

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD & PRIESTLY CELIBACY

“And history shows too plainly that the [Catholic] Church in their sense of the term, has varied in its doctrine, taught dogmas at various places at the same time, inconsistent with each other, and therefore to a considerable extent erroneous.”

– George M. Searle, *Plain Facts*, p. 34.³³⁵

WHAT THEY TEACH CONCERNING THE PRIESTHOOD:

That only a select few can be priests.

That their priesthood is like the OT priesthood.

That priests act as mediators between God and men.

That one must confess sins to a priest to obtain absolution.

That priests must be celibate.

Classes of priests: Religious priests & secular priests.

CATHOLIC TEACHINGS CONCERNING THE PRIESTHOOD:

A. The Roman Catholic Church says only a select few can be priests.

Not all Catholics go to seminaries to train for the priesthood, therefore not all Catholics can be priests. Since the Catholic Church claims to be the Church of Christ, and since they say that not all their members can become priests, in effect they are saying that not all in the group are priests.

REFUTATION:

(1) The Catholic Bible teaches that all Christians are priests³³⁶ (“a holy priesthood,” 1 Peter 2:5;³³⁷ “a royal priesthood,” 1 Peter 2:9³³⁸). This is in contrast to the Old Testament system of having a select group of priests from the lineage of Aaron.

(2) Christ has “made us as kings and priests unto God and his Father” (Revelation 1:5-6). Literally, “And made us a kingdom, priests to God and Father of him” (Revelation 1:6); “And has made us unto our God a kingdom and priests” (Revelation 5:10).³³⁹

³³⁵ George M. Searle, *Plain Facts*, p. 34. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, *Catholicism Against Itself*, 1:58.

³³⁶ Gr. *hierateuma*, “denotes a priesthood (akin to *hierateuo*...), a body of priests, consisting of all believers, the whole Church (not a special order among them), called “holy priesthood,” 1 Peter 2:5; “a royal priesthood,” 1 Peter 2:9. (W. E. Vine, p. 212).

³³⁷ 1 Peter 2:5, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (KJV). The term holy priesthood “is associated with offering spiritual sacrifices” (W. E. Vine, p. 212).

³³⁸ 1 Peter 2:9, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (KJV). The term royal priesthood is associated “with royal dignity of showing forth the Lord’s excellencies” (W. E. Vine, p. 212).

(3) “The words ‘priests,’ ‘priesthood,’ (*hiereus, hierateuma*) are never applied in the New Testament to the office of the Christian ministry. All Christians are said to be priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Apoc. 5:10),” says the *Catholic Dictionary*.³⁴⁰ To this Bertrand L. Conway also agrees: “It is true that St. Peter (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) and St. John (Apoc. 1:6) call Christians priests.”³⁴¹

(4) The concept that the “parish priests were of divine institution,” being “the successors of the disciples of Christ,” is “now a universally rejected opinion,” according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.³⁴²

(5) The *Catholic Encyclopedia* also says that there was no parish system in the Bible,³⁴³ and that the Catholic “priesthood [just] evolved.”³⁴⁴

B. The Roman Catholic Church says their priesthood is just like the Old Testament priesthood, only much better.

(1) Consider, for example, the vestments of their priests: Roman Catholic ecclesiastical vestments are generally divided into three classes: (a) Those worn by the various celebrants of the mass, called mass vestments³⁴⁵; (b) Those worn by bishops and other members of the higher clergy, called episcopal vestments³⁴⁶; and (c) general vestments.³⁴⁷ “The regulations governing the use of vestments by the Roman Catholic clergy are set

³³⁹ See Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. To this literal rendition, the ASV and the Douay-Rheims Version are in agreement.

³⁴⁰ *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 692; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:60.

³⁴¹ Bertrand L. Conway, *The Question Box* (New York: The Columbus Press, 1913), p. 305.

³⁴² *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 7:324.

³⁴³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3:575

³⁴⁴ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 12:406, 415; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:61.

³⁴⁵ “The chasuble, a long, sleeveless, mantle-like garment is the principal outer vestment worn by the priest at the Mass. Draped around the priest's neck under the chasuble is a narrow embroidered band called the stole. Both the chasuble and the stole are coloured, either white, red, green, violet, or rose, depending on the season of the Church calendar or the feast or occasion being commemorated.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Ecclesiastical Vestments”).

³⁴⁶ “The full vestments of a bishop when at the altar include, over a long purple or black cassock, the alb, cincture, stole, and chasuble; the dalmatic may also be worn. On his head he wears the mitre, a high, tongue-shaped cap, terminating in a twofold point. In his hand he carries the pastoral staff, or crozier. Resembling a shepherd's crook, the crozier is presented to the bishop at his consecration as a symbol of the authority he is to exercise over his flock.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Ecclesiastical Vestments”).

