

What is to be said of bishops that allow monks to marry in return for political jobs well done?

The Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon, A.D. 451, decreed (Canon 16) that monastics should not contract marriage and that if they did so they were to be excommunicated.

CANON XVI

If any virgin has dedicated herself to the Lord God, or any men likewise have become monks, let them not be permitted to engage in marriage. If however, they be found to be doing this, let them be denied communion, and be excluded therefrom. But we have made it a rule that the local Bishop is to have control of kindness in regard to the treatment of them.

(c. VII of the 4th; C. XLIV of the 6th; c. XIX of Carthage; and cc. VI, XVIII, XIX, XX, and LX of Basil.)

Interpretation

In times of old some women wearing lay garb would dedicate themselves to God, as becomes plain from what is said about this in C. XLV of the 6th, and they would agree while in full possession of their reasoning powers to remain virgins; and after being further tried and found true to their promise, they would be numbered among the other virgins (for, according to c. XVIII of Basil, any such woman used to be called a virgin. Moreover, they assumed the black habit, according to c. XLV of the 6th). Hence it is that the present Canon decrees that these virgins, and equally so monks in particular, who either as an inference justified by their keeping silent about it are inclined to celibacy, or when asked about it actually agree to remain virgins, in accordance with c. XIX of Basil, are not permitted to marry and to violate the agreements and stipulations which they have made with God. For, if the agreements which men make with one another are confirmed by the name of God being taken in the midst thereof, as St. Gregory the Theologian says, how great indeed is the danger of their being found to be violators of those agreements which they have made with God directly! And if, according to Basil the Great (Ascetic Ordinance 21) a monk, as having reaped fruit and having dedicated his body to God, no longer has control over what has been dedicated to God nor any right

to have it for the use and convenience of his relatives, how much more he is unable to have it for the purpose of carnal intercourse! If; nevertheless, there be found some to have done this, let them be excommunicated. But let the local bishop have the power to treat them with philanthropy or kindness, and either to mitigate their punishment or to shorten the time of their penance. This does not mean that the marriage tie may remain indissoluble, but, on the contrary, it is implied that the parties to the marriage are to be divorced from each other. For, in point of fact, it is a ease of fornication, or rather to say of adultery, and not a marriage that occurred, according to St. Basil the Great in his c. VI and his VIII; see also c. VII of the present Council. . .

FROM THE SIXTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL:

CANON XLIV

Any Monk that is found guilty of the act of fornication, or of accepting a woman for the purpose of matrimony and with a view to living with her (as his wife), shall be compelled to suffer the penalty of undergoing the penances prescribed by the Canons

(c. XVI of the 4th; C. XIX of Ancyra; cc. VI, XVIII, XIX, XX, LX of Basil.)

Interpretation

If any monk be proved to have committed fornication, or if he marries, he is to be penanced as a fornicator, i.e., for seven years, in accordance with the Canons; the unlawful marriage being first dissolved. That is what the present Canon decrees. As for the Canons it refers to, these are c. XIX of Basil. Read also c. XVI: of the 4th.[\[1\]](#)

[1] In view of the fact that a married monk is "canonized" by the present Canon as a fornicator, just like a, worldling, Balsamon says that this concession is made to those monks who of their own accord and voluntarily dissolve their unlawful marriage and hasten to confess and repent, and not to those who repent involuntarily.

