

CONFESSION – AN EVIL PRACTICE

CONFESSION: THE DOCTRINE

The Catholic Church has priests forgiving sins on God's behalf as if they were the one offended, as if they were God!

No trace of this doctrine can be found in the Bible.

Jesus told the apostles that if they forgive the sins of any they are forgiven and if they keep anybody in their sins they are kept in their sins. He is only saying that if the apostles forgive God forgives too. He is not saying they are deciding who God must forgive and they are not forgiving as if they were God. Do you really think a priest has the power to keep you in your sins? Even Catholicism does not go that far - it says that if the priest refuses you might get the gift of forgiveness from God directly.

As a result of the doctrine that priests have to forgive sins, the Church requires that the priest hear your confession of sins. This is necessary so that he can decide whether to pardon you or not. He needs to know if you are really being honest and are repentant.

The New Testament says it wants us to be so loving to each other and trusting that we confess our sins to each other. If John's gospel envisages absolution and it follows that sin has to be confessed so that the forgiving minister knows whether or not to forgive then that is the kind of confession that is needed not whispering privately into the ear of a priest in a Catholic Church confessional.

Confessionals would be acceptable if

- there was no pressure
- the priest had a recognised counselling qualification
- the main concern is the person's self-compassion and self-development and not God or sins or whatever

The Church tells people who have serious sins that if they do not confess they will go to Hell forever if they do not repent. That is bullying. It is extremely damaging to children. The Church needs to be stopped from demanding that children be sent to a priest to confess their sins.

THE SEAL OF CONFESSION

The Catholic Church orders priests to act as if they never heard what they were told in confession.

If you tell your counsellor that you intend to abuse your child sexually he or she is obliged to tell the police.

The priest will not do that. He will let the child go home for more abuse. Some would say this isn't right. If religion were a good thing all people would be saying it is not only bad but terrible. Confidentiality, though important, shouldn't go that far. It is more important to stop the crime than to keep the client's secret.

The Catholic Church has the nerve to agree with all this up to a point. But it wants a legal exception. This exception is that priest must never be legally compelled to reveal what was told to him in confession even if it necessary to save a city from a nuclear attack. You need proof to justify such an extreme position. If the Catholic Church gets such a privilege what is to stop some new religion from arguing that it is a sin for it to report its clergy to the police for child-sex abuse?

DEGRADATION IN THE CONFESSIONAL

Roman Catholics are bound by Church law to confess their sins to a priest at least once a year. The Third Chief Commandment of the Church is, "To go to confession at least once a year." Breaking the rule is a mortal sin - you go to Hell for it if you die unrepentant.

St Augustine of Hippo, the giant who virtually made Christianity, never went to confession. That was hardly surprising for what could he have confessed anyway? The church of the time seems to have imagined that only adultery, murder and apostasy were the sins that cut you off from God. Nothing else was bad enough to do that. Interestingly, child rape was not in the list.

The notion taught by Pope Francis that if you sin against God you offend his people too and must be forgiven through their representative is a strange one. Mostly the people will not know if you went to confession. They will not know that you really repented if you did. The priest does not mention what happened to anyone so he is not in a position to tell the community to accept you again. Christ said you must confess to the person you hurt. Catholic confession is just a way out of that reasonable demand. It is a placebo for cowardice.

Confession is supposed to have been sanctioned by Jesus when he told the disciples that any sins they forgave would be forgiven and any they don't forgive would not be (John 20:22, 23). It is reasoned that if they have to decide what sins to forgive or retain they have to be told the sins. This logic is deliberately false for forgiving and retaining can only be based on whether the person is sorry or not and not on them telling their business. Catholicism does occasionally permit absolution without confession. This shows that she believes that you don't have to know sins in order to pardon or retain them. Telling sins does not mean you are sorry.

True forgiveness is part of an agreement between yourself and the other person that the bad deed will not be repeated.

The Catholic Church settles for a person going to confession and telling God they will not sin again. Nothing is mentioned about saying you will not do it again to the people you hurt. Nobody who gave bad example is told to explain to others what they have done.

Over time Catholics get used to telling shameful things knowing that the priest has heard it all before from others or they can go to a stranger who thinks they don't care about. The Church does its best to prevent confession deterring for priests are not allowed to turn nasty in the confessional.