³⁴⁷ “The most important general vestment is the cope, a wide cloak of silk or other material reaching nearly to the feet; the cope is fastened in front by a clasp called the morse and has a semicircular hood at the back. The humeral veil, an oblong scarf, is used with the cope during special ceremonies; it is worn around the shoulders, and the front ends are draped over the paten, pyx, or monstrance held in the priest's hands. The surplice is a garment of linen worn by all clerics and assistants in choir and priests administering the sacraments. Under all the other vestments is worn the cassock, a close-fitting garment reaching to the feet. The colour varies, being black for a priest, purple for a bishop, and red for a cardinal; the pope alone wears a white cassock.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Ecclesiastical Vestments”).

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forth in the general rubrics,³⁴⁸ precepts for the guidance of the priest in carrying out the sacred rites found principally in the missal, the prayer book for the Mass.”³⁴⁹

(2) “During the first four or five centuries the dress of clerics did not differ from that of the laity either in form or color, but only, if at all in modesty and simplicity.”³⁵⁰

(3) The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says, “At the same time it seems probable enough that certain features of Christian [i.e. Roman Catholic] ceremonials were directly borrowed from Roman secular usages... But granting... a certain amount of direct borrowing of pagan usages, this is no subject of reproach to the Catholic Church... Of such pagan rites laudibly adopted for the service of the Christian religion we have many examples...”³⁵¹

(4) “We need not shrink from admitting that candles, like incense and lustral water, were commonly employed in pagan worship and the rites paid to the dead. But the Church from a very early period took them into her service... We must not forget that most of these adjuncts to worship, like music, lights, perfumes, ablutions, floral decorations, canopies, fans, screens, bells, vestments, etc. were not identified with any idolatrous cult in particular but they were common to almost all cults.”³⁵²

REFUTATION:

(1) If the Roman Catholic priesthood is just like the Old Testament priesthood, then it must be changed, because the Old Testament priesthood was changed (Hebrews 7:11-12).

(2) The New Covenant system of Jesus is “better” than the Old Covenant system (Hebrews 7:22; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 7:19). If the Catholic priesthood follows the Old Testament system, then it cannot claim to be “much better.”

(3) Only Christ Jesus, not the Roman Catholic Church, can claim a better priesthood, for some reasons:

(a) Christ’s priesthood is forever (Hebrews 7:17).

(b) He continues forever, and his priesthood is unchangeable (Hebrews 7:24).

(c) He can save to the uttermost, since he lives forever to intercede for His people (Hebrews 7:25).

(d) His priesthood is not defiled by human infirmities (Hebrews 7:26-28).

(e) He has offered a better sacrifice, which is himself (Hebrews 10:10-14).

³⁴⁸ These are “a set of printed rules or instructions, for example the rules governing how Christian services are to be conducted, often printed in red in a prayer book.” (Microsoft Encarta Dictionary, art. “Rubrics”).

³⁴⁹ MEPS 2005, art. “Ecclesiastical Vestments.”

³⁵⁰ *General Legislation in the New Code*, p. 290; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:65.

³⁵¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 9:246, 247.

³⁵² *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3:246; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:66.

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- (f) Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 12:24).
- (4) They admit that the dress of their priests is a later invention: “During the first four or five centuries the dress of clerics did not differ from that of the laity either in form or color, but only, if at all in modesty and simplicity.”³⁵³
- (5) “The early Romans wore a shirtlike tunica and the characteristic garment of Rome, the toga, which persisted as formal and ceremonial dress throughout the Republic and until the end of the Western Roman Empire... The toga dwindled in size and finally became a band of cloth—the stola, or stole. The tunica survived in varied forms and with increasing ornamentation and, like the stole, survives (as the dalmatic) in Christian church vestments.”³⁵⁴
- (6) They admit that their ceremonials were of pagan origin. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says, “At the same time it seems probable enough that certain features of Christian [i.e. Roman Catholic] ceremonials were directly borrowed from Roman secular usages... But granting... a certain amount of direct borrowing of pagan usages, this is no subject of reproach to the Catholic Church... Of such pagan rites laudibly adopted for the service of the Christian religion we have many examples...”³⁵⁵
- (7) These things they borrowed were common to all cults: “We need not shrink from admitting that candles, like incense and lustral water, were commonly employed in pagan worship and the rites paid to the dead. But the Church from a very early period took them into her service... We must not forget that most of these adjuncts to worship, like music, lights, perfumes, ablutions, floral decorations, canopies, fans, screens, bells, vestments, etc. were not identified with any idolatrous cult in particular but they were common to almost all cults.”³⁵⁶
- (8) Its incense and holy water are pagan in origin. “The use of holy water and incense (the latter originally used as a sort of disinfectant) was also no doubt suggested by the similar customs of pagans around them.”³⁵⁷
- (9) The *Externals of the Catholic Church* says, “Some parts of the governmental system of the Catholic Church are of divine origin, and many of them are human institutions.”³⁵⁸
- (10) “The priesthood evolved,” so says the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.³⁵⁹ “The term ‘clergy’ gradually assumed a technical and restricted sense,” says the *Catholic Dictionary*.³⁶⁰ And after several centuries they have “new use of the word ‘Father’.”³⁶¹

³⁵³ *General Legislation in the New Code*, p. 290; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:65.

