

## The Protestant Reformation and the Marriage of Clergy

THOMAS P. JOHNSTON

Professor of Evangelism

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

There were many moving parts in the Protestant Reformation. And within the Holy Roman Empire with its many city-states and multiple language groups, harnessing these moving parts proves difficult. However, one of the indelible markers of a complete break from Rome was when priests and monks were married—thereby irreparably breaking from their vows of celibacy.

Over time, the Church of Rome had included the Sacrament of Holy Orders (Ordination) in its system of salvation through the Seven Sacraments. Holy Orders included necessary celibacy beginning in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. So, marriage of clergy was a very practical change enacted by the Protestant Reformers. It was not a doctrinal change as much as it was a practical change. And yet the change in practice was based in justification by faith and freedom of conscience. In making this final break with Rome and its traditions, the ordained Reformers cut ties with the vow of celibacy, the vow of obedience (to their superior), the monastic vows as-a-whole, thereby severing themselves from Rome's Sacrament of Holy Matrimony and Sacrament of Holy Orders. Martin Luther's revolutionary recommendations in his 1520 "An Appeal to the Ruling Class" paved the way for major changes regarding clerical celibacy:

The proposals with regard to monasticism and clerical marriage went beyond anything Luther had said previously. The mendicants should be relieved of hearing confession and preaching. The number of orders should be reduced, and there should be no irrevocable vows. The clergy should be permitted to marry because they need housekeepers, and to place man and woman together under such

circumstances is like setting straw beside fire and expecting it not to burn.<sup>1</sup>

This paper will consider the development of the vow of celibacy and consider the Protestant break from that tradition. It is this author's view that marriage of clergy served as a practical outworking and symbol of justification by faith, as opposed to justification by works. Further, marriage was not to be held as dishonorable or impure, but as an honorable estate.

### **A Brief Survey of the Development of a Celibate Clergy**

The development of the obligation for clergy to take a vow of celibacy was not a universal phenomenon. Even today, among the Orthodox Church fellowships, celibacy of Orthodox priests is not mandatory. However, over time the obligatory celibacy of clergy became an organizational benefit to the purposes and goals of the Church of Rome, and thereby it became one of its leadership distinctives. It was not an instantaneous development, but rather a slow and gradual one. The requirement for celibacy came simultaneously to Rome's prohibitions against Bible reading, its use of capital punishment on heretics, and its instigation and marketing of Holy Wars (crusades). Interestingly, all these innovations were a part of developments at the beginning of the Second Millennium—almost as if they marked an ecclesiological shift due to millennial expectations, a type of Second Millennium arrived-millennialism, a *Secundo Millennio Adveniente*.<sup>2</sup>

Millennial interpretations aside, the following timeline highlights major events that contributed to the development of clerical celibacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950), 119-120. Bainton alluded to Luther's 1520 "An Appeal to the Ruling Class," Section 14; in John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections . . .* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 447-51.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II discussed the Second Millennium in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (Rome: 14 Nov 1994); available at: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_10111994\\_tertio-millennio-adveniente\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente_en.html) (Online); accessed 8 Jan 2006; Internet), §37.

The reader will note the concentration of these events in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Timeline of Events and Enactments Related to the Requirement of Clerical Celibacy<sup>3</sup>**

A.D. 480-543, Benedict of Nursia, a Western monk, was heralded as the pioneer of Western Monasticism. The Benedictine Vows bear his name, his memory, and his method. The three common Benedictine Vows are (their order varies): the vow of poverty (no secular work), the vow of abstinence (celibacy), and the vow of obedience (to a superior). These vows are described as voluntary when they are first pronounced.

A.D. 1049-1054, Leo IX appears to prohibit sexual relations for Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.

A.D. 1074, "Priests were forbidden to marry" (Boettner).<sup>4</sup>

A.D. 1075, *Dictatus Papae* placed in the Papal Register, gave the Pope absolute supremacy over Princes, Kings, and Emperors, including in their formulation, interpretation, and application of laws.

A.D. 1079, "Celibacy of the priesthood, decreed by pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand)" (Boettner).

A.D. 1274, "Putting an end to an old debate by the present declaration, we declare that bigamists are deprived of any clerical privilege and are to be handed over to the control of the secular law, any contrary custom notwithstanding" (2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Lyons).<sup>5</sup>

Under the last date, the term "bigamist" needs some interpretation, since it appears to have a dual meaning. By the Vow of Ordination, clerics are

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise listed, citations are from Thomas P. Johnston, *Timelines for Western Christianity*, Volumes 1 and 2 (Liberty, MO: Evangelism Unlimited, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Lorraine Boettner, "Chronological Listing of Roman Catholic Heresies and Inventions," in *Roman Catholicism*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1989), 7-9. Hereafter designated by "Boettner."

<sup>5</sup> "16 {22}. On Bigamists," in *Second Council of Lyons - 1274*; available at: <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum14.htm> (Online); accessed 26 Sept 2017.

considered “married to the church.”<sup>6</sup> Hence, if a priest is both married to the church and married to a woman, he becomes dually-married. Therefore, “bigamist” appears to be code language for a married priest.<sup>7</sup>

These above promulgations and decrees against married clergy resulted in forced separations and significant cultural upheaval. Luther captured the spiritual result of forced celibacy, as it developed a two-tier spirituality within society:

The schoolmen, the monks, and such other, never felt any spiritual temptations, and therefore they fought only for the repressing and overcoming of fleshly lust and lechery, and being proud of the victory which they never yet obtained, they thought themselves far better and more godly than married men.<sup>8</sup>

Required celibacy, along with its Sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders sealed Rome’s two-tier approach to spirituality. The clergy were of a higher spiritual grade than the laity—and celibacy marked that differentiation. And with obligatory celibacy came spiritual pride.

