

# A Comment On "Infallible Fallacies"

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“Henry VIII wanted the Pope to give him a divorce from his first wife, Katherine. The Pope, however, refused, and seceded with all his followers from the Church of England. This was called the Restoration.” 1066 and All That.

IN HIS Presidential Address at the meeting of the Convocation of Canterbury on the 14th October, 1953, the Archbishop of Canterbury mentioned a booklet entitled *Infallible Fallacies*. {Footnote: *Infallible Fallacies: An Anglican Reply to Roman Catholic Arguments*, by some Priests of the Anglican Communion. (S.P.C.K.).}

He said, ‘In this new booklet our people will find a reply, brief but effective, courteous and quickly read, and cheap, to some of the arguments of Roman Catholic propaganda’. Later in the same month another attack on the Catholic Church appeared in a booklet entitled *The Pope’s Men*. \* {Footnote: \**The Pope’s Men*, by Nathaniel Micklem. (Independent Press).}

At the end of the booklet *Infallible Fallacies* the fear is expressed that we who are under attack may think that this monumental essay is anti-Catholic. I do not think that is likely. It is necessary to know something about Catholicism before attacking it. This booklet is in fact much more a revelation of the unhappy divisions that exist amongst Protestants than of anything else. It has been suggested, and the scholarship of the booklet confirms the impression, that this is an old work resurrected from a pigeon hole. Certainly, it has a musty smell. The question is, why has it been produced now?

In any age the effects of schism and heresy are much the same. Curious beliefs grow up amongst the groups unhappily separated from the parent body for the simple reason that religion tends to be odd in its manifestations when unaided human mind takes the place of divine guidance. Only the help of the Holy Spirit, freely given to those who adhere to the visible Church founded by Christ, prevents oddity from developing into a universal characteristic.

It has long been obvious to the sympathetic observer that Protestants are struggling with adversity. For years it has been an open scandal that many clerics within the establishment have little or no idea of what orthodox doctrine is. At the same time, nobody, as far as we can see, has the power to stop the rot. Such a situation, coupled with the fact that Protestantism is dying in this country, is bound to cause great alarm and despondency.

There is always a tendency where paganism is rampant to urge Christians to sink their differences, not because it is a good thing for Christians to love one another, but because differences do not matter and can be made bargaining points. Conscious of her divine mission to teach truth, the Catholic Church can never associate herself with such disloyalty to Christ.

Protestants, on the other hand, hazy about the divinity of Christ and knowing that their Churches are human in origin, regard the Catholic attitude as intransigent. It is hard for them not to yield to the

temptation to gain strength by minimizing difference and emphasizing a mere shop-window unity. There is one bond of union which might act as an antidote to the divisions inherent in heresy and schism - dislike of the old Faith. It is a desperate remedy for a desperate situation carrying with it all sorts of dangerous possibilities. If any attempt should be made to introduce into this country an equivalent of the South India Scheme the loss could easily be as great as the gain. It is unlikely that the attempt to maintain unity through disapproval of the Catholic Church will work. Religion does not thrive on negatives. But the difficulties Protestants have to face make the almost simultaneous appearance of two booklets attacking the Catholic Church more than a mere coincidence. What the outcome will be, it is difficult to foretell. Many will continue to join the Catholic Church, many will continue to drift into the prevalent agnosticism, while the residue, no doubt, will write more booklets like *Infallible Fallacies* and *The Pope's Men*. All that we can do is pray for those concerned since to them it must be a heartbreaking business.