³⁵⁴ MEPS 2005, art. “Clothing.”

³⁵⁵ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 9:246, 247.

³⁵⁶ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3:246; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:66.

³⁵⁷ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3:76; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:67.

³⁵⁸ *Externals of the Catholic Church*, p. 19; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:61.

³⁵⁹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 12:406, 415; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:61.

C. They claim that the priests act as mediators between God and men.

(1) The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent says: “*The priest is the man of God, the minister of God... He that despiseth the priest despiseth God; he that hears him hears God. The priest remits sin as God, and that which he calls his body at the altar is adored as God by himself and by the congregation... It is clear that their function is such that none greater can be conceived. Wherefore they are justly called not only angels, but also God, holding as they do among us the power and the authority of the immortal God.*”³⁶²

(2) “In the Roman Catholic [Church], the priest is a member of the sacerdotal ministry. The priest has the power to celebrate Mass and to administer the sacraments, except holy orders (reserved for the bishop), matrimony (administered to one another by the couple and witnessed by the priest), and... confirmation (usually performed by a bishop)... Most Protestant Churches...believe in the universal priesthood of all believers and do not recognize the need for a mediator between themselves and God.”³⁶³

(3) “Protestant denominations have an ordained ministry. Whereas the Roman Catholic priest is seen as a mediator of God's grace through his administration of the sacraments, the Protestant minister is regarded as one of the laity who has been trained to perform certain church functions (such as preaching and administering the sacraments).”³⁶⁴

(4) Says Alphonsus Liguori in his book *Spouse of Christ*:

(a) “God deigns prelates his own equals.”³⁶⁵ “If, then, you receive a command of one who holds the place of God, you should observe it with the same diligence as if it came from God himself.”³⁶⁶

(b) “Though a confessor should by chance make a mistake, the penitent in obeying him is secure and does not err.”³⁶⁷

(c) “Obey blindly, that is, without asking reasons. Be careful, then, never to examine the directions of your confessor... In a word, keep before your eyes this great rule, that in obeying your confessor you obey God. Force yourself then to obey him in spite of all fears. And be persuaded that if you are not obedient to him it will be impossible for you to go on well; but if you obey him you are secure. But you say, if I am damned in

³⁶⁰ *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 189; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:61.

³⁶¹ *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 342; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:61.

³⁶² See H. J. Schroeder, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (London: B. Herder Book Co., 1950). Quoted by Boettner, p. 51.

³⁶³ MEPS 2005, art. “Priest.”

³⁶⁴ MEPS 2005, art. “Protestantism.”

³⁶⁵ Alphonsus Liguori, *Spouse of Christ*, p. 161; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:30.

³⁶⁶ Alphonsus Liguori, *Spouse of Christ*, p. 161; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:30.

³⁶⁷ Alphonsus Liguori, *Spouse of Christ*, p. 552; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:30.

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consequence of obeying my confessor, who will rescue me from hell? What you say is impossible.”³⁶⁸

(5) “Priesthood confers the power to consecrate the body and blood of Christ, to forgive sins and give the sacrament of extreme unction. The episcopate gives power to ordain and confirm.”³⁶⁹

REFUTATION:

(1) The Bible teaches that there is one mediator³⁷⁰ between God and men, the man Christ Jesus himself (1 Timothy 2:5³⁷¹). As the God-chosen mediator, He does the following:

- (a) He becomes the conciliator (Romans 5:10).
- (b) He satisfies the demands of a righteous God and the needs of an unrighteous man (Hebrews 9:14).
- (c) He erases the enmity between God and men (Ephesians 2:15-16).
- (d) He secures our salvation by His blood (Revelation 1:5; Revelation 5:9; 1 John 1:7).
- (e) He tears down the middle wall that separates races (Ephesians 2:14³⁷²).
- (f) He guarantees that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him until the judgment day (2 Timothy 1:12).

(2) We now have a direct access to God through prayers (cf. Matthew 7:7; John 16:23; Acts 2:21). Christians as priests today offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5), which include the following:

- (a) The sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15);

³⁶⁸ Alphonsus Liguori, *Spouse of Christ*, p. 554; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:30.

³⁶⁹ *The Catholic Picture Dictionary*, pp. 66, 67

³⁷⁰ Mediator, Gr. *mesites*, “mediator, arbitrator, one who mediates between two parties to remove a disagreement or reach a common goal” (BAGD). **mesites*, mediator, is a Hellenistic word formation, derived from adjective *mesos*, “middle.” “Hence *mesites* means one who finds himself between two bodies or parties.” In classical Greek *mesos* has become a legal term with the meaning of the neutral place between two parties in conflict, occupied by the arbitrator who seeks to judge and settle. “At first there was the ceremonial of coming between the two parties, and this is the origin of the later concept of the mediator stepping in as a neutral third party. This gave *mesites* in legal terminology a wide range of meaning”: (a) “He could be the conciliator or arbitrator in cases that had not yet come before a court of law, so as to prevent this happening”; (b) “He could be the administrator or trustee for something in dispute”; (c) “He was also the witness to legal business that had been settled with the responsibility of guaranteeing that the decision would be carried out”; (d) “He could be a pawnbroker and sometimes a guarantor... who guarantees the liabilities of another with his own property” (Colin Brown, 1:372, 373).