On the other hand, to avoid problems related to monks taking their vows in their adolescent years and then falling prey to promiscuity, Luther commended in his *To the Christian Nobility* (1520) that monastic vows only be taken at the age of 30 or later.

But, on account of avoiding the many sins which gnaw their way within us so disgustingly, I will give the faithful advice that neither youths nor maidens should take the vows of continence or the “spiritual”

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<sup>6</sup>“This was the custom then: if a man could bind himself eternally to a woman in the bonds of matrimony, why could he not contract a mystical marriage with Christ at the same age?” (Émile V. Telle, “François Lambert d’Avignon et son Abbaye de Thélème”; in *Rabelaesiana*, 11:1 (1949): 48. “Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to the ‘affairs of the Lord’, they give themselves entirely to God and to men” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994] §1579); “In the Latin Church the Sacrament of Holy Orders for the presbyterate is normally conferred only on candidates who are ready to embrace celibacy freely and who publicly manifest their intention of staying celibate for the love of God’s kingdom and the service of men” (*Catechism*, §1599).

<sup>7</sup> This code-like language is quite common in Rome’s decrees and formulas, often being worded with room for equivocation and plausible deniability.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Luther, “A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, 1531 (Selections),” in John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1961), 146-47.

life before they are thirty. It requires a special gift, as St. Paul says [I Cor 7:7].<sup>9</sup>

By the time Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the doors of the Wittenberg Cathedral in A.D. 1517, there was already over a thousand year history of celibate monks in the Church of Rome. Further, all Western clergy were required to live under that yoke by no later than the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. The mandate of celibacy was not developed in a vacuum, nor was it without its apologists and theoreticians in every century. The policy fit well within a state church structure, in which a clear distinction between laity and clergy gave greater authority to the latter. Vestments, tonsures, exemption from taxes, and celibacy grew the divide between laity and clergy in the Western Church. Required celibacy forced Rome's clergy to "work out their salvation" by works. It provided Rome a motivated group of leaders, who in many cases were struggling with the repression of their sin nature—even though their "original sin" was deemed purged at the baptismal font.<sup>10</sup>

With the advent of Bible literacy and freedom of interpretation, the walls of separation between the laity and clergy began to fall. Clergy members for themselves began to scour the pages of the Bible for a divinely authoritative voice on issues of celibacy and marriage. It was then that the imposition of celibacy began to crumble.

### **The Conversion of a French Monk**

François Lambert d'Avignon, a Strict Franciscan monk from Avignon, France, made his first movements toward the gospel from reading the writings of Luther. Luther's writings were being translated and published in French almost simultaneously to their being published in German or Latin.

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Luther, "An Appeal to the Ruling Class of German Nationality as to the Amelioration of the State of Christendom, 1520," in John Dillenberger, *Martin Luther: Selections*, 484. For example, Francois Lambert apparently took the Franciscan Vows at the age of 16 and several months. He later wrote that at that age he had no idea of the negative ramifications of his vows (J. Platon, "Francois Lambert"; Master's Thesis [Strasbourg: Faculté de Théologie Protestante, 1968], 3).

<sup>10</sup> "1263 By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin" (*Catechism*, §1263).

The question of the reception of Luther's writings benefitted greatly from the new method [the printing presses]. Today every account of this period seems incomplete, if it did not signal the feverish and universal penetration of France by the writings of Luther after 1520. . . . The ideas of Luther were being colported [carried and sold] in France, so interesting and fertile as they were, [that] they ought be studied uniquely in themselves and for themselves.<sup>11</sup>

As Luther's writings crossed Germany, they were translated and printed in Strasbourg, Geneva, and Anvers. From those places they spread across France. These books were marketed by evangelists, or Bible colporteurs. These men were young booksellers who traveled from city to city and from market to market selling Bibles and other Christian books. Many of these colporteurs ended as martyrs. Their fates were recorded in the Martyrology of Jean Crespin, famous printer of 53 of Calvin's works. Crespin kept press #8 open for printing volumes of his Martyrology. Four young traveling book salesmen were listed among the many martyred from 1533-1560: Pierre Chapot, Jean Joéry, Nicolas Ballon, and Barthélémy Hector.<sup>12</sup>

Avignon, France, was the seat of the Avignon Papacy from 1309-1417. Therefore, just over 100 years later, between 1520-1522, when François Lambert began to read Luther, Catholicism was still a very important part of that city's ethos. In fact, Crespin provided a glimpse into the spiritual climate of Avignon when he wrote about the

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<sup>11</sup> W. G. Moore, "La Réforme Allemande et la Littérature Française: Recherches sur la Notoriété de Luther en France" [The German Reformation and French Literature: Research on the Notoriety of Luther in France]; doctoral thesis, University of Strasbourg (Strasbourg: Faculté des Lettres de l'Université, 1930), 7, 10. Translation mine.