Confession is often endorsed because of its alleged therapeutic value. This is fraudulent for it does not justify forced confession. If you feel comforted by something that has the potential to force and which adapts to a framework that enforces then you are twisted or desperate.

Some Catholics praise the confession system for it enables the priest to give advice and educate on spiritual matters. This can be done without the system.

Catholics always start their confession by saying how long it was since their previous confession and Church law binds them to. This should not be compulsory unless the once a year rule is broken.

DETERRENT?

Catholics allege that confession is a valuable deterrent to sin.

Imagine most baptisms that forgive sins and put you into the Church were invalid and thus as spiritually potent as drinking tap water. The Church says that if people find out and get baptised for real they will learn that the sacraments they got did not work even though they feel they did. If they sinned a lot they don't need to confess those sins though it is clear they intended the same malice as a real baptised person would intend. Real baptism removes the need to confess sin since an invalid baptism. If confession is so important then why does nobody need to confess their pre-baptism sins? What kind of repentance are they taking with them into the baptismal font?

The Church advises that you tell the priest about your bad desires that you cannot help. It commands that you tell the priest your bad desires that you entertain. When the filthy desire has to be confessed one will see that one might as well carry out the desire so confession encourages sin. And if some do not behave as if it does it does not prove they were not encouraged.

Some would say they were put off many shameful sins for they couldn't bear having to go and tell the priest that they did them. But say if I could commit child sexual abuse. If the fear of having to tell it in confession is putting me off then it is telling it that bothers me not the sin. I still wish I could commit the sin. That wish would have to be confessed so I still have a shameful sin to tell. It is the heart that counts not the actions in morality. I would be more likely to commit the abuse when I have committed it in my heart anyway. I still have to tell I want to do it so I might as well do it. Thus, you see that instead of deterring sinners, confession makes them keep their sins inside so it only looks like they were deterred.

What about people who feel that God will forgive them no matter what they do? These people might think God forgives them all the time even if they are not sorry so that they can do what they like. They believe in God so they will say they repent and ask God for forgiveness sometimes. Or they might believe that God will save them on their deathbed and they can repent and make peace with him then. The Church says that it is a sin to believe you can do what you wish and presume on the mercy of God. It says you need to repent meaning you wouldn't commit the sins again and you need at least resolve to make up the damage you did. In other words, you need to repudiate the bad things you did and resolve never to do them

again. The promise to change is taken to be okay and you don't have to do the making up first before God will pardon you. The silly thing about this is, the person has proved that he or she takes advantage of mercy and here we have God forgiving the person without waiting until the person proves their sorrow first. Actions speak louder. Actions not words would speak in such a case. The person is being rewarded for their taking advantage and mockery of mercy.

If you avoid sin because you don't want to describe your sins to the priest then that is selfish. You avoid the sin not for God but for yourself. It is not the sin you hate but telling it. This attitude makes you as bad and guilty as if you committed the sin because you would commit it if you did not have to go to the priest. Catholics would say that that is fine if one of your motives is the avoidance of sin for the love of God. But if you really loved God you would cast away the other motive. So, it is not fine. You won't be perfect for God so how can you really love him? The deterrence argument for confession probably is the reason Catholics can believe in confession but it is incorrect. It denies that sin is to be hated for the love of God. Jesus would not authorise anything as a deterrent.

THE NEED FOR DETAIL

I commit a mortal sin and go to confession.

Many just tell the name of the sin and how many times they did it. That is obviously unconcerned about spiritual development. Telling sins is no good in itself. If that is what you have to do then you are only trying to dodge punishment for sin.

The Church says that some mortal sins are worse than others. I can commit adultery. You may do exactly the same. But if I intend more evil and malice than you did, my mortal sin is worse than yours. So outwardly the evil is the same but inwardly my evil is the greatest. Circumstances decree exactly how malicious the sin was. Clearly if confession is worth going to, detail about the sin has to be gone into. It is not enough to say, "I committed the mortal sin of adultery." The person must state any factors that may increase or decrease culpability. For example, adultery with your friend's wife is worse than adultery with a stranger's wife. Then you have two mortal sins - one seriously betraying your friend and adultery.