³⁷¹ 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus” (The Holy Bible, New Catholic Edition).

³⁷² Ephesians 2:14, “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (KJV).

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(b) Sacrifice of our substance to support God's work (Hebrews 13:16);

(c) Our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

(3) "Never in the New Testament is a priest interposed between the sinner and the Saviour; that vast machinery of medieval superstition which is well described by the word 'sacerdotalism' is utterly unknown to the New Testament."³⁷³

(4) The *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* calls the priest "God."³⁷⁴ On the contrary, the Bible teaches that the person who sits in God's stead, arrogating to himself the power and authority that belong to God alone, is the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).³⁷⁵

(5) Catholicism teaches blind obedience. The Bible says, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

D. One must confess his/her sins to the priest to obtain absolution.

(1) Confession, in [Catholic] theology, is the "acknowledgement of sins to God in order to obtain absolution."³⁷⁶

(2) Absolution is "most often used to refer to the act in the sacrament of penance, by which the priest, as the minister of God, grants to confessing penitents forgiveness of their sins. In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the practice is based on John 20:22-23. To be effective, absolution supposes a true contrition for sin and a firm purpose of amendment on the part of the penitent...Although the term "absolution" is confined to Christian theology, the practice of penitently beseeching a deity's forgiveness for individual offences is common to almost all religions."³⁷⁷

(3) "In the [Catholic] tradition, confession has taken either of two forms: the private confession of sins to a priest, known as auricular confession, or the public confession by an individual before the congregation. In Roman Catholic teaching, auricular confession is

³⁷³ Samuel Smith, *The Claims of Rome*, p. 2.

³⁷⁴ "The priest is the man of God, the minister of God... He that despiseth the priest despiseth God; he that hears him hears God. The priest remits sin as God... It is clear that their function is such that none greater can be conceived. Wherefore they are justly called not only angels, but also God, holding as they do among us the power and the authority of the immortal God." (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, H. J. Schroeder, trans. [London: B. Herder Book Co., 1960]. Quoted by Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 51.

³⁷⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (KJV).

³⁷⁶ MEPS 2005, art. "Confession."

³⁷⁷ MEPS 2005, art. "Absolution." "It is a "Latin word which means to free from. It is the remission of sin, or the punishment due to sin, which the priest gives when administering the sacrament of Penance." (*The Catholic Picture Dictionary*, p. 11).

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considered an essential part of the sacrament of penance. Church members are expected to confess their serious sins to a priest at least once a year.”³⁷⁸

(4) “The practice of confession and absolution is based on John 20:22-23. The power to loose and bind, that is, to forgive sins, was conferred on the apostles (see Matthew 16:19, 18:18).”³⁷⁹

(5) “Although confessing to a priest has ancient roots, the practice was rare in the early Church (it was sometimes put off until death approached) and involved severe discipline.”³⁸⁰

(6) “The seal of confession refers to the obligation binding the confessor (priest), interpreter, or bystander who overhears the confession not to divulge the secrets of the confessional. This custom of secrecy is traceable to the 4th and 5th centuries, but was only made canonically binding by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.”³⁸¹

(7) “The sacrament of penance, also referred to as the sacrament of reconciliation, is a rite undertaken for the remission of sins committed after baptism. The sacrament, which involves certain acts of a penitent and the absolution of a priest, is believed to have been divinely instituted (see Matthew 16:19, 18:18; John 20:22-23). The acts of the penitent include contrition (deep, sincere sorrow for sin), confession of serious sins to a priest when possible, and the sacramental penance, or satisfaction (prayers or works to be performed by the penitent in reparation for the sins committed)... Although penance has ancient roots, it was not used as frequently in the early Church as it is today and involved severe discipline.”³⁸²

(8) “Priesthood confers the power to consecrate the body and blood of Christ, to forgive sins and give the sacrament of extreme unction. The episcopate gives power to ordain and confirm.”³⁸³

REFUTATION:

(1) We confess our sins to one another, and pray for one another (James 5:16). Romanism is wrong because I alone confess while the priest alone prays!

(2) It is admitted that “auricular confession” [that is, the practice of confessing sins to a priest] was rare in the early Church.”³⁸⁴ Let me further say, it was not even practiced in the early Church. There is no command for it; there is no example that it was done; and the practice is not even implied in the New Testament.

³⁷⁸ MEPS 2005, art. “Confession.”