<sup>12</sup> For a listing of the 67 Geneva men martyred from 1533-1560 before and during the ministry of John Calvin in Geneva, please see Thomas P. Johnston, "The Evangelistic Zeal of Reformation Geneva (1533-1560) as Exemplified in Crespin's Martyrology"; available at:

<http://www.evangelismunlimited.com/documents/Crespin.pdf>; accessed 26 Sept 2017. Crespin listed 843 Protestant martyrs in his 1570 Martyrology, which covered 1410-1570. Of those 843 martyrs, 316 (37.5%) died on French soil. It must be noted that Crespin used a doctrinal test before he included martyrs in his Martyrology. Thus most Anabaptists were excluded from his book.

circumstances leading to the martyrdom of an Avignon marketplace bookseller (Fr. *Libraire*) in 1545:

Hence there was in this place of commerce, a foreign bookseller, who was displaying for sale Bibles in Latin and in French; he had no other books. And the Prelates looking at him, wondered and said to him, "Who has made you so bold, that you would display such a merchandise in this town? Do you not know that such books are prohibited?" The librarian responded, "Is not the Holy Bible at least as good as the beautiful pictures and paintings that you have purchased for these ladies?" As soon as these words were spoken, the Bishop of Aix said, "I renounce my place in paradise, if this man is not a Lutheran." At that time the man was grasped and rudely brought to prison. To please the Prelates, a band of ruffians and thieves that was accompanying them, began to cry out, "To the Lutheran, to the Lutheran; to the fire, to the fire." And one of them struck him with his fist, and another one pulled out his beard, so much so, that the man was covered in blood before he arrived at the prison. ... [the next day] he was condemned to be burned, and the sentence was executed the same day.<sup>13</sup>

The fate of this unnamed Bible bookseller in Avignon was repeated over and over in France in those years. And yet, it was through the boldness of similar booksellers, that the writings of Luther became available all across Western Europe. For this reason also, early Evangelical believers in France were called "Lutheran" long before they were called "Reformed"—or actually "Religion Pretending to Be Reformed" [Fr. *Religion Prétendue Réformée*].<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jean Crespin, *Histoire des vrais tesmoins de la verite de l'evangile, qui de leur sang l'ont signée, depuis Jean Hus iusques autemps present* [History of the True Witnesses to the Truthfulness of the Gospel, Who with Their Blood Signed, from John Hus to the Present Time] (Geneva, 1570; Liège, 1964), 118 and verso. Translation mine.

<sup>14</sup> *Religion Prétendue Réformée* [Religion Pretending to Be Reformed]: "Official term for the Calvinistic obedience in France. It appears in the text drawn up for the Peace of Longjumeau in 1568 and appears in the various edicts of pacification until the Edict of Nantes. An official term of this nature is an insult and Protestants are strongly opposed to it. The semantic struggle continues throughout the XVII<sup>th</sup> and XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries." Available at:

<https://www.museeprotessant.org/en/glossary/religion-pretendue-reformee/> (Online); accessed 26 Sept 2017.

And so it was, Luther's books made their way into Lambert's cell at the Franciscan monastery in Avignon, France. And Lambert came under influenced of Luther's writings. While Lambert's cache of Luther's books were confiscated and burned as heretical, the Holy Spirit had used them to make a deep impression on his soul. These writings began Lambert's journey of Evangelical conversion. Not long after the burning of Luther's books, during an official trip on behalf of his monastery in A.D. 1522, Lambert deviated from his journey and headed through Switzerland. It was an evangelistic encounter with Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, which resulted in Lambert removing his monastic cowl and discarding his Rosary beads. Zwingli led Lambert to place his faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.<sup>15</sup>

### **A Tsunami of Clerical Marriages**

Interestingly enough, François Lambert was to become the first French ecclesiastic to be married.<sup>16</sup> He was also the first Protestant Reformer to write a commentary on Song of Solomon, allowing for its literal interpretation. Much like Luther, Lambert was very clear in his rejection of the monastic vows that he had taken, as we shall see below. The following timeline considers major events related to clerical marriage among the Protestant Reformers.

### **Timeline on Marriage, Select Dates, People, and Events**<sup>17</sup>

1520 Luther published the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, discussing the Seven Sacraments of the Church of Rome, with sections condemning Rome's views of the Sacraments of Marriage and Ordination.

1521 Three priests arrested for marriage in Saxony.

1521 November, Luther wrote "On Monastic Vows."

1522 January, Wittenberg doctor of theology Andreas Karlstadt (36 years old) married Anna von Mochau.

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<sup>15</sup> Roy Lutz Winters, *Francis Lambert of Avignon (1487-1530): A Study in Reformation Origins* (Philadelphia: United Lutheran, 1938), 28-31.

<sup>16</sup> "François Lambert was the first [French] ecclesiastic to abandon celibacy" (Platon, 23).

<sup>17</sup> Dates may vary.



1522 July, Zwingli gathered a meeting in Einsiedeln, Switzerland, in which they discussed, among other things, the abolition of celibacy.

1522 July, Zwingli and Lambert discussed prayer to Mary and the saints, leading to Lambert's conversion.<sup>18</sup>

1523 January, Zwingli published his 67 Theses, three of which deal with celibacy and the marriage of clergy:

"28. Everything which God permits or which he has not forbidden, is lawful. From this we learn that it is proper for everyone to marry.

"29. That all those whom we call 'spiritual' sin when, having discovered that God did not grant them the ability to remain chaste, they, nonetheless, do not protect themselves through marriage.

"30. Those who take a vow of chastity childishly or foolishly undertake too much. We learn from this that anyone who accepts such vows, does injustice to good people."<sup>19</sup>

1523 February, Lambert wrote a treatise "Reasons on account of which he rejected the way of life of the Minorites [Franciscans]."

1523 July, Lambert (35 years old) married Christina.

1524 April, Ulrich Zwingli (40 years old) married Anna Reinhart.

1524 Lambert published a work on Song of Solomon (Strasbourg, 1524; Nürnberg, 1525), as well as a book sharply contrasting marriage and celibacy (Strasbourg, 1524; Nürnberg, 1525).