#### CHARGES MUST BE ANSWERED.

AT the same time, charges have been made which must be answered. This, the unknown pamphleteers, I have not the slightest doubt, would be the first to admit. They view their work, as also does Dr Micklem, with confessed distaste. So do we. The barbarian is knocking at the gates and since it is at our gate he always knocks first and most fiercely, we would like to be left alone to deal with him. Our attention to this unexpected distraction must be brief, friendly, but firm. It is true that we are in general very friendly towards Protestants. Our task is to put forward the arguments for the historic Faith with rancour to none. This is done with skill and devotion by cradle and convert Catholics alike. It was the *New Statesman* and *Nation* which remarked some years ago that the most skilled pens in England were writing for the Catholic Church. I think they are, but I do not expect things to be anything different. At the same time it must be remarked that there is a difference between attacking those with whom you disagree and merely putting forth your own point of view. We must leave it to the public to judge but I submit that Catholic writing in the last fifty years has not been aggressive. Readers who are interested in this point may easily study any catalogue of Catholic books or the shelves of Catholic bookshops. It is symptomatic of the failings that afflict erastian and heretic bodies that they find in a clear statement of truth a form of attack upon themselves. The spirit of the age in which we live regards clear thought as a form of dogmatic reaction. The Church of Christ is above the shortcomings of the Bloomsbury mentality and only a Church cut off from the power of the Holy Spirit would allow itself to be influenced by a fashion of thought which is of its nature temporary and already out of date on the Continent.

The authors say that they would like to see a united Church enriched by the thought and experience of Canterbury and Rome. We must say in all charity, that to be enriched by the unhappy experience of Canterbury is to wish to leave it alone. The only experience of Canterbury that any Catholic can cherish is that of our very great St Thomas who died to avoid the evils of a State Church.

#### ROMAN AND PROUD OF IT.

IT simply is not true that we are upset when we are referred to as Roman. Why should we be ashamed of St Irenaeus and St. Ignatius of Antioch, ancient Bishops both, who directed our love and reverence towards Rome? We are by character and education traditionalists. From our cradles we have always respected our ancestors as they were people who never hesitated to glory in the name of Protestant. It is not we who have gone back on the Reformation. The basic difference was always between Catholic and Protestant. Since the Reformation the distinction remained clear until

Newman upset the applecart. The Tudor Queen Elizabeth, as a Catholic writer has recently pointed out in the Catholic press, always referred to Catholics and Protestants. What is all the fuss about? Are these people ashamed of their belongings? Sometimes they forget that they are talking to Irish, Scots, Welsh, and to Nonconformists. Are they trying to tell the Irish that the men who imposed the horrible penal code upon them after the Treaty of Limerick were Catholics? That is not funny, it is bad taste. Too much real suffering is associated with the Reformation for that sort of culpable confusion to be excusable.

Then they go on to tell us that we ought not to carry the Mass into areas where the Anglican community already exercises its influence. We are charged by the good God to carry the Holy Mass into the four corners of the earth. The Mass is the sacrifice of the New Law and we who are the priests of that law have to say it and plant the Church everywhere. Are we any different from the St Augustine, our father, who brought the Mass to England? My own experience has always been that wherever the Catholic Church opens a tin hut for the offering of the sacrifice it is crowded by people within a few weeks of its inception. We do not so much bring the Mass as follow it. That is to say the Mass is in the hearts of men and women scattered all over the fair land of England. We take any spot that is convenient, open a room in a public house or hire a barn, and they are there in their hundreds.

#### BAPTISM.

NOR is it any less nonsense to complain that we cavil about the Baptism of the Protestant Church. What does the Protestant Church believe about this vital sacrament and how does it administer it? Enough has been written and said by modern Churchmen to leave us wondering. The main office of the Church of Christ is to guard these holy things. Clearly, the belief, or disbelief, of Protestants in the efficacy of baptism does not affect the validity of the Sacrament they administer. But if those who have departed from the See of the Apostles deny, as they undoubtedly have done, the full significance of this Sacrament, and vary seriously in its administration, then their exact observance of the rite instituted by Christ is open to the gravest suspicion and we who are charged to keep it sacred must take it as our solemn duty to administer it again under condition. It is my own practice to receive into the Catholic Church an average of fifteen converts in any year. Never have I known one who has not asked for the Sacrament of Baptism to be administered again conditionally. This is not a charge against the Catholic Church. It is a reflection on the slackness in doctrine and discipline characteristic of the Protestant Churches. Things have changed since the days of that great and distinguished convert Cardinal Manning. No doubt he knew enough about Anglicans to reverence their belief in Baptism but he would not say the same to-day.