³⁷⁹ MEPS 2005, art. “Confession.”

³⁸⁰ MEPS 2005, art. “Confession.”

³⁸¹ MEPS 2005, art. “Confession.”

³⁸² MEPS 2005, art. “Penance.”

³⁸³ *The Catholic Picture Dictionary*, pp. 66, 67

³⁸⁴ MEPS 2005, art. “Confession.”

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(3) The Bible teaches that only God can remit or forgive sins (Daniel 9:9; Mark 2:5-7). The Bible also teaches that the Lord also gave the apostles the power to remit sins (John 20:22-23),³⁸⁵ and on the day of Pentecost, they exercised this power (Acts 2:38). The big question, however, is: Did the Lord also give this power to the Catholic priest?

(4) The Bible teaches that sinner must truly repent, otherwise there won't be any forgiveness (Luke 13:3; Acts 8:22). True repentance involves genuine sorrow for sin (Acts 8:22), is directed toward God (Acts 17:30); is shown by confessing one's fault to one another (James 5:16), and by truly forsaking sin (cf. 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-9).

(5) We need no earthly priest patterned after Catholicism; we are the priests, hence we can come boldly before God's presence (Hebrews 10:19).

(6) As Christian priests we now have a direct access to God through prayers (cf. Matthew 7:7; John 16:23; Acts 2:21).

(7) Even Simon the backslider was told to pray to God for himself (Acts 8:22), although he chose that someone pray for him (v. 24).

(8) The person who sits in God's stead, arrogating to himself the power and authority that belongs to God alone, is the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4³⁸⁶).

E. That all who perform the office of the priesthood must remain celibate.

(1) By celibacy is meant the sectarian requirement of the Roman Catholic church that its priests, monks and nuns abstain from marriage. "Celibacy [is] the state of being unmarried, with abstinence from sexual activity."³⁸⁷

(2) "In the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy is a prerequisite of ordination, though already-married clerics of other Christian denominations who convert to Roman Catholicism may become married priests. Celibacy has never been a requirement for ordination in the Eastern or Protestant Churches, and the early Church treated marriage as the norm for all Christians (see 1 Timothy 4:3). There seem to be three major considerations in favour of clerical celibacy: the ancient idea that sexual intercourse defiles the individual (Leviticus 15); the claim that the partisan ties of marriage may give rise to

³⁸⁵ Catholics admit that "the power to loose and bind, that is, to forgive sins, was conferred on the apostles (see Matthew 16:19, 18:18)." (MEPS 2005, art. "Confession").

³⁸⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (KJV).

³⁸⁷ "Considered a form of asceticism, it has been practised in many religious traditions: in ancient Judaism, by the Essenes; and in Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, by the members of monastic groups." (MEPS 2005, art. "Celibacy").

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conflicts of interest (1 Corinthians 7:32); and the notion that devotion to the deity ought to override all earthly attachments (Mark 10:29).”³⁸⁸

(3) “In the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy is required of all clergy in the Latin Rite. The Church holds that this practice is sanctioned, although not required, by the New Testament, basing this claim upon what it avers to have been the constant tradition of the Church and upon several biblical texts (notably, 1 Corinthians 7:6-7, 25; Matthew 19:12). The principles upon which the law of celibacy is founded are (1) that the clergy may serve God with more freedom and with undivided heart; (2) that, being called to serve Jesus Christ, they may embrace the holier life of self-restraint. This statement does not imply, it is said, that matrimony is not a holy state, but simply that celibacy is a state of greater perfection.”³⁸⁹

(4) Celibacy is not to be confused with the vow of chastity, which means abstention from sexual relations. According to the Catholic Canon law, the vow of celibacy is broken if the priest marries, but not if he engages in sexual relations. Pardon for having had sexual relations and violating the vow of celibacy can be had by confession to any fellow-priest. Absolution for any priest who marries can be obtained only from the pope, with the accompanying severe penalties.

(5) How did the doctrine of celibacy originate in the Roman Catholic Church?

(a) First, the Council of Elvira (305 A.D.) enacted decrees against the marriage of the clergy. (This admits that at first the Catholic priests were married!). The decrees however were of a limited extent and there was no attempt to enforce them.

(b) Hildebrand, otherwise known as Gregory VII, again decreed that the priests must be celibate. This was in 1079 AD.

(c) The popes that followed, such as Urban II (1088-1099) and Calixtus (1119-1124) made a determined fight against bishops and priests who had concubines.

(d) In 1223, the first Lateran Council declared that the marriage of all priests in sacred orders were invalid, in effect making them all “unmarried.”

(e) Then, the Council of Trent in 1545 made the following stricter pronouncement concerning celibacy of the clergy: (1) That a priest who marries would be excommunicated; (2) That a married priest is debarred from all priestly functions; (3) That a married man who desires to be a priest is required to leave his wife; or (4) His wife is also required to take the vow of chastity, otherwise the husband would not be ordained. (5) That anyone who teaches that the conjugal state is more preferable to a life of celibacy shall be accursed.