1525 May, Balthasar Hubmaier (45 years old) married Elsbeth Hügline.

1525 June, Martin Luther (42 years old) was married to Katie von Bora.

1537 John Rogers (32 years old) was married to Adriana de Weyden.

1537 Menno Simons (41 years old) married Gertrude.

1540 John Calvin (31 years old) married Idelette de Bure.

Clearly, between 1523 and 1525, a seismic cultural-spiritual upheaval took place related to the marriage of clergymen. This first wave of clergy marriages necessitated a complete reversal of over four centuries of Roman Catholic precedent. Of the many Protestant voices in Wittenberg in those days, François Lambert's voice unequivocally stated that the monastic vows that he had taken were "contrary to the Christian

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<sup>18</sup> Winters, 30-31.

<sup>19</sup> "The Sixty-Seven Articles of Huldrych Zwingli (1523)" in James T. Dennison, Jr., ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries in English Translation: Volume 1, 1523-1552* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2008), 5.

profession of faith.” His shocking bluntness made the case against the monastic vows. And his voice added an Occitan accent (of Southern France) to the Germanic and Helvetic rumblings already taking place.

### **Monastic Vows as Against the Gospel of Christ**

After his encounter with Zwingli in Zurich, Switzerland, Lambert continued on his way to Wittenberg, Saxony, Germany. By 1523, Lambert began teaching and studying in Wittenberg. His Gallican voice remained unequivocal. He forcefully stated that the monastic vows that he had taken were not just neutral as related the gospel of Christ—they were contrary to the gospel. Herein was the strength of his argument. He did not seek to be non-negative or couch his propositions in equivocal language. His A.D. 1523 words were very pointed:

I tell you only, dear reader, a few of the reasons that constrained me to leave the *Minorites* (Franciscan order) . . . but it must suffice that I tell you only summarily. In a few days, you will receive a commentary concerning the rule of their order, that will help you understand the totality. In the meantime, in order that all the world may know what to wait for as far as my resolutions and convictions, I will say these three things:

1<sup>st</sup> Heretofore seduced and ignorant of what I was doing, I pronounced vows contrary to the Christian profession of faith. Oh well! I renounce all these inventions of the *Minorites* and recognize that the holy Gospel is my rule and should be that of all Christians;

2<sup>nd</sup> I retract what I have preached that does not conform to Christian truth. I pray all those who have heard me preach or who read my writings to reject all that is contrary to the Holy Books. I have confidence in Him who removed me from a captivity more difficult than that of Egypt, that I will repair with His divine help by my words and by my books my numerous errors;

3<sup>rd</sup> As no one can come to the knowledge of the truth without being in disagreement with the Pope, I renounce him and all his decrees, and I no longer want to be a part of his reign of apostasy. I desire

rather to be excommunicated by him, knowing that his reign is excommunicated and accursed of God . . .<sup>20</sup>

The words of Lambert were very penetrating, “I pronounced vows contrary to the Christian profession of faith.” Five months after penning those words, Lambert married Christina, becoming the first monk to physically and publicly renounce his monastic vows through marriage. It must be acknowledged that Lambert has been accused of self-service in the forcefulness of his words.<sup>21</sup> He was also accused of seeking to appeal to Martin Luther by his writings.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the remainder of his life and ministry in Marburg under Philip of Hess bears witness to the honesty of his original confession. Marriage became an unequivocal marker of Protestant Reform in a number of ways:

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<sup>20</sup> François Lambert d’Avignon, “Histoire du moine racontée par lui-même, traduite du latin” [story of a monk told by he himself, translated from Latin], in Franck Puaux, *Histoire de la Réformation Française* (1523; Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1859), 1:412-17; taken from Gerdesius, *Historia christianismi renovati*, vol IV; translation mine.

<sup>21</sup> “Public confession differs notably from regular confession at this point: it is that the person who confides in the public, by the very act, is merely making excuses; he is looking to accuse neighbors or a system, to displace the inner sense of personal responsibility to scape goats” (Telle, 48; translation mine). It is notable to consider that in the mind of Émile Telle, Lambert “became a scandal for all French” (*ibid.*). Telle accused Lambert of neo-Pauline simplistic thinking, exaggeration of facts, flattering the German public, embodying the Medieval Waldensian ideas found in 12<sup>th</sup> Century Avignon, misapplying the Franciscan simplicity of life that he had learned in the order, and confusing piety with theology.

<sup>22</sup> “Lambert probably overemphasized this episode in order to establish himself as a reliable disciple of Luther and, unfortunately, he neither said precisely what these books were, nor where he obtained them. Did they circulate in the convents? Did Lambert buy them during his preaching journeys? In any case, he depicted this as the episode that induced him to leave the convent definitively, which he did using letters that had to be delivered to the general of the order as a pretext for his departure” (Pietro Delcorno, “Between Pulpit and Reformation: The “Confessions” of François Lambert” [paper given at Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen; available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/6156006/Between\\_Pulpit\\_and\\_Reformation\\_The\\_Confessions\\_of\\_François\\_Lambert](https://www.academia.edu/6156006/Between_Pulpit_and_Reformation_The_Confessions_of_François_Lambert) (Online); accessed: 26 Sept 2017; Internet].

Marriage marked the breaking of the vow of celibacy.

Marriage displayed breaking the vow of obedience.

The financial obligation of marriage necessitated the need to work, and therefore the breaking of the vow of poverty.

Marriage marked a clear break from the Seven Sacraments in Rome's system of salvation.

Marriage displayed a public disregard for the teachings of Rome and of the ineffectiveness of its condemnations.

Marriage marked the point of no return for the Protestant clergy.

It was a "Protest" by behavior before the word "Protest" was officially penned at the Second Diet of Speyer in 1529. In less than two years from 1523 to 1525, François Lambert was married, Ulrich Zwingli was married, Balthasar Hubmaier was married, and Martin Luther was married. Evangelicalism was established, "Until death do us part."

