. The dangers associated with such truncated emotional and sexual maturation have been made painfully clear with the sexual abuse scandals that erupted in the last decades of the twentieth century.[114]

Cozzens's comments confirm that there is indeed a connection between pedophilia and celibacy, despite the systematic denial of many high-profile church officials. Cozzens asks: "Is it possible that obligatory celibacy unwittingly fosters psycho-sexual immaturity among seminarians and priests? And that this immaturity in turn fosters a truncated, repressed sexual development among these same men? Individuals coping with underdeveloped sexual and emotional maturation find teens and children far less

[114]Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*, 82.

threatening objects of sexual attraction."[115] To his questions, I answer an emphatic "yes." I have seen the system at work and have first-hand experience of it! I am fully confident that the psychological sexual immaturity described by Cozzens has its roots in a negative and repressive sex ethic. I am equally convinced that the sex-negative education these seminarians and priests have received at home, in Catholic schools, and in seminaries can be easily traced back to the antiquated sexual anthropology of the Roman Church.

Both Küng and Cozzens are persuaded that if church officials had not been celibate themselves, they almost certainly would have been more sensitive to the horrors of the sexual abuse of minors by the clergy. Küng advocates for the reform of the law of celibacy: "It is obvious to anyone that if a priest could have a wife and children, if this avenue were not forbidden to him, tendencies toward pedophilia would not have such a real-world effect. . . . Voluntary celibacy, yes! Compulsory celibacy, no!"[116] For his part, Cozzens ponders again: "Is it reasonable to wonder if church authorities reacting to the clergy abuse scandals would have responded more pastorally and less corporately had they been parents and grandparents themselves, had they spouses with whom they might have pondered and fashioned a more Christ-like outreach to victims and a more forthright resolve for the safety of children?"[117] Who would dare dispute the vigorous arguments that Cozzens cleverly disguises in the form of questions?

Hans Küng criticizes the law of celibacy because of the possibility that it might attract sexually unhealthy individuals: "There is the danger of a negative selection if remaining unmarried in fact becomes the decisive criterion for the priesthood. As a result of this, it is easy for men who cannot cope with their sexuality, including some with

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[115]Ibid., 61.
[116]Küng, 210.

pedophile tendencies, to become attracted to the priesthood, especially as the priestly vocation is very much involved with children and young people."[118] Küng's comments point to the fact that the very functions of priestly pastoral ministry could appeal to candidates who are sexually attracted to minors long before they become seminarians or priests. A scary prospect indeed!

I am not the only one who thinks that celibacy and the sexual abuse of minors are related, despite the denial of those who defend the system. Let us listen to Donald Cozzens again: "To insist that there is simply no correlation between mandatory celibacy and the present crisis over clergy misconduct of minors looks like bureaucratic bullying as long as the Vatican remains opposed to even discussion concerning the systems undergirding the priestly lifestyle."[119] Garry Wills joins the discussion by identifying three ways, all related to celibacy, in which offences committed by pedophile priests are different from those committed by other professions. He mentions the fact that other professions have not publicly "claimed membership in a group vowed to lifelong abstention from sex of any kind, with any partner, male or female, young or old." He adds that civic officials are "chary of investigating, reporting, or prosecuting celibates' [sexual] offenses" precisely because of the reverence due to their "heroic abstention." Last but not least, Wills asserts that "for a priest to be a pedophile raises the question whether the celibate disciple for a whole class of men (not just for the spiritually gifted individual) is a false, because unrealizable ideal."[120]

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[117]Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*, 92.

[118]Küng, 211.

[119]Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood,* 119.

[120]Wills, 184-185. At the time of publication, Garry Wills was adjunct professor of history at Northwestern University.

The previous paragraphs describe the connection between celibacy and sexual abuse; it is appropriate now to look for means of preventing the abuse of minors in the future. Richard Sipe recommends several preventive measures. According to Sipe,

> the deficiencies of the seminary structure and failure of the integration of sex and celibacy create a situation where adolescence is protected or postponed, or where the celibate priesthood becomes a hiding place for unresolved sexual conflict. The atmosphere and power structure of the church tolerates and in some case encourages sexual regression and fixation. Preference for secrecy obviates accountability on the part of the priest and his superiors. The lack of credibility in the church's teaching on sex fosters primitive mental defences such as denial, rationalization, and splitting.[121]

Such substantial arguments can no longer be disputed or denied. And this section has established what it was meant to do, namely, to provide evidence of the relationship between mandatory celibacy and the sexual abuse of minors.

