

The Antichrist: His Portrait and History – Appendix E. Romish Truth and Celibacy

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One of the late Cardinal Bourne's entourage, once wrote to the Press stating that the feelings of Papists had been harrowed by a newspaper report of a meeting of priests at Naples, at which a resolution had been passed demanding the abolition of priestly celibacy. This report was, of course, declared to be untrue—*ça va sans dire* (it goes without saying). But I have taken the trouble to institute inquiries at Naples and elsewhere in Italy, and I find, as I expected, that the report was true in substance, though not correctly expressed. I have before me an Italian journal published at Florence. It contains an article by the Senator ex-priest Romolo Murri, entitled "A Cry of Anguish." It deals with the subject of priestly celibacy as viewed by ex-military priests who had recently held a meeting at Milan, on purpose to demand "the abolition of the obligatory celibacy of Romish priests." Murri was directly appealed to by these to interest himself in this matter, and he says in his article that "probably these are the same that published in the Press an appeal on the same subject, as was dealt with by *Qui quondam* in the April number of the Roman Review Bilychnis."

Commenting on this article, the Editor of the journal said: "A great stir was made at Rome by the notice, published at the end of March by a popular morning journal, that at a meeting of priests at Naples there was ventilated the question of the abolition of obligatory celibacy, and of the vow of chastity: and this at once provoked lively and instant protests and denials at the Vatican."

As a fact the Naples meeting took place. It had been duly authorized. *Therefore no official* resolution against celibacy could be passed by it. But the subject was most certainly mooted, and numbers of those present were in favor of it. Indeed it cannot be denied, even by the Vatican official prevarication, that there exists at Naples a secret organization the priests—who are opposed to celibacy; and that this question was discussed very fully in a Review and pamphlets, by Professor Gennaro Avolio; and that copious literature is at this very moment circulating throughout Italy, especially in Southern Italy, where the matter affects the priesthood very severely.

A movement against celibacy was actually founded with its headquarters in Naples. A large number of priests joined it, as shown by a referendum made by Avolio, and its echoes have reached as far as Rome. Many members of this organization attended the authorized meeting at Naples, and there is no doubt that these entered into a deliberate propaganda. No sooner was this discovered than the Cardinal Archbishop Prisco fulminated against the movement, the Vatican rose in arms, and denials were plentifully showered.

But the fact remains, that at the Naples meeting—and unofficially –under the very noses of the authorities, celibacy was not only mooted, but discussed, and its abolition recommended by numbers of priests.

In France and Czechoslovakia the priests followed suit.

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