³⁸⁸ MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

³⁸⁹ MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

REFUTATION:

(1) Marriage is the first institution God established. It antedated the church by thousands of years. God said, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18), for which reason He gave him a wife.

(2) Historically, celibacy had its roots in the Gnostic and Manichaeism heresies³⁹⁰ of the second and third centuries which taught (a) that matter is inherently evil, (b) that salvation consists in resisting and overcoming the desires of the flesh, and (c) that adherents had to engage in monastic life in order to resist and overcome these desires.³⁹¹

(3) The Roman Catholic church admits that priestly celibacy has no doctrinal bearing, meaning it is not important at all whether one is celibate or not. “Having no doctrinal bearing in the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy is regarded as a purely disciplinary law. A dispensation from the obligation of celibacy has occasionally been granted to ecclesiastics under exceptional circumstances, for instance, to provide an heir for a noble family in danger of extinction.”³⁹² But their so-called “disciplinary law” is a purely human law, not a law of God.

(4) They hold that celibacy is not required. “The Church holds that this practice is sanctioned, although not required, by the New Testament, basing this claim upon what it avers to have been the constant tradition of the Church and upon several biblical texts (notably, 1 Corinthians 7:6-7, 25; Matthew 19:12).”³⁹³ And yet it is required! “In the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy is a prerequisite of ordination.”³⁹⁴ George M. Searle says, “And history shows too plainly that the [Catholic] Church in their sense of the term, has varied in its doctrine, taught dogmas at various places at the same time, inconsistent with each other, and therefore to a considerable extent erroneous.”³⁹⁵

³⁹⁰ Gnostics taught they had the “secret knowledge of the divine realm.” “Sparks or seeds of the Divine Being fell from this transcendent realm into the material universe, which is wholly evil, and were imprisoned in human bodies.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Gnosticism”). “The fundamental doctrine of Manichaeism is its dualistic division of the universe into contending realms of good and evil: the realm of Light (spirit), ruled by God, and the realm of Darkness (matter), ruled by Satan. Originally, the two realms were entirely separate, but in a primal catastrophe the realm of Darkness invaded the realm of Light, and the two became mixed and engaged in a perpetual struggle. The human race is a result and a microcosm of this struggle. The human body is material, therefore evil.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Manichaeism”).

³⁹¹ “The earliest form of Christian monasticism was, probably, that of the anchorites or hermits; a later development is found in the pillar saints, called Stylites, who spent most of their time on the tops of pillars in order to separate themselves from the world and to mortify the flesh. After a time, however, the necessities of the religious life itself led to modifications. In order to combine the personal seclusion of individuals with the common exercise of religious duties, the early hermits had an aggregation of separate cells called *laura*, to which they could retire after their communal duties had been discharged.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Monasticism”).

³⁹² MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

³⁹³ MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

³⁹⁴ MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

³⁹⁵ George M. Searle, *Plain Facts*, p. 34. Quoted by O. C. Lambert, *Catholicism Against Itself*, 1:58.

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(5) They hold that celibacy is a state of greater perfection. “This statement [about priestly celibacy] does not imply, it is said, that matrimony is not a holy state, but simply that celibacy is a state of greater perfection.”³⁹⁶ Yet they have no textual evidence to support this contention..

(6) The Roman Catholic Church also admits in their Bible that “priestly celibacy as a law is of later ecclesiastical institution.”³⁹⁷ In other words, their law of priestly celibacy was of late origin, and that it was a law instituted by their church.

(7) One the major considerations that give rise to clerical celibacy is “the ancient idea that sexual intercourse defiles the individual (Leviticus 15).”³⁹⁸ Nowhere is this taught in the Bible.

(8) Catholics admit their doctrine of priestly celibacy remains a much disputed ecclesiastical question. “The history of priestly celibacy has been a stormy one since it became law for the clergy of the Latin Rite in the 6th century. Although Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical of June 24, 1967, reaffirmed the traditional position, the requirement of priestly celibacy remains a much-disputed ecclesiastical question.”³⁹⁹ It will remain so as long as errors prevail in the world (and priestly celibacy is an error condemned by Paul).

(9) An appeal to Peter as their so-called “first pope” won’t help their case, for Peter was married (Matthew 8:14; Luke 4:38). At the time Paul wrote the 1 Corinthians, Peter was going around with his wife (1 Corinthians 9:5). Peter was an elder or bishop; Paul says the bishop must be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2).

(10) The Spirit speaks expressly concerning the doctrines of demons, one of which is forced celibacy. “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

(11) Some of their popes, however, could not live by their own ecclesiastical law on celibacy:

(a) Sergius III had an illegitimate son by Moroizia, one of the worst women in history. His son, John XI, also became pope.⁴⁰⁰

(b) John XIII (955-964) is described as “a coarse, immoral man whose life was such that the Lateran was spoken of as a brothel.” He was stricken with paralysis in the act of adultery.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁶ MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

³⁹⁷ See footnote to 1 Timothy 3:2, The Holy Bible, New Catholic Edition.