Therefore Lambert, Zwingli, and Luther must needs first establish funding, housing, and a social network for Protestant parsonages. They were entering new territory for them. However, this was territory for which purpose the New Testament served as a well-suited advisor.

Perhaps it is not an overstatement to say that the clearest antithetical distinctive between the life and work of a Protestant minister and that of Roman Catholic clergy is family. The wife of the Catholic priest is the Church. The wife of most Protestant ministers is a woman.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the Catholic priest lives a life in the relational solicitude of celibacy, the Protestant minister has both the demands and blessings of a wife, children, and even sometimes grandchildren.

### **Reasons Required Celibacy Is Against the Gospel**

Perhaps Lambert's most penetrating words in his abdication of his monastic vows are noted in the statement, "I pronounced vows contrary to the Christian profession of faith." Likewise, Luther's thoughts were summarized by Bainton, "The monk's vow is unfounded in Scripture and

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<sup>23</sup> There are exceptions today, such as the celibate Protestant pastors, female Protestant pastors in certain church bodies, and even married homosexual ministers in some Protestant denominations.

in conflict with charity and liberty.”<sup>24</sup> Were these words overstatement, or do they ring true in Scriptures as read today? In seeking to evaluate these statements, this next section will enumerate several points where obligatory celibacy runs counter to the gospel profession, or the written word of God.

### **The Bible Prohibits Forbidding Marriage**

First and foremost, as to the pronouncing of vows contrary to the Christian profession of faith, Paul in his first epistle to Timothy explained that forbidding marriage was a sign of departure from the faith. Paul noted that the root source for forbidding marriage was deceptive and demonic teaching. Paul prophesied that in the future some would follow in this path.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 1 Timothy 4:1-3 (ESV).<sup>25</sup>

### **The Bible Nowhere Positions Celibacy as Spiritually Superior to Marriage**

There is no place in the Bible that celibacy is considered to allow for higher spiritual attainment. In fact, the most prominent men in the Bible, excepting Jesus and Paul, were all married: Abraham, Moses, David, all the other apostles, and Philip the evangelist.

On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. While we were staying for many days . . . Acts 21:8-10.

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<sup>24</sup> Bainton, 156.

<sup>25</sup> All Scripture citations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise stated.

If anyone may be considered a New Testament priest, would it not be the married Zacharias, father of John the Baptist. Further, the Bible does not teach that John was conceived of the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Or consider that Simon Peter had a mother-in-law (Luke 4:38).

Whereas Paul expressed a preference for the single state in 1 Corinthians 7, he also made a shocking admission. The husband's interests are rightly divided between the Lord and his wife. In a sense, one's relationship with one's wife parallels one's relationship with God! Rather than lowering marriage, it raises the relationship in marriage to the highest human relationship on earth, even running parallel to one's relationship with God—which is why the Christian ought to “marry in the Lord”:

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. 1 Corinthians 7:32-34.

### **To Raise Celibacy as Spiritually Superior Is to Lower Marriage as Spiritually Inferior**

The greatest danger in raising celibacy is its lowering of marriage.<sup>27</sup> In contradistinction, the Book of Proverbs asserted without disclaimer, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.” Proverbs 18:22. Advocates for celibacy must equivocate that verse in the case of clergy. More importantly, if Christ's relationship to the church is

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<sup>26</sup> There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. . . . And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived . . . (Luke 1:5-6, 23-24).

<sup>27</sup> “Saint Paul does he not rather recognize to spouses the right of temporarily abstaining from the use of marriage in order to attend to prayer [see 1 Co 7,5], precisely because this abstinence increasingly frees up the soul of the person who wants to abandon themselves to the things of God and to prayer?” (Heinrich Denzinger's *Symboles et Définitions de la Foi Catholique: Enchiridion Symbolorum*, edited by Peter Hünermann and Joseph Hoffman [Paris: Cerf, 2005], §3911).

like a groom to his bride, then it only makes sense that a pastor needs to learn how to properly treat a church by first learning to properly treat his wife.<sup>28</sup> Further, the writer of Hebrews taught that marriage was to be held in honor, and therefore by antithesis, not as dishonorable nor less honorable.<sup>29</sup>

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.  
Hebrews 13:4.

**Salvation Is Not Achieved through Self-Denial—Salvation Was Achieved by Christ on the Cross, and through the Substitutionary Imputation by Faith Alone of the Character Resulting from His Obedience, His Righteousness**

Perhaps most importantly to the issue of the clerical celibacy pertains to the system of salvation. In the Second Council of Orange (A.D. 529) the yoke of works was lowered onto the shoulders of the Infant Baptized person, which burden was only increased in the case of celibate clergy.

According to the Catholic faith we also believe that after grace has been received through baptism, all baptized persons have the ability and responsibility, if they desire to labor faithfully, to perform with the aid

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<sup>28</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Ephesians 5:25.

<sup>29</sup> "In order to have the proper attitude of mind in the Church Militant we should observe the following rules: 1. Putting aside all private judgment, we should keep our minds prepared and ready to obey promptly and in all things the true spouse of Christ our Lord, our Holy Mother, the hierarchical Church. . . . 4. To praise highly the religious life, virginity, and continence; and also matrimony, but not as highly as the foregoing. 5. To praise the vows of religion, obedience, poverty, chastity, and the other works of perfection and supererogation. . . . 9. Finally, to praise all the precepts of the Church, holding ourselves ready at all times to find reasons for their defense, and never offending against them." (Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, translated by Anthony Mottala S.J. [New York: Doubleday, 1964], 139-140).

and cooperation of Christ what is of essential importance in regard to the salvation of their soul.<sup>30</sup>

