

## ***THE ELEPHANT IN OUR CHURCH SANCTUARIES***

*By Rev. Royal Hamel*

George Orwell once wrote that he lived in an age when stating the obvious was the first duty of intelligent men. I believe that activists and lay people are rising up and carrying out prophetic work in the culture because pastors and priests by and large are not carrying out a prophetic calling in their pulpits. I speak as a former pastor and my critique includes my own years of pulpit ministry.

Who will doubt, for instance, that we live in a sex-saturated society? Hollywood, TV, books, magazines, music videos, and advertising have been spewing out a gospel of unrestrained sexual indulgence for decades. Pre-marital sex has practically become the norm among adolescents, abortions have risen dramatically as a result, and homosexuality is not only tolerated, but is quickly becoming “normal” as an accepted cultural lifestyle. And now certain academics are beginning to defend the acceptability of inter-generational sex (pedophilia). And nobody questions that Christians, too, are influenced negatively by these immoral “norms”. *Nevertheless, in the face of rampant anti-moral trends, it is my observation that pastors and priests, rarely, if ever touch on issues of sexual morality from the pulpit.*

In fact people have lamented to me that they do not know of a single clergyman who has the courage to address moral issues in his preaching. Now to be fair, such men are not totally lacking, but their number is far from legion. My own brother who regularly attends mass made the following comment, “Most sermons are so watered down, and so tailored to offend absolutely nobody, that at the end there is little substance left to help anybody”.

Why do pastors and priests avoid addressing moral concerns? Perhaps it’s a bit like the proverbial elephant in the living room; everybody knows he’s there, but few have the courage to lead him out. *And yes, at the risk of being simplistic, I believe the elephant in the church sanctuaries must be met by the courage of the ministers. Shepherds must preach with great clarity and boldness on sexual immorality, adultery, homosexuality, abortion, and the beauty of God’s good gift of sex.* Believers will be strengthened by truthful biblical content, be encouraged to embrace its hope for daily life, and be better equipped to parent their children. Thousands will escape the snares of sexual immorality with its attendant diseases and heartbreak, marriages will endure, giving children a refuge in which to be nurtured, and Christians will have truthful, accurate answers for their friends and neighbors. Lastly, and of great importance clergymen, of all stripes will escape the charge of being unfaithful watchmen with blood on their hands (Ezekiel 33).

Thirty years ago Francis Shaeffer saw Europe as an arid, decaying culture, virtually bereft of Christian truth and morality. He warned that this situation was coming to North America as well. He called the church to biblical fidelity as the only possible preventative to what had happened in Europe. Tragically, I think his call went largely unheeded.

Does the culture need aggressive activists in our day and age? Perhaps it does. But the far greater need is for prophets to take their place in the pulpit. Every sincere Christian should encourage, support, and pray for bold proclamation from their minister. *For we must have bold pastors and priests who fearlessly, relevantly, and lovingly give all of God’s word to a needy people who will in their turn be salt and light to our darkening culture*

Frankly, we don’t have much time. Night is coming.