³⁹⁸ MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

³⁹⁹ MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy.”

⁴⁰⁰ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 8:426; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:48.

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(c) Benedict IX (1032-1049) is described as a “youthful libertine,” a man “of dissolute life,” and a “disgrace to the chair of Peter.”⁴⁰²

(d) Innocent VIII (1484-1492) had seven or eight illegitimate sons by different women.⁴⁰³

(e) Alexander VI (1492-1503) is classed as “the worst pope.” “He had eight illegitimate children by different women,”⁴⁰⁴ “four infamous ones by one woman. These were brought to Rome with him when he became pope. His son, Cesar Borgia, one of the worst men in history, was made archbishop when 18 years old, then cardinal at 19! Alexander’s daughter Lucretia Borgia’s wedding was one of the highlights of social life of Rome. Alexander bought the popedom and there was general rejoicing when he became pope.”⁴⁰⁵

(f) Julius II (1503-1515) bribed the Cardinals for the office. He had three illegitimate children.⁴⁰⁶

THERE ARE TWO CLASSES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS:

A. The religious priests. The religious clergy belong to a religious order and in most cases they are responsible to an abbot⁴⁰⁷ who heads a monastery.⁴⁰⁸ They are primarily committed to their orders or congregations, which transcend diocesan boundaries.⁴⁰⁹ While working within a given diocese, these clergy must adhere to the bishop’s decisions

⁴⁰¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 8:426; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:48-49.

⁴⁰² *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4:17; 2:429; 4:791; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:49.

⁴⁰³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 8:19-20; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:49.

⁴⁰⁴ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 6:213; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:50.

⁴⁰⁵ O. C. Lambert, 1:50.

⁴⁰⁶ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 8:562; quoted by O. C. Lambert, 1:50.

⁴⁰⁷ Pre 12th century. Via ecclesiastical Latin *abbot*, which in turn came from the Aramaic *abba*, “father.” (Microsoft Encarta Dictionary). “Abbot (Aramaic, *abba*, “father”), in certain Christian religious orders, the head of a monastery or abbey elected (sometimes for life) by the members of the order. Regarded as the father of his community, the abbot has the authority to enforce observance of the rules of the order and to administer the goods of the monastery. Until the beginning of the 10th century, the head of every monastery was called abbot, but many of the orders founded after that time rejected the title. The Carthusians, Dominicans, Carmelites, and Augustinians called the superior prepositor, or prior; the Franciscans, *custos*, or guardian. In the Orthodox Church the superiors of monasteries are called *hegumens* or *archimandrites*. During the Middle Ages many chief abbeys were under the influence of lay rulers who sought control of monastic wealth. The members of the royal household received grants of abbeys as their maintenance, and monarchs kept the richest for themselves.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Abbot”).

⁴⁰⁸ Originated in the 14th century. Via ecclesiastical Latin *monasterium* from the Gr. *monazein* which means “to live alone” (Microsoft Encarta Dictionary).

⁴⁰⁹ “Religious Orders” are “religious bodies” “whose members live under a distinctive rule, or discipline. The members of the greater number of Christian religious orders are ordained priests, although lay members are admitted as brothers and nuns to some; a number of orders are for women only.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Religious Orders and Communities”). Examples of religious orders are: Augustinians (broadly divided into Augustinian Friars and Augustinian Hermits), Benedictines, Carmelites (divided into Calced Carmelites and the Discalced Carmelites), Capuchins, Carthusians, Cistercians, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, the Servites, the Theatines, the Ursulines, and many others. The military religious orders include: The Poor Knights of Christ (also known as The Knights Templar), Knights of St. John of Jerusalem (Hospitallers), Teutonic Knights of St. Mary’s Hospital at Jerusalem (known simply as Teutonic Knights)

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in matters of public worship but otherwise enjoy considerable discretion in their ministry. The religious clergy and lay clergy tend to work in schools, hospitals, and other institutions of mercy and social service in the diocese.⁴¹⁰ They take three vows: (a) Poverty, (b) Chastity, or celibacy,⁴¹¹ and (c) Obedience. “The vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience under which Christian monastic clergy live are termed the evangelical counsels. A person bound by such vows is known as a religious (Latin, *religare*, ‘to bind’).”⁴¹²

Religious priests (priests who are members of religious orders) are of two kinds:

(1) **Monks.** They withdraw from the world for religious reasons and usually live in monasteries and engage in meditation, study, and writing, etc.⁴¹³

(2) **Plain religious priests,** otherwise known as “Friars.”⁴¹⁴ They engage in various religious activities for the order to which they belong. The unordained religious priests who belong to an order and have taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are called **brothers.**⁴¹⁵

B. The secular or diocesan priests. “Secular clergy are not members of religious orders or congregations and have been incorporated (incardinated) into the diocese under the authority of the local bishop.”⁴¹⁶ They are usually assigned to churches and are responsible only to the local bishop. They take vows of chastity, not of poverty, which means they may own property. “Secular clergy generally staff the parishes of the diocese and serve as pastors in them.”⁴¹⁷

REFUTATION:

(1) The “diocesan concept” of church government (one bishop ruling over many local churches) is borrowed from paganism and is not scriptural.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁰ MEPS 2005, art. “Roman Catholic Church.”