It is difficult to understand what all this indignation about the Bishop of Southwark's reference to the Tudor Queen Elizabeth means. She was an unsavoury character and the Bishop did not do more than quote that good Protestant historian Cobbett who loved the Church of England but was objective enough to know that the Reformation was an evil thing carried out in an evil way. Like the good man he was, Cobbett did not hesitate to say so.

#### CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

A LARGE part of my time is spent in upholding Protestant marriages. Our doctrine is that when Protestants marry in their own churches or in registry offices the marriages are binding and valid until the contrary is proved. Catholics must marry in the Church before a priest and two witnesses. All that is perfectly clear. Sometimes Protestants come to me and ask if their marriages will be

declared null and void in the event of their entering the Catholic Church. This is often because the wish to enter the Church has been fathered by the intention to contract a new alliance with a Catholic.

They are generally surprised to hear that the Catholic Church regards their first marriage as valid and expects them to abide by it. Any confusion in this matter is not our fault because the teaching of the Church has always been quite clear. At the same time there have been indications recently that not all Anglicans are prepared to stand by the awkward consequences of defending the sacrament of marriage in a pagan society. What precisely is meant by 'the law of reason yielding to the law of charity' nobody knows, unless it means that what is understood to be wrong may be permitted because virtue is painful. This is 'aspirin Christianity'.

There is a suggestion in the booklet that the Catholic Church by multiplying the reasons for nullity, manages to avoid the consequences of her teaching on divorce. She has her wedding cake and eats it. This is worse than aspirin Christianity, it is gossip Christianity. There has been no alteration in the Catholic nullity laws, and those cases which have caused public discussion have been fully described in an excellent book on nullity by Frank Sheed. If anything the practice of the Church has grown more strict as the attack upon marriage has developed. But anyone who cares to investigate the question will find an abundance of literature explaining the position of the Catholic Church in this matter. It would have been more impressive if the authors of the booklet had taken the trouble to read Fr Davis *on this subject after they had mis-read him on the subject of the marriages of Catholics in Protestant churches*. {Footnote: Moral and Pastoral Theology: A Summary, by Henry Davis S.J. (Sheed and Ward).}

#### ANGLICAN ORDERS.

With certain Protestants the subject of the validity of Anglican Orders is a sore point. It is important to note that those amongst them who wish to be regarded as priests in the Catholic sense are not so numerous as their protests would suggest. It is largely a confusion about words.

The Catholic Church ordains priests to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. When the Reformation took place in England the new Church retained the old title of priest but went to extraordinary lengths to abolish the Mass. Men were killed for saying Mass and men and women were persecuted for hearing it. When the Reformers went to the trouble of changing the ordinals they must have had a motive for doing so. History makes that motive more than obvious. The altars were destroyed and the Mass was proscribed. No one can deny this: it is part of the story of England. In the Thirty-nine Articles, Masses are described as 'blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits'.

It is not we, as the booklet suggests, who ascribe bastardy to the Anglican Church. To go back on the destruction of the Mass is to go back on the Reformation. The Anglican who calls himself a priest in the Catholic sense repudiates the mother who gave him birth. As long as that sort of thing goes on it will be impossible to make an honest woman of the Ecclesia Anglicana.

Nor are we alone in thinking this. In a series of capable articles written by members of the Catholic Missionary Society for the Catholic Press of October 23rd, 1953, relevant quotations are given from Protestant writers and Bishops of the Establishment which clearly demonstrate that they agree with us about this and not with their embarrassing colleagues.

None of us thinks that those who would be posthumously priested are dishonest. Their trouble is that their ancestors did not have to die and suffer for the Mass. We are sprung from the stock of

persecuted men and women and such is our history that confusion about the nature of the priesthood and the Mass becomes impossible. We have clung to the Mass for centuries and had we not done so, this particular section of the Protestant Church would probably never have thought of claiming the right to offer it. We are happy that there are Protestants who have come to love what the Reformation repudiated but they must have the courage of their convictions. If they wish to say Mass, they must receive the necessary orders and that can only be done by returning to the Church of their ancestors. If their claim to be priests in the historic sense is true then there are no orders and there never was a priesthood validly ordained to offer the sacrifice. To say that the Established Church never repudiated the sacrifice of the Mass is to make nonsense of the history of England, of everything represented by Tyburn, Padley and other holy places.

