

A Critical Enquiry into the Non-Compliance of Clergy Men to their own Preaching: Effect on the Church

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Abstract

This study critically explores the issue of clergy non-compliance with their own preaching and its subsequent impact on the church community. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, interviews, and case studies to investigate the causes, patterns, and consequences of clergy non-compliance across various Christian denominations. Key findings reveal that psychological pressures, societal expectations, and institutional factors significantly contribute to clergy's deviation from their preached doctrines. The impact of such non-compliance is profound, leading to an erosion of trust and credibility in church leadership, declines in church attendance and membership, and severe spiritual and moral consequences for congregants. The study emphasizes the need for stronger accountability mechanisms, ethical training, and transparent communication within the church to address this issue. This journal provides an examination of the non-compliance of clergy to their own preaching and its effect on the church. It includes detailed analyses, survey questions; the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges facing church leadership and offers practical solutions for fostering a culture of accountability and trust within religious communities.

Key words: Critical Enquiry, Non-Compliance, Clergy Men, Preaching, Effect, Church

Introduction

Clergy are entrusted with the spiritual guidance of their congregations, serving as role models and interpreters of religious doctrines. However, when clergy fail to adhere to the teachings they promote, it creates a dissonance that can have profound effects on the church community. This study seeks to explore the causes and consequences of such non-compliance, with a focus on its impact on church members' trust, church attendance, and the broader moral and spiritual health of the congregation. The discrepancy between clergy preaching and their personal conduct is an issue that undermines the authority and credibility of church leadership. This problem is not only damaging to the reputation of individual clergy members but also has far-reaching implications for the trust and spiritual well-being of the congregation. At a point one may begin to think that they church should be closed, so that everyone can live as they like or that some clergy should be retried (who

happen to be the bad eggs) so that the good ones continue. In some cases, the researcher has seen persons who dropped from church because the preacher is seeking sexual attachment with them (females) or he is seen in the wrong places, doing what the street boys do, or that he has embezzled the fund supposedly belonging to the church. The questions here remain: are they supposed to be what they preach or act different from what they preach: these answers are yet to be answered. Looking at what is happening in the congregation today, ranging from the Protestants to the neo-Pentecostals, one would wonder why the church is both loosing numerical, soul and financial strength. Most persons blame the priests and others may have nothing to say. This work finds it relevant to trace how the clerical deviation from their own sermon affects the church negatively.

The Clergy man

Clergy are formal leaders within established religions. Their roles and functions vary in different religious traditions, but usually involve presiding over specific rituals and teaching their religion's doctrines and practices. The word *cleric* comes from the ecclesiastical Latin *Clericus*, for those belonging to the priestly class. In turn, the source of the Latin word is from the Ecclesiastical Greek *Klerikos* (κληρικός), meaning appertaining to an inheritance, in reference to the fact that the Levitical priests of the Old Testament had no inheritance except the Lord "Clergy" is from two Old French words, *clergié* and *clergie*, which refer to those with learning and derive from Medieval Latin *clericatus*, from Late Latin *clericus* (the same word from which "cleric" is derived). "Clerk", which used to mean one ordained to the ministry, also derives from *clericus*. In general, Christian clergy are ordained; that is, they are set apart for specific ministry in religious rites. Others who have definite roles in worship but who are not ordained (e.g. laypeople acting as acolytes) are generally not considered clergy, even though they may require some sort of official approval to exercise these ministries.

Types of clerics are distinguished from offices, even when the latter are commonly or exclusively occupied by clerics. A Roman Catholic cardinal, for instance, is almost without exception a cleric, but a cardinal is not a type of cleric. An archbishop is not a distinct type of cleric, but is simply a bishop who occupies a particular position with special authority. Conversely, a youth minister at a parish may or may not be a cleric. Different churches have different systems of clergy, though churches with similar polity have similar systems.

