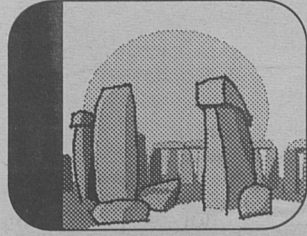


## STONEHENGE TO STONEWALL

by charlie emond



# On the Sixth Day God Said...

**B**e fruitful and multiply." (Genesis 1:28) Historically there have been lots of Jews and Christians who did not heed this command. Some of them were even famous for ignoring it. (The Virgin Mary comes immediately to mind because she even has "virgin" as part of her name.) This brings up a good point to raise with those who torment us about the "unnaturalness" of homosexuality: how natural is virgin birth?

Then you have women like St. Pulcheria, who took a vow of perpetual virginity and then got married, and St. Etheldreda, who insisted on the preservation of her virginity through two marriages. Their husbands can't have been too happy.

The Third Council of Constantinople (680-681) dictated that "the spirit of unity is superior to the joining of bodies." In the Middle Ages, Hugh of St. Victor argued that the ideals of Christian marriage are most fully realized when the marriage remains unconsummated. Well, I have news for them all. This is definitely not the way to multiply.

### The Holy Catholic Closet

The classic idea of the vestal virgin who remained without sex for some higher purpose was adopted by the Christian church very early on. The fact that Jesus Christ was apparently celibate encouraged those who wished to imitate him to follow the same lifestyle.

Roman Catholic nuns, professional virgins after all, are actually married to Christ with wedding rings and pseudo-wedding ceremonies, thus creating a kind of holy harem. Priests are considered married to the church, though why they couldn't also be married to Christ, I don't know. It's not like there is any sex involved here, after all, just that old passionate friendship thing at most.

Back in the early days of the church, there were just two lifestyle choices: marriage or the church. So where do you suppose most gay men and lesbians ended up? Of course; they flocked to the nunneries and monasteries.

The profound paradox here is that the greatest persecution

of gay men and lesbians is by the very church so many of them have served and continue to serve. But that's what happens when you confuse sexual activity with sexual orientation -- or try to divide the two for that matter. That's why the Pope and Jerry Falwell are still preaching that quirky "love the

If you were an early Christian, figuring out what to do about sex was a real problem. First you were told that the most perfect response to the Christian message was celibacy and that the ONLY reason for marriage was if you just couldn't stand it anymore. Then you were told to be fruitful and mul-

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sinner but hate the sin!" They haven't figured it out yet.

### Just take a cold shower

Our old friend St. Paul writes the following in his first letter to the Corinthians, "Yes, it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman. . .but if they cannot control the sexual urges, they should get married." (7:1,9) "Those who have wives should live as though they had none." (7:29) "About remaining celibate. . .it is good for a man to stay as he is. If you are tied (TIED?) to a wife, do not look for freedom, if you are free of a wife do not look for one. But if you marry, it is no sin." (7:25-28) Paul's low opinion of women comes through so clearly here that I still wonder why none of them hauled off and decked him!

tiply and your bible offered examples like old King Solomon, with 700 wives and 300 concubines, going at it like a crazed rabbit.

### The devil made me do it

It took St. Augustine to finally sort out this mixed message. Of course, Augustine sowed his own wild oats (one bloomed into an illegitimate son) before setting out strict laws for the rest of us. His motto (from his "Confessions"): "Give me chastity and continence, but not just now."

This is the gist of his writings and the stuff of church policy ever since: sex is the work of the devil and the temptations of the flesh must be fought against with vigor. Get married before you do it. Don't do it if you don't want children, and

don't enjoy it when you do it. Don't even think about masturbation. In fact, don't even think about sex! If the cold shower doesn't work, a man might consider a more radical solution — become a eunuch!

### Less is more?

Jesus says, "There are eunuchs born that way from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by men and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can." (Matthew 19: 1-12) For those now reaching for the Webster's, a eunuch is a castrated male. Why would they DO that? Well, you could get a lucrative job as a harem guard for your local sheik, or you

the Queen of Ethiopia, meets Philip along the road, asks him many questions, and is soon baptized by him. He is warmly welcomed into the new Christian church, but for him to be fruitful and multiply he would have to wear fruit on his head like Carmen Miranda and reach for his abacus!

It is abundantly clear, then, that the command to be fruitful and multiply was not meant for everyone. On the contrary, admiration, praise, a warm welcome, and apparently a place in heaven went to those who ignored it, so there is hope for us all! ▼

### Next time: The Bishop and his Boyfriend.

For more information, see John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*

Charlie Emond has a bachelor's degree from Queens College and master's degrees from both Dartmouth and Keene State. He teaches college history courses in Springfield and White River Junction. This January he will be teaching a course he developed - *Hidden History: Homosexuality in Western Civilization* - for the Community College of Vermont on line.

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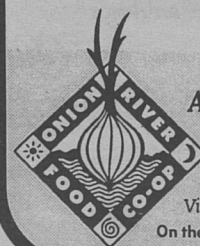
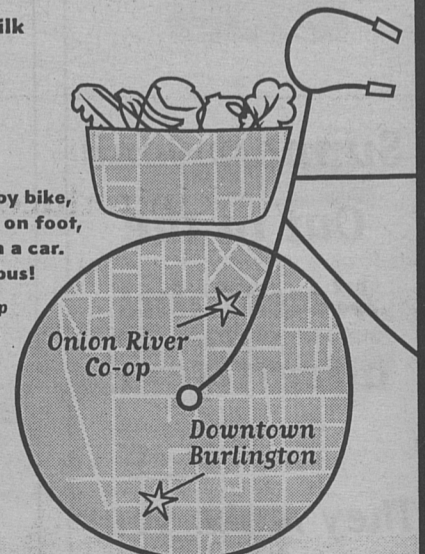
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