

CELIBACY

The word *celibate* derives from the Latin *caelebs*, "unmarried." In modern usage celibacy generally means not only that one is unmarried but also abstaining from sexual intercourse. Celibacy may be a matter of individual choice or it may be the condition of joining an institution, as in Christian and Buddhist monasteries. Historically, Christian "total institutions" are enclaves which result from a social compromise in which a state of sexual asceticism, originally recommended as the ideal for all members of society, became mandatory for a defined minority only. Some inmates of Christian monasteries and nunneries have rationalized that homosexual conduct, not constituting marriage and not necessarily extending to intercourse, does not represent a breach of vows. Others hold that monks may experience homosexual feelings, but must not act on them.

Over the centuries many individuals have adopted sexual abstinence either for a given period or for life. This option may reflect aversion to the sexual act ("frigidity"), or a conscious decision to husband energy for the accomplishment of some other goal.

In the twentieth century psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich and his followers regarded frequent heterosexual intercourse as the very definition of mental health. Less extreme, other sex reformers, who seek to free those they counsel from the shackles of puritanical self-denial, seem to imply that the modern individual must fulfill a sort of quota of sexual acts. Faced with such pressures, some individuals react against what they perceive as the tyranny of the cult of the orgasm and choose celibacy. With the development of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, many are adopting celibacy less as a matter of personal preference than as a precaution. Their fears may be exaggerated, but some actually find relief in being excused from participating in the "sex race."

See also Asceticism; Buddhism; Monasticism.

Ward Houser

CELLINI, BENVENUTO (1500–1571)

Florentine sculptor, goldsmith, and memoirist. After early success as a goldsmith, Cellini could virtually write his own ticket as an artist, and he conducted a successful and peripatetic career in a number of places in Italy and France. His autobiography (written in 1558–62, and therefore not covering his last years) gives a highly colored account of the artist's motivation in these wanderings. A fervent admirer of Michelangelo in art, he conspicuously departed from the austerity of his mentor in his swashbuckling life, so that his name has become a byword for the profligacy and extravagance of the Renaissance artist.

Cellini's sculpture *Perseus* (1545–54) was judged worthy of a place of honor in Florence's Loggia dei Lanzi near Michelangelo's superb *David*. In 1540–43 Cellini completed the daunting task for the salt-cellar of Francis I in France. This and other undertakings in that country served to consolidate the mannerist taste of Fontainebleau, with which Cellini was perfectly in tune.

During his later years he chose to reside in Florence, where his relations with grandduke Cosimo I were stormy. Once during a quarrel a rival artist Baccio Bandinelli cried out, "Oh keep quiet you dirty sodomite," an early instance of public labeling. In 1527 he was called before a court for sexual irregularity, but the case appears to have been quashed. In 1557 he was placed under house arrest for sodomy, using the occasion to begin dictating his *Autobiography*, which more than any of his other works has made him famous. Some years later, apparently rehabilitated, he married the mother of some of his illegitimate children. In 1571 Cellini died and was

buried with full honors in the church of the Santissima Annunziata.

One of his most personal works is the marble *Ganymede* of 1545–46 (Florence, Bargello), where the Phrygian youth stands next to the eagle, a manifestation of his abductor, Zeus. In his right hand Ganymede holds a small bird, evidently a love gift from his suitor. Other works heavy with male eroticism are the *Narcissus* and *Apollo and Hyacinth* (both Florence, Bargello).

Heir to the Renaissance tradition of the artist as a special being, exempt from ordinary demands of morality, Cellini nonetheless fell afoul of changing religious currents. The Council of Trent, which began meeting in 1545 during his middle years, was the belweather of this shift. After Cellini Italy saw only one other major artist in this grand homosexual/bisexual tradition, the painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610).

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Wayne R. Dynes

CELTS, ANCIENT

In the first millennium B.C. the Celtic peoples expanded from their original homeland in Central Europe to occupy much of what is now France, the British Isles, and Northern Italy. Although Celtic languages are today confined to small areas in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Brittany, their heritage forms an important substratum of developing European culture, as seen, for example, in the legends of the Arthurian cycle.

In their dynamic period, bodies of Celts also moved eastward, where they encountered the ancient Greeks, who celebrated their warlike character and their attachment to male homosexuality. In his

Politics (II, 9:7–8), Aristotle compares the Spartans unfavorably with the Celts: under the influence of their wives the former have fallen into luxury, while the Celts use their devotion to male love as a shield against such self-indulgence. Athenaeus (XIII, 603a; echoed by Diodorus Siculus and Strabo) says that although the Celts had beautiful women, they much preferred boys. Sometimes, he states, they would sleep on animal skins with a boyfriend on either side. This observation seems to reflect the fact that great warriors had two squires, each with his own horse.

Inasmuch as the ancient Celts were illiterate, we are compelled to rely on the scanty testimony of the Greeks and Romans. The wonderful specimens of Celtic art ("La Tène") found in tombs do not suffice to make up the gap. What is known suggests that homosexuality had an initiatory function among these warriors, not unlike that found among some Greek peoples. Whether all these manifestations derive in turn from a unitary primordial Indo-European institution of initiatory homosexuality, as Bernard Sergent has argued, must be regarded as still unproven.

In the late Roman Republic and the first century of the Empire most of the western Celtic peoples lost their independence—with which their devotion to male love had been linked—and fell under the domination of Rome, with its more ambivalent attitudes to homosexuality. The coming of Christianity finally severed the link with the old homoerotic traditions, although traces of them seem to have survived here and there in imaginative literature. The early Irish penitentials also show that homosexual love continued in the monasteries, while subject to continuing surveillance and repression.

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