Anglicanism

In Anglicanism, clergy consist of the orders of deacons, priests (presbyters), and bishops in ascending order of seniority. *Canon*, *archdeacon*, *archbishop* and the like are specific positions within these orders. Bishops are typically overseers, presiding over a diocese composed of many parishes, with an archbishop presiding over a province in

most, which is a group of dioceses. A parish (generally a single church) is looked after by one or more priests, although one priest may be responsible for several parishes. New clergy are first ordained as deacons. Those seeking to become priests are usually ordained to the priesthood around a year later. Since the 1960s some Anglican churches have reinstituted the permanent diaconate, in addition to the transitional diaconate, as a ministry focused on bridges the church and the world, especially ministry to those on the margins of society.

Baptist

The Baptist tradition only recognizes two ordained positions in the church as being the elders (pastors) and deacons as outlined in the third chapter of I Timothy in the Bible.

Catholic Church

Ordained clergy in the Catholic Church are deacons, priests, or bishops belonging to the diaconate, the presbyterate, or the episcopate, respectively. Among bishops, some are metropolitans, archbishops, or patriarchs. The pope is the bishop of Rome, the supreme and universal hierarch of the Church, and his authorization is now required for the ordination of all Roman Catholic bishops. With rare exceptions, cardinals are bishops, although it was not always so; formerly, some cardinals were people who had received clerical tonsure, but not Holy Orders.

Methodism

In the Methodist Churches, candidates for ordination are "licensed" to the ministry for a period of time (typically one to three years) prior to being ordained. This period typically is spent performing the duties of ministry under the guidance, supervision, and evaluation of a more senior, ordained minister. In some denominations, however, licensure is a permanent, rather than a transitional state for ministers assigned to certain specialized ministries, such as music ministry or youth ministry.

Lutheranism

From a religious standpoint there is only one order of clergy in the Lutheran church, namely the office of pastor. Some Lutheran churches, like the state churches of Scandinavia, refer to this office as priest.

However, for practical and historical reasons, Lutheran churches tend to have different roles of pastors or priests, and a clear hierarchy. Some pastors are functioning as deacons or provosts, others as parish priests and yet some as bishops and even archbishops. Lutherans have no principal aversion against having a pope as the leading bishop.

Reformed

The Presbyterian Church (USA) ordains two types of presbyters or elders, teaching (pastor) and ruling (leaders of the congregation which form a council with the pastors). Teaching

elders are seminary trained and ordained as a presbyter and set aside on behalf of the whole denomination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Ordinarily, teaching elders are installed by a presbytery as pastor of a congregation. Ruling elders, after receiving training, may be commissioned by a presbytery to serve as a pastor of a congregation, as well as preach and administer sacraments.

The Pentecostal

In the Pentecostal setting, the Pastor, Reverend and Bishop remain the hierarchy. All still referred to as clergy as well. The congregation listen and follow them as well as other denominations.

Historical Overview of Clergy Preaching

Preaching, as a central element of religious practice, has evolved significantly over the centuries. The history of clergy preaching can be traced back to the early days of Christianity, where the apostles and early church fathers laid the foundation for Christian homiletics.

Early Christian Preaching

In the first century AD, preaching was primarily an apostolic activity. The apostles, including Peter and Paul, traveled extensively, spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ. This form of preaching was informal, often taking place in public squares, homes, or synagogues (Ferguson, 2005). The content of early Christian preaching focused on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the call to repentance and faith (Kelly, 1978).

The Patristic Period

As Christianity began to spread, the role of preaching became more formalized. The patristic period, which spans from the 2nd to the 5th centuries, saw the emergence of notable church fathers such as Augustine of Hippo, John Chrysostom, and Gregory the Great. These figures contributed significantly to the development of Christian homiletics. Augustine, for instance, emphasized the importance of rhetoric in preaching, advocating for sermons that were not only doctrinally sound but also eloquent and persuasive (Green, 1995).