This sentence proves unhelpful to the efforts of the New Testament evangelist. First, Orange affirmed that grace was received through [Infant] Baptism<sup>31</sup>—in what appears to be the rhetorical climax of the entire Council. Second, it removed assurance of salvation through the completed work of Christ alone on the cross. Rather, it placed the need for faithful labor squarely on the shoulders of people who were [infant] baptized. With the haunting conditional conjunction “if”, assurance of salvation so clearly taught in Scripture was swept away.<sup>32</sup> Third, it openly stated that they will need “to perform . . . what is of essential importance in regard to the salvation of their soul.” Hence, according to this 6<sup>th</sup> Century Catholic Council, the Christian’s salvation was not purchased full and free by the blood of Jesus. Building on this very shaky view of salvation within Catholicism, it is understandable to read that Luther was concerned about “the many sins which gnaw their way within us so disgustingly.”<sup>33</sup> The rock of Christ and His perfect work had been replaced with the shifting sand of personal human effort—a recipe for sure failure!

It appears that the vow of celibacy plays into man’s pride in self-made righteousness, while simultaneously embodying Satan’s greatest deception whereby he leveraged the destruction of those souls seeking to achieve this impossible standard of excellence.

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<sup>30</sup> Canon 27 of The [Second] Council of Orange, (529): available online at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/orange.txt>; accessed: 5 June 2009; Internet. The official chronological theology of the Roman Catholic Church, Heinrich Denzinger’s *Symboles et Définitions de la Foi Catholique: Enchiridion Symbolorum*, §396-397, ascribed the concluding text of this council to Cesar of Arles (A.D. 470-542), Bishop of Arles from A.D. 502-542.

<sup>31</sup> The baptized have “put on Christ.” Through the Holy Spirit, Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies and sanctifies. 1228 Hence Baptism is a bath of water in which the “imperishable seed” of the Word of God produces its life-giving effect. St Augustine says of Baptism: “The word is brought to the material element, and it becomes a sacrament.” (*Catechism*, §1227-1228).

<sup>32</sup> For example, consider John 5:24 and 1 John 5:11-13.

<sup>33</sup> Martin Luther, “An Appeal to the Ruling Class,” *Selections*, in Dillenberger, 484.



### **Potential Unintended Consequences of Forbidding Clergy to Marry**

In seeking to meet the impossible standard of absolute perfection, "with the aid and cooperation of Christ," it appears that Catholic clergy were made to fall prey to the trap of self-made righteousness of which Paul spoke in Romans 10:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Romans 10:1-4.

There may be unintended consequences to seeking that which is impossible to achieve. Seeking sinless perfection in one's own strength, no matter what supposed "aid and cooperation" are promised is bound to end in failure. Four unintended consequences seem to flow from Orange's description of salvation: failure, fear, relativism, and pride.

#### **Failure**

Solomon wisely wrote, "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." Ecclesiastes 7:20. John added:

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:7, 9.

Sin is inevitable. Seeking to meet an impossible standard of behavior will surely lead to failure. Failure to achieve sinless perfection is inevitable!

#### **Fear**

Just as Felix and Drusilla in Acts 24 were frightened when they heard Paul speaking of "righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment," (Acts 24:25), so the one attempting a perfect standard, when

he falls, will cower in fear before the judgment of the righteous God. This kind of fear is not a healthy fear leading to repentance and release. Rather, like Adam in the Garden of Eden, it is an unhealthy fear leading to the attempt to hide from God. Likewise, Luther confessed his hatred of God's unrealistic demands before his conversion.<sup>34</sup>

### **Relativism**

Once a person has lived with sin and failure over time, then human nature begins to relativize a behavior being sinful, especially in a context where one hears about "saints" who live lives of sinless perfection. Complex philosophical arguments soon rationalize sin. Man can congratulate himself at his abilities to rationalize. Soon good is evil and evil is good:<sup>35</sup>

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! Isaiah 5:20-21.

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<sup>34</sup> "I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, 'the justice of God,' because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore, I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant" (Bainton, 49).

<sup>35</sup> "13. If we wish to be sure that we are right in all things, we should always be ready to accept this principle: I will believe that the white that I see is black, if the hierarchical Church so defines it. For I believe that between the Bridegroom, Christ our Lord, and the Bride, His Church, there is but one spirit, which governs and directs us for the salvation of our souls, for the same Spirit and Lord, who gave us the Ten Commandments, guides and governs our Holy Mother Church" (Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 140-141).

## **Pride**

Once relativism has led to rationalization and sin is entrenched, then comes pride. The sinner thinks himself righteous. He becomes righteous in his own eyes. As John wrote in 1 John, "He deceives himself and the truth is not in him."

And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. Isaiah 2:17.

It is a dangerous thing to fall into the trap of spiritual pride! Could it be that Rome's clerical celibacy leads to a systemic culture of vainglory from which they look down on married clergy as spiritually inferior?

Therefore, although expedient for the running and operating of a human organization, required clerical celibacy appears to have driven Rome away from the gospel and further into spiritual relativism. For one thing, ordination ought not be a vow to a human or earthly centered organization. Being set aside in ordination is to be set aside to the ministry of the gospel. Second, raising ordination to the level of the "reception of grace" places it in the succession of saving ordinances; or, in other words, the Sacrament of Holy Orders saves. When coupled with mandatory celibacy, the psychological pressure of the Monastic Vows were immense. This virtually impossible juggernaut was instantaneously removed from the necks of the Protestant Reformers at the marriage altar.

## **Doctrinal and Practical Implications of Freedom to Marry**

In sharp contradistinction to the results of required clergy celibacy, clear doctrinal and pragmatic concepts underpin the Protestant concept of clergy being free to marry or not to marry.<sup>36</sup> These implications flow from who can read the Bible to individual interpretation, soul competency to freedom of conscience, as well as justification and sanctification by faith. It is important to remember that most or all

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<sup>36</sup> Luther wrote, "Marriage is good, virginity is better, but liberty is best" (Bainton, 156).

practices have some type of doctrinal underpinning. The same is true for voluntary marriage of clergy.

