

# The BIG BAD Catholic Church

Dealing with the “Argument from Corruption”

By Brother André Marie

Whenever Catholics and non-Catholics find themselves discussing religion — an all too rare occurrence — one of the commonest objections voiced by the non-Catholic has something to do with the “horribly corrupt” history of the Catholic Church. What this article sets out to do is to show — if the objector claims to believe in the Bible, and *even if* his version of the history is true (which it usually is not) — that he still has a useless objection to Catholicism. In other words, this article will show that there is no “argument from corruption” which can be effectively used by a Protestant (or even a Jew, since we will use the Old Testament) to refute Catholicism as being God’s religion.

It has to be noted that the objectors *usually* know little or nothing about what the actual history is to which they object, but neither do they *usually* know much of the Bible either, and they try to use it as an objection to the Faith, too. The important thing is that the non-Catholic has made an objection, and it is now the job of the Catholic to answer, refute, or otherwise deal with it.

Anyone who has had one of these conversations with a non-Catholic knows the stock “scandals” from Church history that will be invoked as proofs against Catholicism. They include, but are by no means limited to, the following: The Spanish Inquisition, the Crusades, the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre, the corrupt lifestyles of certain Renaissance popes, Pius XII’s “inaction” to save Jews from Hitler, the sack of Constantinople, and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. My defense will deal with all of these, and any others which may be drawn from the annals of history — truly or untruly — and marshaled out as negating Catholicism’s claim to be the one true religion given by God. I will do so without going into any history at all, except for this: Certain of the above items did really happen; certain of them were really bad. On the other hand, some of them were good things, and one on that list — namely Pius XII’s guilt in the death of Jews — is fictitious.

What is to the point now is how, in an argument with a non-Catholic, to deal with any possible historical scandal using Holy Scripture and common sense.

## What’s the Point?

The first thing we should do is to ask ourselves, “So what? What’s the point?” In other words, how is the non-Catholic using this historical fact (or

*non-fact*) against the Faith? It boils down to this: Their claim, whether or not they actually state it, is that since corruption existed in the Catholic Church, then the Faith of that Church cannot be the proper God-given religion for man. If they do not agree to this, then the objection is useless, and Catholicism wins a quick victory. Observe:

**Catholic:** “Are you saying that any religion which has corrupt, sinful leaders cannot be from God?”

**Non-Catholic:** “No! I wouldn’t say that. We have rotten pastors in my Church, too!”

**Catholic:** “So you mean corruption argues against Catholics only and not non-Catholics. I see... Doesn’t Scripture say, ‘The standard with which you measure, the same will be meted out to you?’ Are you not, in fact, guilty of having ‘diverse weights in your bag’ (Deut 25:13) and thus being a sheer fraud and a hypocrite?”

**Non-Catholic:** “Nice weather we’ve been having, eh?”

The reader should have figured out by the above that if the opponent claims that such a proof does not undo the Catholic claim, then he is a fool for presenting it as if it did.\*

### **But, What If...**

But supposing he answers, “Yes. I hold that corrupt, sinful leaders reveal a religion to be not of God.”

\* The frequency of non-Catholics using such

Should he say this, there are several Biblical arguments to be used against him.

One of them is from the First Book of Kings, called “First Samuel” in the Protestant King James Version (KJV). In chapter two of that book, the story is told of the priest Heli (KJV: Eli) and his sons, Ophni and Phinees (KJV: Hophni and Phinehas). Heli was a good man who apparently had the fault of being too lenient with his children. His sons were exceedingly corrupt, but since the priesthood was hereditary in the Old Testament, they were priests, too, and served God in the temple. They were, then, ministers of the true religion, serving God in His tabernacle. Here is what the Bible says about their crimes:

“Now the sons of Heli were children of Belial, not knowing the Lord.”(1 Kings 2:12) Verse 13-16 tells how they sinfully glutted themselves on the animal sacrifices that were supposed to be offered to God. Then verse seventeen continues: “Wherefore the sin of the young men was exceeding great before the Lord: because they withdrew men from the sacrifice of the Lord.” And verse 22-24: “Now Heli was very old, and he heard all that his sons did to arguments and then readily admitting that they do *not* prove Catholicism wrong is very high in my personal experience. This is not surprising, given that one of the effects of sin is that it darkens the intellect.

all Israel: and how they lay with the women that waited at the door of the tabernacle: And he said to them: Why do ye these kinds of things, which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people? Do not so, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear, that you make the people of the Lord to transgress.”