Medieval Preaching

During the medieval period, preaching became a more organized and institutionalized activity within the church. The rise of monasticism and the establishment of universities contributed to the intellectualization of preaching. Scholarly clergy, such as Thomas Aquinas, integrated theology with Aristotelian philosophy, shaping the intellectual content of sermons (Leclercq, 1981). Additionally, the medieval period witnessed the rise of mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, who were known for their

itinerant preaching. These preachers played a crucial role in addressing the spiritual needs of both urban and rural populations (Lawrence, 1984).

The Reformation and Beyond

The Protestant Reformation in the 16th century marked a significant turning point in the history of preaching. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized the authority of Scripture and the importance of preaching in the vernacular, making religious teachings more accessible to the laity (MacCulloch, 2003). The Reformation led to a resurgence in expository preaching, where the focus was on explaining and applying the Bible textually (Old, 1998).

In the post-Reformation period, various Protestant traditions developed their own distinctive preaching styles. Puritan preaching, for example, was characterized by its emphasis on moral and ethical living, while evangelical preaching in the 18th and 19th centuries focused on conversion and personal salvation (Noll, 2002).

Modern Preaching

In the modern era, preaching has continued to evolve, adapting to cultural, social, and technological changes. The rise of mass media in the 20th century, including radio and television, provided new platforms for clergy to reach wider audiences. Figures like Billy Graham became prominent for their ability to connect with large audiences through charismatic and impactful preaching (Aikman, 1991).

Today, preaching remains a central aspect of Christian worship, with clergy using various approaches, from traditional pulpit sermons to contemporary, multimedia-driven messages, to engage and inspire their congregations (Tisdale, 2010).

Today, one could see that the focus of the sermon is either for self lifting, money making, property acquisition or cover an error.

The Role of Clergy in Shaping Church Doctrine

Clergy play a critical role in interpreting and teaching church doctrine, influencing the beliefs and behaviors of their congregants. The effectiveness of their teaching is closely linked to their personal adherence to the principles they advocate:

1. Authority and Leadership: Clergy, including priests, pastors, bishops, and other church leaders, serve as the spiritual guides for their congregations. They are often seen as intermediaries between the congregation and the divine, which grants them significant authority in interpreting and teaching doctrine.

In many denominations, clergy are responsible for interpreting the scriptures and church teachings. Their interpretations often become the foundation for the doctrinal beliefs held by the congregation.

2. Formation and Development of Doctrine: Clergy often receive extensive theological education, which equips them with the knowledge to develop and refine church doctrine. This education helps them understand the historical and biblical contexts of church teachings, which they then adapt to contemporary issues.

In some traditions, especially in Catholicism and Orthodoxy, clergy participate in councils or synods where church doctrine is debated and defined. These gatherings can lead to the formulation of new doctrines or the clarification of existing ones.

3. Preaching and Teaching: Through their sermons, clergy communicate doctrinal teachings to their congregations. These sermons not only explain the doctrine but also apply it to the everyday lives of the faithful, thereby reinforcing its relevance and importance. Clergy often lead catechetical programs, where they teach the fundamentals of the faith to new members, particularly children and converts. This process helps in the transmission and preservation of church doctrine across generations.

4. Pastoral Counseling and Ethical Guidance: Clergy provide guidance on how church doctrine applies to moral and ethical issues. Their role in counseling individuals and families on matters of faith and morality shapes the practical application of doctrine in the lives of believers.

5. Influence in Church Governance: In hierarchical churches like the Catholic Church, bishops and higher clergy play a direct role in defining and enforcing doctrine. The Pope, for example, has the authority to define doctrines that are considered infallible in Catholicism.

In Protestant denominations, clergy often serve on boards or committees that influence doctrinal decisions. Their leadership in these bodies ensures that doctrinal development is consistent with the theological traditions of the denomination.

6. Ecumenical Engagement: Clergy often engage in dialogues with leaders of other denominations and faiths. These discussions can lead to a broader understanding of doctrine and sometimes to its development or refinement in light of new perspectives.