Fr Ripley writing in the Catholic Times of October 23rd quotes from an Anglican author's book, *The Book of Common Prayer*, which has a preface by the Bishop of Sodor and Man. The quotation adequately sums up what Catholics have always maintained: 'The most important of these [the changes made by the ordinal of 1552] is the re-definition of the function of the priest... All sacerdotal language is removed. The Anglican priest is a presbyter, not a sacrificing priest.' Fr Ripley further quotes Bishop Knox as writing in 1925 of Anglican masses as 'so-called masses'. There is no need to labour this point further. The literature of the Catholic Truth Society deals fully with the subject and with greater scholarship than the authors of this booklet display.

At the close of its discussion of Anglican Orders the booklet suggests that Pope Leo XIII was either ignorant of the Preface of the English Ordinal or too dishonest to refer to it. The Preface says that the intention of the ordinal is to return to apostolic usage when ordaining priests. The implication is that something contrary to the teaching of our Lord had crept into the Church which the ordinal proposed to expurgate. That could only mean the expurgation of what the Thirty-nine Articles refer to as the 'blasphemous fables of Masses'. The Pope must have read the Preface and found it evidence in favour of his decision that Anglican Orders are invalid. Although the authors of this booklet appear to have forgotten this, there is evidence in abundance of the mind of the men who set out to change the English religion. It was Bishop Ridley, successor of Bishop Bonner, who pulled down the high altar of St Paul's while he ordered his clergy 'to use only the ceremonies and gestures in the Book of Common Prayer and none other, so that there do not appear in them any counterfeiting of the Popish Mass'.

The authors of *Infallible Fallacies* make much of the fact that Cardinal Pole re-ordained only 13 of those who had been ordained according to the revised ordinals. Cardinal Pole's behaviour was not very curious. He had to deal with 112 ordinations. Of these, 71 were cases of men who had been made deacons. Of the remaining 41 cases, 13 were re-ordained, and there is no record of the remaining 28 practising as priests. From the Cardinal's general policy in relation to married clergy it can safely be inferred that these men were unwilling to leave their wives and submit themselves to ordination. If, as is suggested, the disputed ordinals represent an unbroken tradition, it is curious that there is no record of any Anglican protest against the slaughter of men who were ordained in the rite they claim to possess. Had they regarded themselves as satisfactory priests, they would have seen in the persecution of Catholic priests an attack upon themselves. The truth is that the Anglican clergy were protestant and repudiated the Mass.

THE SEE OF PETER.

AFTER the discussion of Anglican Orders, *Infallible Fallacies* begins to drag a tail as long as that of a bad cricket eleven. All the old arguments against the supremacy of the See of St Peter are produced once more. The point which is missed is that if orthodox Catholics are wrong about the supremacy of the Popes, so were English Christians before the Reformation. Modern historical research has revealed beyond a shadow of doubt that the English Church was in full obedience to, and in communion with, Rome and that the Canon Law of the universal Church held sway throughout the land. Bishops and Archbishops received their authority from Rome. That is why so much persecution was necessary to tear the English people away from their long allegiance to the Pope. Anglicans really ought to make up their minds about their position in this matter. Either they are good Protestants who consider that the allegiance of the English Church to Rome was wrong, or they regret what happened at the Reformation and desire to renew the old practice of asking the Pope to confirm, as he always did, the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Some of them have sat upon the fence so long that the iron has entered into their souls and made them bitter.

Whatever the reason for their confusion may be, they ought to realize that their attitude creates a bad impression amongst Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The authors appear to have grasped the significance of their false position and assert that they are not the heirs of St Augustine but of an older Church which was seduced by Rome in the sixth century. That being so, the present Archbishop of Canterbury is not, on their showing, the occupant of the ancient see of Augustine and they have to prove that the British Church (their mother) was not in communion with Rome. We must leave them to extricate themselves from this tangled skein of history. But it is all very confusing. The only people who gain anything from this are the Scots who can now insist with some point that the Anglicans should refer to themselves in future as British.