There we have a picture of priestly corruption: using their divine office to commit fornication and to steal from the offerings brought to God in the tabernacle. These men, who were supposed to bring people closer to God, instead made “the people of the Lord to transgress.” But they were priests of the living God, weren’t they? The tabernacle they served in was the center of worship of the true God-revealed religion, wasn’t it? Therefore, if “corrupt sinful leaders reveal a religion to be not of God,” then the religion of the Old Testament was not from God. Since this conclusion is not true — and nobody who pretends to believe in the Bible would defend it — then the premise must be false. If the premise is false, it cannot be applied to Catholicism.

Other examples abound in the Old and New Testaments: Moses doubted and was therefore forbidden to enter into the Promised Land. Aaron led the people in the idolatrous worship of the golden calf, but was still a true priest of God.\* King David was a murderer and an adulterer; and Solomon, his son, became an idolater,

yet both of these men wrote books of the Bible (Psalms by David and Solomon’s Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticle of Canticles, and Wisdom†). Regarding the priesthood of the Old Testament as it existed in His life on earth, our Lord said, “The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not.” (Matthew 23:2-3) This teaches us that the teaching office of the high priesthood was from God, even when the men occupying the offices were evil. St. John even depicts Caiphias making an infallible pronouncement despite his personal evil: “Neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spoke not of himself: but *being the high priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation.*” (John 11:50-51)

Jesus was constantly rebuking the Apostles. They fled when He

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\* Regarding Aaron’s sin, the fact that he sinned and still was a God-ordained leader is vividly brought to light in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Numbers, where Core (KJV: Korah) and his followers were brutally punished for rejecting Moses’ and Aaron’s authority. This was well after Aaron’s sin.

† Canticle of Canticles is known as “Song of Solomon” in the KJV. Wisdom is not in the Protestant Bibles because they call it “apocryphal.”

was arrested, Peter denied Him, and, on that first Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday morning, when they were all bereaving our Lord, none of them had Faith in His Resurrection, even though He had told them about it more than once. Yet, to these men, Jesus says “He that heareth you heareth me: and he that despiseth you despiseth me.” (Luke 10:16)\* (They, and all the saints, teach us the lesson that sinners can faithfully respond to God’s grace and become holy.)

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\* The Apostles certainly made up for their transgressions by their subsequent loyalty and fidelity, even unto blood. I certainly do not want to appear to put the Apostles (or Moses, David, or Aaron) on an equally low footing with the wicked Ophni and Phinees. The

These and other examples from the Bible can all be used as further confirmation that the argument from corruption is all wet.

With this argument, the Catholic has a shield — a defense, not a sword. But it is the kind of shield that comes in very handy in a religious confrontation: When the opponent’s attack is repelled, then is the most effective time to use a sword.

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differences are obvious. I personally despise when modern authors speak in a condescending tone about the Apostles. However, the records of their blunders are right there in the Bible, so we can learn from them.

## Two By Brother Francis, M.I.C.M.

### Protesting

The Unitarian Dr. Lee  
Is pleased he does not disagree  
With God on points,  
— perhaps two or three.

The Presbyterian, Reverend Shreeve  
Has found himself more bent to believe  
From being a conservative

But the High Episcopalian Dunn  
(Who is far above the common run)  
Agrees with God on all Points  
— but one.

### The Prayer of the Geresenes

(Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:17; Luke 8:26)

The Geresenes certainly know  
how to pray  
In polite dignity and solemn display  
And their prayer was answered  
On the very same day

Now this is the substance  
of what they had to say:

“We want our swine  
and our demons to stay  
And please, God, leave us  
And go away!”  
Amen.