The clergy's participation in ecumenical movements helps to shape doctrines that foster unity among different Christian denominations while respecting doctrinal differences.

7. Response to Cultural and Social Change: Clergy play a key role in how church doctrine responds to and incorporates cultural and social changes. Their leadership helps ensure that

doctrine remains relevant to the lived experiences of the congregation while staying true to the core beliefs of the faith.

Clergy are central to the formation, interpretation, and communication of church doctrine. Their leadership and expertise ensure that doctrinal teachings are faithfully transmitted, while also adapting to the needs and challenges of contemporary society. The balance they maintain between tradition and relevance is crucial to the ongoing life of the church. In any case of deviation from the sermon preached by the same clergy, the result will be discouraging the members' faithful participation.

Non-Compliance Among Clergy: Causes and Patterns

1. Psychological Factors Influencing Clergy Behavior

Clergy often face intense psychological pressures, including the burden of being perceived as moral exemplars. These pressures can lead to cognitive dissonance when their personal behavior deviates from their preaching. This internal conflict can result in non-compliance as clergy struggle to reconcile their actions with their beliefs.

2. Societal Pressures and Expectations

Societal expectations of clergy can also contribute to non-compliance. Clergy are often held to higher moral standards, and the fear of public scrutiny can lead to secretive behavior that contradicts their public preaching. Additionally, societal changes and evolving moral standards can create conflicts between traditional religious teachings and contemporary practices.

3. Institutional Factors within the Church

Institutional factors, such as the hierarchical structure of the church and the lack of accountability mechanisms, can facilitate non-compliance. In some cases, church leadership may be reluctant to discipline clergy for fear of scandal or loss of authority. On the other hand, when the juniors see the seniors do what is not right, because they will not be listened to or given any justice for complaining, they rather resolve to keeping quiet and acting the same way whenever the opportunity appears for them to do so.

4. Normal Human Weakness

For the fact that humans are humans, the pressures of life can cause a change in the life of a clergyman, which, if hidden, can create a pattern of life, by so causing a habitual deviation from preaching.

5. Deliberate Actions

It is believed by people that some clergy were not called by God, though no one has the ability to prove this, but the action of some clergy being deliberately and intentionally evil, such as seen in churches today where the superior will promise to deal with the junior and finally make sure they harm his days of service, or as seen in most churches, where the senior clergy in some cases plot and deal with a set of persons, leaving in the wounds of what they may never discover, all these are deliberate and intentional evils seen in the church today.

6. Patterns of Non-Compliance Across Different Denominations

The study found that patterns of non-compliance vary across denominations. For example, more hierarchical denominations with centralized authority structures tend to have more instances of non-compliance, possibly due to the lack of checks and balances. In contrast, denominations with more decentralized structures may experience less non-compliance due to greater accountability.

Impact of Clergy Non-Compliance on the Church

Erosion of Trust and Credibility

Non-compliance among clergy leads to a significant erosion of trust and credibility within the church. Congregants who perceive their clergy as hypocritical are less likely to trust their teachings, which can weaken the overall authority of the church. This erosion of trust is particularly damaging in cases where clergy are found to engage in behaviors that directly contradict their preaching.

Effect on Church Attendance and Membership

The study found a strong correlation between clergy non-compliance and declining church attendance and membership. Congregants who lose trust in their clergy are more likely to disengage from church activities and, in some cases, leave the church altogether. Table 1 illustrates the relationship between perceived clergy integrity and church attendance.

Spiritual and Moral Consequences

The spiritual and moral consequences of clergy non-compliance are profound. Congregants who feel betrayed by their clergy may experience a crisis of faith, leading to spiritual disillusionment and moral confusion. This can result in a weakened commitment to the church and its teachings.

Responses from Church Leadership and Congregants

Responses to clergy non-compliance vary, with some church leaders taking decisive action to address the issue, while others may downplay or ignore it. Congregants' responses also

vary, with some choosing to confront the issue directly, while others may disengage from the church.