### **Freedom to Read the Bible for One's Self**

Reading Scripture where God has direct access to the human soul without any human intermediary is central to an understanding of evangelicalism.<sup>37</sup> Consider in this regard the direct agency of the words of God to man, as described by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs:

That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you. Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge, to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you? Proverbs 22:19-21.

One of the most basic spiritual truths in discipleship is the necessity of learning directly from the voice of God through reading and hearing the Bible for oneself.<sup>38</sup> The right and obligation to personal interpretation of

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<sup>37</sup> "Over and against this view, evangelicalism, seeking to conserve what it conceives to be the only consistent supernaturalism, sweeps away every intermediary between the soul and its God, and leaves the soul dependent for its salvation on God alone, operating on it by his immediate grace. . . . Evangelicalism does not cease to be fundamentally antinaturalistic, however, in being antisacerdotal: its primary protest continues to be against naturalism, and in opposing sacerdotalism also it only is the more consistently supernaturalistic, refusing to admit any intermediaries between the soul and God, as the sole source of salvation. That only is true evangelicalism, therefore, in which sounds clearly the double confession that all the power exerted in saving the soul is from God, and that God in his saving operations acts directly upon the soul" (Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1918], 19-20).

<sup>38</sup> "As we have said, God never has dealt, and never does deal, with mankind at any time otherwise than by the word of promise. Neither can we, on our part, ever have to do with God otherwise than through faith in His word and promise" (Martin Luther, "The Pagan Servitude of the Church," *Selections*, Dillenberger, 277). "The Holy Spirit works with, by, and in the Word of God to bring men to illumination, conversion, and the new birth" (Philipp Jakob Spener, *Theologische Bedencken* (Halle, Germany: Erster Theil. Mit Chur-Furstl., 1700), 159;

Scripture ought never be deeded over to anyone else for any reason. How can the disciple, who is to be taught to observe all that Christ has commanded,<sup>38</sup> obey the command to “take heed,” if he is not given a standard by which to judge what he hears?

And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.” Matthew 24:4-5.

And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. Matthew 24:11.

Then if anyone says to you, “Look, here is the Christ!” or “There he is!” do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, “Look, he is in the wilderness,” do not go out. If they say, “Look, he is in the inner rooms,” do not believe it. Matthew 24:23-26.

Christ personally commended great vigilance from His people to guard themselves against false teaching and false teachers. They must be allowed to exercise that same vigilance in the area of marriage and required celibacy. Let each person decide for himself what the Bible truly says!

### **Freedom to Decide on the State of Marriage or the State of Celibacy**

But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” Matthew 19:11-12.

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translation and citation by Arthur P. Johnston, *World Evangelism and the Word of God* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1974), 30).

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 28:20.

Both at the beginning, as well as at the end, of this important teaching on celibacy, "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," Jesus repeated a condition. He made it doubly clear that "not everyone can receive this saying." In the Protestant approach to marriage, the freedom to marry or not to marry is left in the hands of the person getting married, not in the hands of a dictate of the church. If read literally, in fact, Paul seemed to require marriage of pastors when he wrote Timothy:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach. 1 Timothy 3:1-2.

Through marriage, the wife of a young pastor can surely assist him to become more sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, and hospitable.

### **Freedom to Obey Christ**

Central in biblical revelation are the concepts of soul accountability and therefore soul competency. From the warnings and blessings expressed in Scripture flow the concept of freedom of conscience. In Romans 14 Paul made a strong argument, using the example of eating or not eating meat, that each person is free to decide for themselves the course of action that they will take on actions that do not constitute moral infractions, such as against the Ten Commandments:

One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Romans 14:2-4.

From these freedoms follow the freedom to marry or not to marry. These comments of Paul confirm the teachings of Jesus on celibacy in Matthew above. "But he said to them, 'Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. . . . Let the one who is able to receive this

receive it.” Matthew 19:11-12. Christ gave His followers freedom to obey Him as they felt led by circumstances and the Holy Spirit.

### **Removing the Yoke of Self-Denial (Works) for Salvation**

Peter was clear in the gathering of disciples in Jerusalem in Acts 15, it would not be helpful to new believers if a yoke of obeying the Old Testament Law was placed on them:

Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? Acts 15:10.

As to works playing no role in salvation, Lambert himself focused on Luke 17:10:

So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’.” Luke 17:10.

Rather than relish in a salvation earned through fulfilling all the commands of Christ, the follower of Jesus remains unworthy of the salvation that Jesus purchased full and free.

### **Consequences of Married Clergy**

Just like obligatory celibacy does not remain in isolation without consequences, so the marriage of clergy carries with it resulting consequences.