[121]Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis*, 225.

Failed Celibacy and Abortion

Official Vatican teaching on abortion is clear and unequivocal. Abortion is forbidden.

A.W. Richard Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis: A Secret World Revisited*

Abortion is the one issue in which a male power system would like to stand on moral high ground, pronouncing and defending principles presumably without any regard for personal pressure or bias—unmarried and male, objective commentators on questions of life and death, good and evil, especially in sexual matters.

A.W. Richard Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power: Anatomy of a Crisis*

In Chapter III, the study of abortion provided an example of moral absolutism as compared to the flexibility or relativism of postmodernism, which distances itself from moral absolutes. This section addresses the unwelcome truth that some priests have not only fathered children, but also have encouraged—and in some cases coerced—the women they are involved with to have an abortion.

Several reputable authors, who have experience in counselling priests or who have conducted research based on questionnaires and interviews, confirm the fact that abortion is occasionally chosen as an option by priests who impregnate women. "A wealth of anecdotal evidence supports the allure and attraction celibate priests hold for numerous women. Diocesan personnel files and archives tell stories of priests involved with both single and married women. Not infrequently, children are conceived—and sometimes aborted."[122] This is surprising when one considers the threat of excommunication for anyone who cooperates formally with any procedure that results in a direct abortion. Formal cooperation, as we have seen, consists in the direct intention to kill the foetus; and the Church considers such an intention to be nothing short of murder!

[122]Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy,* 58.

Yet, researcher Richard Sipe affirms unequivocally that, "dozens of priests have chosen to have the foetus they fathered aborted. Several physicians who are acquainted with Catholic clergy have reported this phenomenon."[123] Sipe makes way for a divorced woman to tell her own story of falling in love with, and becoming pregnant by, a priest. After considering their options, the priest chose abortion. Out of disappointment and anger, the woman had an abortion. A few years later, Sipe interviewed her again. If she could relive her past, she said, she would not have had the abortion, but would have raised the child herself. Sipe concludes the story as follows: "The priest is now the pastor of a large parish and was made a Monsignor. He is still sexually active."[124] A sad story indeed! And it serves to confirm how women are used and abused, and how children are sacrificed—for the sake of a priest's career or to avoid bringing shame on the institution that calls abortion murder!

Sipe has an even more gloomy prediction:

> Abortions of children fathered by priests is one of the most lethal time bombs ticking within the American Catholic Church. In a loosely affiliated group of approximately 50 women, each has had an abortion at the insistence, with the help, or at the urging of the priest whose child she carried. Although none has yet come to attention through civil litigation, it is only a matter of time before the nature and scope of this issue becomes public record.[125]

If Sipe is accurate in his prediction, the scandals that currently plague the Catholic Church will continue to worsen as these incidents are made public. Hopefully, such revelations will lead to the reform of clerical celibacy, which continues to destroy lives.

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[123]Sipe, *Celibacy in Crisis,* 125.
[124]Ibid., 126-129.
[125]Sipe, *Sex, Priests, and Power,* 124.

Celibacy and Ecumenism

I have heard it said that by departing from the tradition of optional celibacy, the Roman Catholic Church is guilty of heresy. We have seen that the development of the law of celibacy had little to do with Scripture and theology and much more to do with power, property, and control. It is worth noting that the imposition of celibacy in the twelfth century almost coincides with the separation of the Western and Eastern churches. Donald Cozzens observes, "One of Benedict XVI's major goals, if not *the* goal of his papacy, is the healing of the tragic separation in 1054 of Western Christianity from Eastern Orthodoxy. Since celibacy for Western clergy played a significant part in the schism, the issue will be key in the work for reunion."[126] Once again, we see that the unilateral imposition of celibacy for Western priests has cost the church greatly. After more than two thousand years of optional celibacy, the Orthodox churches would certainly not accept the imposition of the universal law of celibacy if ever the East and the West should plan to reunite. The discipline of celibacy in the Roman church is an impediment to unity with Orthodoxy. The Protestant reformers headed by Martin Luther and John Calvin restored marriage to the clergy, but the Roman Church continues to resist. Consequently, Catholics have lost an important and rich dimension of church life by demanding celibacy from its priests, and the Church has distanced itself from the age-old tradition of optional celibacy that we find in the Orthodox and Reformation Churches.