⁴¹¹ “Celibacy, the state of being unmarried, with abstinence from sexual activity. Considered a form of asceticism, it has been practised in many religious traditions: in ancient Judaism, by the Essenes; and in Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, by the members of monastic groups. In Christianity, celibacy has been practised by monks and nuns (see Monasticism) in both the Western and Eastern Churches. In the Eastern Church, parish clergy are permitted to marry before ordination, but bishops are selected from among the unmarried clergy. In the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy is required of all clergy in the Latin Rite.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Celibacy”).

⁴¹² MEPS 2005, art. “Monasticism.”

⁴¹³ “A man who belongs to a monastic order is ... called a monk.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Monasticism”). “The monk [is] attached to a specific community within which he [leads] a cloistered life, having no direct contact with the secular world.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Friars”).

⁴¹⁴ “The friar... belonged to no particular monastic house but to a general order, and worked as an individual in the secular world. Thus, friar and monk are not synonymous terms, even though in popular usage monk is often used as a generic term for all members of religious orders.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Friars”).

⁴¹⁵ “Lay Brother [is a] member of a Roman Catholic religious order who is not destined for holy orders, but who is employed in the material affairs of the community and especially in manual work.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Lay Brother.”)

⁴¹⁶ MEPS 2005, art. “Roman Catholic Church.”

⁴¹⁷ MEPS 2005, art. “Roman Catholic Church.”

⁴¹⁸ “Diocese (Greek, *dioikesis*, “administration”), in the Christian Church, the territory over which a bishop exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The term was used as early as the time of the Greek orator Demosthenes

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- (2) In the New Testament, every local church is under the oversight of its elders or bishops. “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed” Acts 14:23). The diocesan concept—that is, churches under the oversight of one bishop—is foreign to the New Testament.
- (3) The Bible teaches that all Christians are priests. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).
- (4) Christians as priests are enjoined to go out into the world, not to hide from it by secluding themselves in monasteries (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 8:1, 4; 1 Cor. 5:9-10).
- (5) Christ’s prayed not that God should take his disciples out of the world, but that they would be kept from the evil (John 17:15).
- (6) Monasticism is not taught in the Scripture. It was founded by men, not by Christ nor by his apostles.⁴¹⁹
- (7) Monasticism is the offspring of the false doctrine of gnosticism,⁴²⁰ that says all flesh is evil.

to signify the treasury or department of finance. But in the organization of the Roman Empire introduced by the emperor Diocletian, the designation diocese was applied to the larger political divisions, which were subdivided into provinces, or eparchies. About the middle of the 5th century, the dioceses of the empire were Asia, Pontus, the East, Thrace, Macedonia, Dacia, Illyria, Italy, Africa, Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The government of the Christian Church, as established by Constantine I, emperor of Rome, adopted this division, and diocese, as well as other terms borrowed from the government of the Roman Empire, passed over into ecclesiastical usage. The term was first applied in an ecclesiastical context to a collection of metropolitan churches, or provinces (parishes), each under the charge of an archbishop. Later applied to a single metropolitanate, or province, it finally came to signify the local jurisdiction of any bishop of any rank, while the term province came to be used for the group of dioceses under the supervision of an archbishop, or metropolitan.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Diocese”).

⁴¹⁹ “St Anthony is regarded as the founder of the cenobitic manner of living. He established himself at Alexandria, and the fame of his sanctity, as well as his gentleness and learning, drew many disciples to him. Most of his followers accompanied him when he retired to the desert. One of his disciples, St Pachomius, founded a great monastery on an island in the Nile River. Pachomius drew up for his subjects a monastic rule, the first regulations of the kind on record. Many thousands of disciples flocked to him, and he founded several other monasteries for men and one for women under the direction of his sister. All of these houses recognized the authority of a single superior, an abbot or archimandrite. They constitute the original type of the religious order. The cenobitic form of monasticism was first introduced into the West at Rome and in Northern Italy by St Athanasius, in central North Africa by St Augustine of Hippo, and in Gaul by St Martin of Tours.” (MEPS 2005, art. “Monasticism”).

⁴²⁰ Gnosticism is an “esoteric religious movement that flourished during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD and presented a major challenge to orthodox Christianity. Most Gnostic sects professed Christianity, but their beliefs sharply diverged from those of the majority of Christians in the early Church. The term Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word gnosis (“revealed knowledge”). To its adherents, Gnosticism promised a secret knowledge of the divine realm” (MEPS 2005, art. “Gnosticism”).