### **A Distraction from Spiritual Duties**

This distraction, of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 7:32-34 contains both negative and positive angles. On the negative side, an unsaved, ungodly, or selfish wife can lead to marital stress as regards a pastor’s involvement in the ministry. These matters cannot be ignored. However, on the positive side, a godly wife provides a haven to the pastor from the stresses and pressures of life and ministry—hence she

embodies a positive distraction! French Reformed pastor Franck Puaux explained the benefits of a godly wife as he discussed Lambert's marriage:

The monk Lambert dated his letter from Wittenberg, where he arrived in 1523. That same year he was married. He was the first French monk who broke the vow of celibacy, and found in a virtuous and pious woman the help that God in his kindness has given to man.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Need to Support a Family**

In the case of Francois Lambert, the need to support himself and his family became overwhelming to him. On January 20, 1523 he wrote to the Elector of Saxony, "I am poor, I have nothing to eat." And on that same day he wrote Spalatin to supply him only what he needed to live.<sup>41</sup> Once married he desired to move from Wittenberg to Zurich to support his family. With no opportunities for him in Zurich, he brought his German wife to Metz in March 1524, eight months after his marriage. There for a short time, he then turned to Strasbourg, from which he published several books on marriage. Ten months after leaving Metz, in January of 1525, Jean Castellan, another former Franciscan, was burned alive for heresy. Meanwhile, the city of Strasbourg provided Lambert a stipend. It was in Strasbourg that he met other French and Swiss Reformers. In 1526 at the Diet of Speyer, the mayor of Strasbourg commended Lambert to Philip of Hesse.<sup>42</sup> So, Lambert moved to Marburg, and assisted Philip of Hesse with his Reformation efforts. He died there in 1530. Needless-to-say, once Lambert left the Franciscan order, he found himself busy travelling and working to support both himself and his wife.

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<sup>40</sup> Franck Puaux, *Histoire de la Réformation Française* (1523; Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1859), 1:417. [Translation mine].

<sup>41</sup> Platon, 12.

<sup>42</sup> "The meeting of Philip [of Hesse] and Sturm [of Strasbourg] in Speyer was a turning point in the life of Francis Lambert, for the Strasbourg mayor spoke in a commendatory manner about him" (Winters, 60).



### **A Partner in Times of Trouble**

Marriage provides the potential for a bond of partnership that is unequalled on earth. In Genesis 2 we read, “and they shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24. Jesus rendered this point more emphatic by using the first two ordinal numbers, “So they are no longer two but one flesh.” Matthew 19:6.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon reminded his readers, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.” Ecclesiastes 4:9. Therefore, marriage provides a doubly multiplied benefit of partnership, not only is the labor of the couple doubly blessed, but their relationship is greater than merely two people working together, because they are “one flesh.”

### **A Natural Minister to Woman**

In Titus 2, Paul prescribed that older and experienced married women should minister to younger married women. The entire discipleship and mentoring structure laid out by the Apostle presumes a context in which married women minister to married women. Within this relational context in the church, the pastor’s wife can speak to the issues of marriage, because she is also married. She can also speak about the complexities, difficulties and stresses of rearing children, because she is rearing or has reared children.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Titus 2:3-5.

Further, not only is it good for a woman to minister to a woman in her spiritual needs, but it is better and best. It is not helpful for a pastor to minister to a woman. Not only can he not sympathize with a woman’s issues, but it can put him in a compromising situation.

Lastly, many women labor under the stress of a marriage where they are not properly loved. The pastor’s love for his wife gives these ladies an example and the hope that at least there is one woman on earth who is loved by her husband. Therefore, the pastor’s wife plays an important

exemplary and teaching role, multiplying the pastor's ministry to all the women in the church.

### **An Example of Fathering and Child-Rearing**

Married clergy with children provides every church with a role model for child-rearing and child discipline. Paul taught of the pastor: "He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive." 1 Tim 3:4. Therefore he was to exemplify the characteristics of a good father, as taught by Paul:

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Colossians 3:21.

### **Learning to Shepherd the Church of God**

Building from the admonition to the church to be sure that their pastor was a good husband and father, Paul added a pointed rhetorical question to this admonition:

He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

This rhetorical question has rung throughout the history of the church as a warning to pastors to practice in the home what they preach in the church. Its message reminds the attentive church leader to remain humble before the Lord and humble before his wife and children.

Further, and most obviously, a pastor needs to be married, have children, and keep them in dignity for this test to be applied to their pastor by his congregation. Pastors may not like this level of scrutiny, but it comes from the Lord. On the other hand, under a system of obligatory celibacy this test cannot be applied to the church leader. By clerical celibacy is removed a God-ordained accountability of the pastor to his local church.

But beyond the test for leadership comes another principle. The home is the crucible by which God trains His servants to care for the church. As men grow and learn to care for their wives and children, in like manner, they will grow and learn to care for the church of God. The home life of the pastor is not an end in itself but it includes an array of positive ramifications for his ministry in the local church.

### **Learning to Love the Church**

The love relationship of Christ for His bride, the church universal, was called upon as an example for the husband to love his own wife. Further, this love provides an example for the love and care that is to bond the pastor to the local church.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:25-32.

While there are a number of lessons in this passage. For the purposes of this essay, one lesson will be considered. Paul taught that the relationship of Christ to the church was an example for husbands loving their wives. This same admonition can be applied to a pastor and his flock. As he learns to love his own wife at home, he will grow and learn how to better love the church to whom he is ministering.

The symbiotic interrelationship between the lessons of marriage and how a pastor treats his church portrays the importance of the home as a training ground for pastoral ministry. In light of these teachings of Scripture, it proves difficult to understand how obligatory celibacy ever entered the Western church. In the final analysis, the vow of celibacy

dealt quite a blow to the Church. Required celibacy served as a disservice to the clergy themselves, to their view of salvation, and to their view of themselves as superior to lay people. It distanced clergy from the scrutiny of church members. Further, it eliminated effective ministry to married women and mothers by pastor's wives. Even more, it removed an important God-given milieu by which and through which pastoral behavior was to be groomed.

The avalanche of Protestant marriages encouraged by Martin Luther, François Lambert d'Avignon, and other Protestant Reformers released Evangelical believers from the yoke of obligatory clerical celibacy. This Protest-by-Marriage of the Protestant Reformers greatly enriched Evangelical churches, providing an incalculable positive impact. The opportunity for clergy to be married leaves this married minister filled with gratitude to those who forged the path for clerical marriage.