#### POPE JOAN AND MARIA MONK.

USUALLY there is something charming to be found in one's adversaries. The assertion which these writers make that the great Church is in schism from them is quite delightful. It reminds me of the story told by Mr. Douglas Woodruff of the elephant and the mouse. 'You are very small,' said the elephant. 'Yes, I know,' replied the mouse, 'but I have been unwell lately.' Still it was nice of them to think of it and it introduces a smile into a distasteful controversy. Without doubt the Continent has been cut off by fog. Into the category of old family favourites we can, I think, place the friendly suggestion that indulgences are sold for a huge profit and the curious idea that Catholic priests engage in a sort of spiritual Burke and Hare activity. (Cf. *Punch* of October 28th, 1953.) If the first were true then most of us would stand accused of neglecting a glorious financial opportunity. We have our faults, but we are not slow on the uptake where money is concerned. As for kidnapping dying Protestants under the very noses of nurses and doctors, we clergy owe the authors a vote of thanks. So often the laity complain that we do not visit them enough. Sometimes one is hard put for an explanation. What we have been needing for years was the introduction of a little variety into the rather stodgy list of lame excuses. Here is a pastoral exchange of no little value. Thanks to our unknown Protestant friends, all we have to do is look knowingly at the laity and nod towards the hospital. They being naturally and (what is worse) supernaturally dishonest, will be thrilled. It is unfortunate that these charges should have been introduced into what is a delicate relationship. Its only effect has been to embarrass the clergy and, what is worse, the sick. The Universe has conducted an enquiry into this accusation, and evidence of its truth has not yet appeared.

My only grumble about all this is the lack of gallantry displayed in the booklet. In a revivalist gathering such as this, more ancient than modern, those two charming ladies Pope Joan and Maria

Monk, should not have been omitted. We Catholics have a great sense of tradition and that type of carelessness offends our sense of what is fitting. If there is to be a reprint of *Infallible Fallacies* may I, on behalf of thousands of disappointed Catholics, ask for the rehabilitation of these two injured women who have done so much in the past for the Evangelical cause and the destruction of Rome.

#### THEOLOGICAL ANAEMIA.

ONE of the most disastrous effects of the Reformation has been the almost complete loss amongst Protestants of any conception of what the Church of Christ is meant to do beyond avoiding trouble with the mentality current in any given age. Christ and His Church are one. What Our Lord taught remains indefectible but it ought to be studied and prayed about so that each generation regards it as a glory to add greater insight into the truths handed down. Unless the Church can do this the only effect of the years will be a loss of vitality. It is a commonplace that the Catholic Church renews herself in every age, while the progress of history has seen the decay of Protestantism. It is the difference between theological anaemia and the development of doctrine. That is why it is so unnecessary for Catholics to proselytise amongst Protestants.

Modernism is a form of theological anemia which leads to the whittling down of the revelation of Christ and ends in querying whether He is God or not. Dr Micklem in his booklet attacking the Catholic Church gives an entertaining example of that. He describes a glorious Catholic High Mass in Hungary on Easter Sunday where everyone concerned seemed to be declaring from a full heart that Christ is risen indeed, as compared with a Non-conformist service at which the preacher remarked that 'Prima facie, my brethren, the Resurrection presents us with a problem'. Neither he nor his Anglican friends seem to realize that they are illustrating in fact what Catholic writers have always asserted to be the effects of schism and heresy. Cut off from the main stem, the branch decays. It is a serious failure on the part of Protestants that they do not appear to have understood the full effect of watered-down Christianity on the British people. Dr Micklem suggests that the Catholic Church produces atheism in some countries, but there has been no greater cause of it here than the failure of Protestantism to stand up firmly to modern errors.

The authors of the booklet *Infallible Fallacies* ought to have studied the theory of the development of doctrine and to have known how strong the case is for the theological teaching of the Catholic Church on such subjects as the Papacy and our Lady. It is a far cry from Dr Jalland to this sort of thing. But the root of the difficulty is that they have not sufficient confidence in the power of God to realize that He guides His Church. The individual claims inspiration for himself but will not allow it for the corporate body. The result is doctrinal chaos. Dr Micklem describes the Nicene Creed as a man-made document already out of date. *Infallible Fallacies* asserts on one page that the 'Roman Church is a true part of the Catholic Church' and on another proceeds to accuse her of the gravest possible heresies. This is to make nonsense of the whole business and vitiates everything the booklet sets out to prove. If it is true, the claim of the Anglican Church has no meaning.

