

HOMOSEXUALITY AND SEXUAL ABUSE

The conventional wisdom maintains there is a pedophilia crisis in the Catholic Church. Popular as this position is, it is empirically wrong: the data show it has been a homosexual crisis all along. The evidence is not ambiguous, though there is a reluctance to let the data drive the conclusion. But that is a function of politics, not scholarship.

Alfred Kinsey was the first to identify a correlation between homosexuality and the sexual abuse of minors. In 1948, he found that 37 percent of all male homosexuals admitted to having sex with children under 17 years old. More recently, in organs such as the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, the *Journal of Sex Research*, the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, and *Pediatrics*, it has been established that homosexuals are disproportionately represented among child molesters.

Correlation is not causation; it is an association. So to say that there is a correlation between homosexual orientation and the sexual abuse of minors is not to say that being a homosexual makes one a molester. On the other hand, it makes no sense to pretend that there is no relationship between homosexuality and the sexual abuse of minors.

Think of it this way. We know there is a correlation between being Irish and being an alcoholic, but that doesn't mean all Irishmen are, or will become, alcoholics. But it does mean they have a special problem in this area.

After the *Boston Globe* broke the story on priestly sexual abuse in 2002, the American bishops established an independent panel to study this issue. When the National Review Board released its findings in 2004, noted Washington attorney Robert S. Bennett, who headed the study, said, "There are no

doubt many outstanding priests of a homosexual orientation who live chaste, celibate lives, but any evaluation of the causes and context of the current crisis must be cognizant of the fact that more than 80 percent of the abuse at issue was of a homosexual nature.”

Furthermore, the panel explicitly said that “we must call attention to the homosexual behavior that characterized the vast majority of the cases of abuse observed in recent decades.”

One of those who served on the National Review Board, Dr. Paul McHugh, is former psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins. He is on record saying, “This behavior was homosexual predation on American Catholic youth, yet it’s not being discussed.” More recently, the *New York Times* ran a story on Leslie Lothstein, another psychologist who has treated abusive priests. He concluded that “only a small minority were true pedophiles.”

Roderick MacLeish Jr. was the Boston lawyer who pressed the case against the Archdiocese of Boston; he examined all the files on this subject. As reported by Michael Paulson in the *Boston Globe*, MacLeish concluded that “90 percent of the nearly 400 sexual abuse victims he has represented are boys, and three quarters of them are post-pubescent.” Once again, the issue is homosexuality, not pedophilia.

Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons is a psychiatrist who has spent years treating sexually abusive priests. “Many psychologists and psychiatrists have shown that there is no link between celibacy and pedophilia,” he said earlier this year. Instead, they have found a “relationship between homosexuality and pedophilia.” Fitzgibbons goes further, saying, “Every priest whom I treated who was involved with children sexually had previously been involved in adult homosexual relationships.” Notice he didn’t say *some* priests.

Need more proof? When the John Jay College of Criminal Justice released its findings, the *Boston Globe*, which won a Pulitzer Prize for its investigation, commented that “more than three-quarters of the victims were post pubescent, meaning the abuse did not meet the clinical definition of pedophilia.” So if the definitive study, which covered the years 1950-2002, concludes that pedophilia was never the issue, why does elite opinion insist that there is a “pedophilia crisis” in the Catholic Church?

If most of the damage was done by gay priests, it raises the question whether there would have been a scandal at all had homosexuals been barred from the priesthood. While the conclusion—no gays, no scandal—is simplistic, it nonetheless reveals more than it conceals. It is too simplistic because it does not take into account the fact that in the 1970s (at the height of the scandal), America was in the throes of a sexual revolution, one which touched every institution in society, including the Catholic Church; no matter what the composition of the priesthood, some problems were on the horizon given the cultural turbulence of this period.

Having said as much, it should be obvious that if eight in ten of the molesters had never been allowed to become priests, the scandal *as we know it* would have been avoided.

Is this a plea to bar homosexuals from the priesthood? No. There are many good homosexual priests, and most have served the Church well. What the Vatican has done is to screen carefully for sexually active homosexuals, without imposing an absolute ban. That makes sense, and it is one reason why this problem is abating.