Every sin is different so a "because" would be important. You have to say, "I did x because..." Some say that this risks lessening your own culpability. But to confess and say that you did something and that is all that matters is risking slandering yourself. That is increasing your culpability.

If confessing sin is about growing, then you cannot grow unless you put the because in there. How else will you understand the reasons for why you fell into sin?

Any feedback from the priest is not going to help unless he is helped to understand the reasons for your sins.

Catholics are instructed to give the disgusting details about their sin to show what its level of gravity is but only when it is necessary. But if it is unnecessary and when they want to they are told to do it. Catholics are not expected to answer the priest when he asks a question that is unlawful – that is, one that serves no useful or relevant purpose. They are to mention all their mortal sins and state as accurately as possible the number of times they committed each type of mortal sin.

Religion admits the importance of consistency because you can't really believe in a doctrine if you repudiate something that flows logically from it. If we have to confess our mortal sins then we have to go into all the relevant details.

Since circumstances which extenuate or increase the gravity of an individual mortal sin have to be recounted then people have to describe their sexual sins in salacious and explicit detail. Take adultery. Each sexual act employed in it is a separate mortal sin in itself. And so is every second of time. Every second you maintain a mortal sin is a fresh mortal sin. The sins have to be described in full detail. How you felt during each one has to be mentioned plus the temptations and physical responses it awoke in you for you are tempting yourself which is a sin. You have to say what you wanted to feel and wanted to do next. If it is right to be vague on any sin or to leave it out then confession is pointless.

The sincere priest will ask filthy questions to help the penitent unburden herself or himself only if she or he has confessed sexual sin and needs to tell more. It is the penitent's business to examine her or his conscience so otherwise the priest isn't supposed to ask questions. The priest will know that a person who hasn't been at confession for a while must have some sexual sins even if he or she hasn't mentioned any. God commands whatever reduces the likelihood of sin being committed for sin is the worst evil so it is the priest's duty to ask the penitent if he or she has done this and that in a gentle way to encourage her or him to talk. He has to do this to discourage bad confession or to remove a person's fear of confessing such things in case it forces her or him not to tell it.

People feel better about doing bad things if they think enough of their neighbours do them too. Priests are bound to feel encouraged in sin by listening to the sins of others. It gives them ideas too!

It is a mortal sin not to get cleansed of mortal sin as soon as possible which requires running along to the parish priest who may know or suspect who you have committed your sexual sins with when you confess them. No true Catholic would wait to go to a strange priest for they would not be as readily available. Confession is such a curious practice that one wonders why the papal Church really commands it. It is possible that some priests use it to glean information to pass on to the Vatican that it can exploit to construct some power-grabbing strategies.

The priest cannot absolve unless he judges first. It is all right for him to judge you as deserving Hell. It seems so smug. The priest has no right to put people through the ordeal of confession and the feeling that if they die they should go to Hell forever. To go to confession is to assist in the priest's self-conceit and in his self-aggrandizement at your expense. Don't do it.

So we see the priest has to spend ages with each penitent trying to judge their guilt, the degree of guilt and the sincerity of their sorrow. When you sin it is only a symptom of many other sins. For example, if I confess to an act of adultery, a mortal sin, with a woman who is not my wife. It is not enough to confess that. I have to confess the first time I felt the attraction when and why I decided to do something about it. The less temptation I had to sin the worse the sin is. So I have to discuss every temptation. I have to confess what it was like when I first kissed her and what happened after for there is a whole series of sins surrounding it. Normally small sins that I commit to encourage the adultery to happen are thereby turned into mortal sins for adultery is a serious matter. So if Jesus meant to start a sacrament based on confession and absolution we reach some ridiculous conclusions. It means that the apostles and their delegates who he commissioned to preach the gospel first and foremost were to be bogged down with this sacrament in those precarious and difficult early days. The absurdity of Jesus doing this proves that the Roman Catholic interpretation of the verse from the John gospel is wrong.

It gets a hundred times worse when one realises that the idea that venial sin exists is foreign to the Bible which says that even sins that do little or almost no harm are still serious hell-deserving offences – mortal sins.

FINALLY - Confession is just an excuse for invading and intruding in your conscience.