What Anglicans are saying is, 'We are as much a part of the Church of Christ as you are, but you are, in fact, quite wrong'. Then we are both wrong and the agnostic has won the day.

#### 'THE POPE'S MEN.'

TURNING for a moment to Dr Micklem's booklet, *The Pope's Men*, I am reminded of Maria Teresa, the Empress of Austria in the eighteenth century. She found herself confronted with the determination of Russia and Prussia to partition Poland. Rather than be left out of the spoliation and endangered thereby, she determined, against her conscience, to join it. Frederick of Prussia grimly

remarked that, although she wept she did not hesitate to take. Dr Micklem confesses his distaste at having to start this trouble but he gets on with it nevertheless. His booklet is almost as muddled as that of his anonymous compeers.

The standard of theological discussion is bewildering. For example, he points out that Catholic theologians explain the doctrine of the presence of our Blessed Lord in the Eucharist by the theory of Transubstantiation, and then goes on to say that the ordinary laity are content to believe that our Lord is truly present. That is what those theologians also believe. Then he goes on to argue that Catholic theologians are quite clear about devotion to our Lady as distinct from the common belief which is that our Lady is a goddess. So the very opposite happens in the case of a doctrine much easier to understand than that of Transubstantiation. In the first case the people get it right, in the second they do not. In neither case is the question of the guidance and help of God introduced, nor any explanation of this curious alternation between cleverness and stupidity offered. It is, of course, like nonconformity itself, an entirely subjective judgement.

I hope I am not unfair to Dr Micklem when I say that his booklet reflects a mind in a very confused state. We are saints and sinners, bible haters and bible lovers, democrats and totalitarians: the Doctor's right mind just does not know what his wrong mind is thinking.

The sturdy Catholics of Quebec can, I think, look after themselves and, probably, care very little what English Nonconformists think about them, but it is doubtful whether they would regard our civilization as the unmixed blessing Dr Micklem considers it to be. His views on reactionary Catholics bring back all the fun that Chesterton poked in his glorious poem on Heckmondwike. The citizens of Quebec are longing, I suppose, to read the Sunday Dispatch on the Kinsey report and have become dissatisfied with Canada after reading Rowntree on the morals of the English people. I hope I love my own country but it is carrying insularity too far to think that we possess advantages over pastoral peoples, who say their prayers, quite so striking as the author of *The Pope's Men* seems to think.

Dr Micklem is unfair when he does no more than acknowledge the tolerance of the Irish. Even a cursory reading of Irish history would prove that the present constitution of Eire is one of the greatest triumphs of toleration known in the modern world. Mention ought also to have been made of the distinguished group of Catholic European statesmen whose efforts and mutual understanding have kept the enemies of civilization at bay since the war. Our debt to them is great indeed and ought to be acknowledged.

There are dark hints in plenty about Catholics, up and down the world, who persecute Protestants. Here one must ask for more definite facts. When they are forthcoming, it should be possible to investigate them. The question of toleration is more complicated than Dr Micklem suggests. Our own government, for example, would hesitate to allow full freedom to Nazi propaganda in Germany. That is to say, we ourselves are not entirely tolerant. A line has to be drawn. Famous writers like Mr. Maritain have made contributions to this difficult problem and it is a disappointment that so distinguished a thinker as Dr. Micklem has failed to offer any help whatever.

The general thesis of *The Pope's Men* is that the Catholic Church is both wicked and saintly at the same time. As a rule the two qualities are mutually exclusive. Faced with such a contradiction it would have been wiser of Dr Micklem to have said that the Catholic Church is to him an enigma about which judgement must be reserved. Whatever the motive behind this dual attack, good will emerge from it. We have been asked to state our position clearly and have done so. It is better for us

that it should have come about that way. There have been hard blows without hard feelings and the onlooker will judge for himself.

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