Challenges and Opportunities for Addressing Non-Compliance

Challenges in Holding Clergy Accountable

Holding clergy accountable for their actions is challenging due to the hierarchical nature of many religious institutions and the potential for scandal. Additionally, the close relationships between clergy and their congregants can make it difficult to address issues of non-compliance.

Opportunities for Reform and Improvement

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for reform. Implementing stronger accountability mechanisms, such as independent oversight bodies and clearer ethical guidelines, can help address the issue of clergy non-compliance. Additionally, promoting transparency and open communication within the church can help rebuild trust and credibility.

Strategies for Promoting Integrity and Compliance

Strategies for promoting integrity among clergy include providing ongoing ethical training, fostering a culture of accountability, and encouraging clergy to seek support when facing personal or professional challenges. These strategies can help ensure that clergy adhere to the teachings they promote and maintain the trust of their congregants.

Conclusion

This study has identified several key factors contributing to clergy non-compliance, including psychological pressures, societal expectations, and institutional factors. The impact of non-compliance on the church is significant, leading to an erosion of trust, declining attendance and membership, and serious spiritual and moral consequences.

The non-compliance of clergymen to their own preaching represents a significant issue within the church, impacting both the credibility of the clergy and the spiritual health of the congregation. Through a critical enquiry into this issue, several key conclusions are drawn:

Erosion of Trust and Credibility: When clergymen fail to live according to the principles they preach, it leads to an erosion of trust among congregants. This inconsistency can cause followers to question the sincerity and authenticity of their leaders, thereby diminishing the overall credibility of the church. Trust is a foundational element in any religious community, and its loss can lead to disengagement and skepticism.

Spiritual Disillusionment: The gap between preaching and practice can cause spiritual disillusionment among church members. Many believers look up to clergy as moral and spiritual guides. When these leaders do not exemplify the teachings they advocate, it can lead to confusion, disappointment, and even a crisis of faith for some individuals. This disillusionment can weaken the church's ability to nurture the spiritual growth of its members.

Negative Impact on Evangelism: Non-compliance by clergy can negatively affect the church's evangelistic efforts. Hypocrisy or perceived hypocrisy can be a significant deterrent to potential converts. People outside the church may view such behavior as evidence that the church lacks genuine integrity or transformative power. This can hinder the church's mission to spread its message and attract new members.

Internal Division and Conflict: When church leaders do not adhere to their own teachings, it can lead to internal division and conflict within the congregation. Members may become polarized, with some defending the clergy and others calling for accountability. Such divisions can weaken the unity of the church, creating a hostile environment that is counterproductive to the church's mission.

Moral and Ethical Standards: Clergymen are often seen as upholders of high moral and ethical standards. Their failure to comply with their own teachings sets a poor example, potentially lowering the moral and ethical expectations within the congregation. If leaders do not model the behaviors they preach, it becomes challenging for the church to maintain high standards of conduct among its members.

Recommendations

To address the issue of non-compliance by clergy, the following steps are recommended:

- i. **Accountability Structures:** Churches should implement strong accountability structures to ensure that clergymen adhere to the teachings they promote. This could include oversight committees, regular evaluations, and transparent disciplinary processes.
- ii. **Continuous Personal Development:** Clergymen should be encouraged to engage in continuous personal and spiritual development. This includes regular reflection, counseling, and spiritual retreats to align their personal lives with their preaching.
- iii. **Open Communication:** Churches should foster an environment of open communication where congregants feel safe to express concerns about clergy behavior without fear of retribution. This openness can help address issues before they escalate.

- iv. Role Modeling and Mentorship: Senior clergy members should serve as role models and mentors for younger or less experienced clergy, demonstrating how to live out the teachings of the church in daily life.
- v. Community Involvement: Encouraging clergy to be actively involved in the community and accountable to their congregants can help bridge the gap between preaching and practice. Engaging with the community allows clergy to better understand the real-world implications of their teachings and to model appropriate behavior.

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