The Roman Catholic Church frequently invokes freedom from wordly attachments in order to justify the discipline of celibacy. It is said that the priest is much more free to serve God and the People of God if unattached to a wife and children. Such

a total gift of oneself is said to free one's self totally for the sake of the Kingdom of God. But,

> Are not married priests of the Eastern rites married for the sake of the kingdom? Are not married Orthodox priests married for the sake of the Kingdom? Are the hundreds of married Latin rite priests (converts with special dispensation from celibacy) less committed to the kingdom? . . . Moreover, are not all sacramental marriages oriented to the kingdom of heaven? Finally, are not all Christians, because of their baptismal dignity, committed to the kingdom of heaven?[127]

In reflecting in this manner, Cozzens confirms the long-held observation that the members of many demanding professions such as medicine and nursing do not inevitably neglect their families because of their commitments to the people they serve. There is no evidence that married Orthodox priests and Protestant ministers do not serve well; the implication that their marriage would hinder them from being dedicated servants of God's people is chauvinistic and insulting. On the contrary, the majority of them serve admirably and with selfless dedication.

Hans Küng also deplores the consequence of mandated celibacy when considering the Catholic church's relationship to other churches:

> Compulsory celibacy is an extremely fateful deviation from a tradition going back a thousand years. The Eastern churches never shared in this development, and to the present day even the priests in the churches of the East that are united with Rome are not expected to be celibate. Moreover, it is a contradiction that Protestant or Old Catholic pastors who convert to the Roman Catholic Church are allowed to be married but this is refused to Catholic priests.[128]

Here, Küng alludes to the thousands of priests who have received a dispensation from celibacy to marry, but who are reduced to the lay state and forbidden to exercise any priestly ministry. To many, this is a flagrant injustice, because these priests have not lost

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[126]Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*, 47.
[127]Ibid., 98.

their faith, and many of them love the church deeply and would be happy to serve as priests.

The Vatican's decision to accept the transfer of married Anglican priests who object to the ordination of women in their own denomination is first, an insult to all women, and second, a hindrance to Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical relations. Elizabeth Abbott calls these transfers the "Misogynous Exceptions to the Papal Rule of Celibacy."[129] Third, it is an insult and an injustice to the thousands of Roman Catholic priests who have lost their right to exercise their pastoral ministry simply because they are married.

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[128]Küng, 211.
[129]Elizabeth Abbott, *A History of Celibacy* (Toronto: Harper Perennial Canada, 1999), 427.

Chapter Summary

This chapter was written to provide a critical review of the rule of celibacy for priests of the Latin rite of the Roman Catholic Church. The arguments presented the reasons why so many people hope for the repeal of the law of celibacy. Numerous reasons exist to support the view that a reform of celibacy is overdue and must occur. The pagan origins of celibacy, the consolidation of papal power resulting in the imposing of the universal law of celibacy, the well-documented and well-publicized sexual abuse of minors, the decline of vocations to the priesthood, the exclusion of women from governance and priesthood, the absurdity and paradox of legislation that attempts to control a charism that is really the sole domain of God's grace, the possibility that the priesthood could become a gay profession, and the ecumenical difficulties that celibacy presents for our time—these together provide ample evidence that the law of celibacy should be repealed.

CONCLUSION

> *The culture of patriarchy—politically and religiously—has left us with an enormous backlog of ignorance and repression. So much of our sacred sexual story, individually and as a species, has been driven underground. Shame and guilt abound; the journey to wholeness will require a great deal of gentle dialogue, tender care and deep healing.*
>
> Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Reclaiming Spirituality: A New Spiritual Framework for Today's World*

> *Charismatic celibacy, I have argued here, is indeed a blessing for the church. As a freely bestowed gift of the Spirit, it deserves to be released from canonical mandate as a condition for ordination. The time has come to set celibacy free.*
>
> Donald Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*

And the time has come to bring this dissertation to its conclusion. The Introduction clearly states the goal of the research project, namely, the critical evaluation of the requirement of celibacy for diocesan priests of the Latin rite of the Roman Catholic Church. Official texts from the Code of Canon Law, the Second Vatican Council, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, provide the undisputable primary sources that the Catholic Church draws upon to justify the continuation of the discipline of celibacy. Undisputable, because once Rome speaks, we are expected to respect, obey, and uphold the teachings of the Church without questioning: *Roma locuta, causa finita*. There is no room for discussion, much less for dissent.

In this twenty-first century, we are seeing the end of the monarchical absolutism of the hierarchical church. The end, if it is not felt or seen at the Vatican, is in the minds and hearts of countless Catholics in North America, Europe, and other parts of the world. As the world thirsts for democracy, freedom, dialogue, and respect, Catholics are requiring the same from their Church. Where dialogue is not possible, dissent—if not

rebellion—follows. Blind conformity and obedience are no longer considered virtues, if they ever were.

Contemporary philosophies, particularly postmodernism and feminism, severely critique and challenge the seemingly immutable patriarchy of the Church. These philosophies invite the Church, at least in this scholarly work, to reconsider not only the universal requirement of celibacy, but also to consider dismantling what so many Catholics decry as the excessive use of power by the papal office and the Vatican Curia. This need for reform is being felt more urgently now, because many of the teachings of the Church, particularly in the area of sexual ethics, have almost completely lost their credibility. For many, the Church has come to be seen as a scheming, abusive parent, mainly interested in maintaining its power, and using every means it can to do so.

The four chapters of this dissertation provide the primary and secondary sources for a vigorous debate in favour of the repeal of the universal requirement of celibacy. The discipline of celibacy was introduced in dubious circumstances and motives that are still worthy of much suspicion. From Augustine to Aquinas in Chapter I; from Luther to Calvin in Chapter II; from the study of dualism to wholeness and of modernism to postmodernism in Chapter III; and finally, to the profound, urgent, and critical review of the requirement of mandatory celibacy in Chapter IV, the goal of this dissertation has been achieved. A strong and successful case has been made for the repeal of the requirement of celibacy for the diocesan priests of the Latin rite of the Roman Catholic Church.

Now it is necessary to look to the future. Is it an exaggeration to state that the Roman Church's internal reform is necessary for its very survival? Some people think

such reform is indeed necessary, and urgently so. In some ways, I do too. Let us listen again to Hans Küng: "Behind all the current tensions, parties, and confrontations are not only different persons, nations, and theologies but rather two different models of the church, two different overall constellations, paradigms. The choice is either to go back to the Roman, medieval, anti-Reformation, antimodernist constellation or to go forward into a modern/postmodern paradigm."[130] Is Küng pessimistic? I don't believe so. "I have the well-founded hope," says he, "that Christianity will finally find its way to an ecumenical paradigm in the present upheaval between modernity and postmodernity. For the new generation, the time of confessionalism is finally past."[131]

Although he makes no reference to Avery Dulles, Küng's mention of two different models of the church brings me back to the Introduction, in which we alluded to Dulles's *Models of Church.* Dulles ably explains the institutional model of church, which is still very much the preferred model of contemporary popes and the Vatican Curia. Our hope for the future is a more inclusive, dialogical, and transparent church. The means will involve drawing more on sciences such as psychology and sociology, and embracing more of the positive and freeing philosophical elements of our time.

I am aware that much of what is researched in this dissertation focuses on critical arguments in favour of the repeal of the law of celibacy. Some critics might exclaim that my research is biased in that direction. Of course it is! To those critics, I say: The protagonists of legislated celibacy have had more than two thousand years to research and prove their point. I have had a decade or so. So here I am, with my secondary sources!

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[130]Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church: A Short History,* trans. John Bowden (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 198.

Finally, I am also aware that I am taking a risk of exposure, not all of it pleasant, by writing this dissertation. To those who might disagree with my research and its findings, I borrow the following words from Michael Crosby. These words find a profound, positive resonance within me: "Because the history of religious institutions shows that transformation rarely comes from within, I don't expect that my reflections will be met with much enthusiasm by those whose interests might be challenged by what I say. However, while I don't expect those in power will be open to my remarks, I will have the blessed assurance that I have done what I could."[132] Yes, I am grateful for having had the opportunity. And to my brother priests and to fellow Catholics, I say with warmth and respect, with Donald Cozzens, "In [God's] abiding love and saving promise [we] look, without fear, to the renewal and transformation of the priesthood. Behind the changing face of the priesthood remains the saving face of Jesus the Christ."[133]

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[131]Ibid., 205.

[132]Michael H. Crosby, *Rethinking Celibacy, Reclaiming the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), xvi.

[133]Donald Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood: A Reflection on the Priest's Crisis of Soul* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 143.

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