

strains within the Church of England, as well as its role within the World Council of Churches (so dear to Dr Fisher), make an anti-Catholic attack intelligible, though scarcely justifiable.

'Attacks do call for occasional answers', Dr Fisher has remarked. Our complaint is not that there should be answers, but that here they relate to fictitious questions. There are indeed many questions that demand to be answered by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, but if the motive of the asking is the search for Christian truth, then the mode of it must be Christian charity and nothing less. Here all, Catholics included, have the duty of examining their consciences, and if that be the result of the recent pamphleteering it is a matter for gratitude.

FALLIBLE INFELICITIES

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IT would be interesting to know in what sense the Archbishop of Canterbury used the word 'propaganda' in introducing to the public, in his speech to Convocation, the pamphlet *Infallible Fallacies*¹ as a useful antidote to the 'intensified propaganda' of the Catholic Church. This word has almost lost its primary and original sense, and has acquired a loaded and sinister meaning. What it usually signifies today is spreading or bolstering up an idea by suppressing half the truth about it, using false emphasis, suggestion and even direct mis-statement, and especially by employing a technique of making isolated and probably hypothetical instances appear as widely applicable generalisations. Inevitably, when the word is used, it raises in the mind an imaginative picture embodying these associations. It is strange then that His Grace should have used it, without explanation, when speaking officially on the delicate topic of the greatest Church in Christendom and the methods it uses in proclaiming its teaching, and it is still stranger that he should have selected for commendation, as a defence against

¹ *Infallible Fallacies*—An Anglican reply to Roman Catholic arguments; by some Priests of the Anglican Communion (S.P.C.K.).

this teaching, a pamphlet which exhibits, though clearly unconsciously and in ignorance, many of the characteristics of propaganda in this secondary and less reputable sense.

What is most strange of all, however, is that the Archbishop expressed a hope that the booklet might encourage the search for a better understanding with the Church of Rome. In virtue of his position Dr Fisher is in close touch with the Ecumenical Movement, and the work it is doing to bring about such understanding between the divided parts of Christendom. He cannot be unaware that work of this kind must be slow, patient and costing to those who undertake it. It must involve fundamental questions at their deepest level, studied with sincere and laborious effort to see the positions of those who differ from us, not partially and in distortion, but in their full theological and cultural context. That is the only basis upon which a better understanding can be reached between any of the parts of divided Christendom. This pamphlet is superficial, even for its size, in its treatment of the most fundamental themes; it contains a number of inaccuracies and mis-statements, which more thorough investigation could have avoided; and it is pervaded by an apparent assumption that the Catholic clergy and bishops habitually put expediency and aggrandisement by numbers and prestige before the welfare of men's souls. Yet the Archbishop's action has raised it almost to the level of the Church of England's official apology.

The root question dividing Christendom is what elements constitute the essential nature of the Church that Christ founded. This question separates East from West, Free Churchman from Anglican and Anglican from Catholic, and each section of divided Christendom is bound in loyalty to Christ to maintain its own view on this fundamental matter till conscience dictates a change. The authors of the pamphlet may or may not believe that the episcopate is of the *esse* of the Church; yet if *they* do not, very many Anglicans do, and in consequence it is widely held within the Church of England that the sacraments of non-episcopal Churches (apart from baptism and matrimony) are either non-existent or invalid. Yet they warn their readers that every convert from the Anglican to the Roman Church is publicly declar-

ing, by his submission, that the Anglican bishop who confirmed him was an impostor, that the priest who baptised him, taught him the Catechism and gave him communion was cheating him; that he has never before received the sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood and never before received the gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands.

Everyone is bound by his own principles, and thousands of Anglican clergy and hundreds of bishops would be bound in this way to say to a convert from one of the non-episcopal bodies, whom they might receive into the Anglican fold, exactly what a Catholic priest says to an Anglican who makes his submission to the Holy See. By their silence concerning this, and by their use of the loaded words 'impostor' and 'cheating', the authors of the pamphlet are suppressing the fact that their own fellow churchmen act towards Free Churchmen exactly as Catholics do towards Anglicans. Just as these Anglican clergy would explain to their convert that he was in no way bound to deny or doubt that God had given him great graces within the religious body he was leaving, graces granted in reward for his faithfulness in the use of its religious ordinances, so a Catholic priest guided by the sound theological principle, *Deus non alligatur sacramentis sed nos*, would tell his convert the same truth. Thirty-six years ago I put this problem, which must exercise the minds of many converts, to Father Vincent McNabb before my own reception. 'My dear child', he said. 'You may be certain that your absolutions and communions in the Church of England have brought you great graces, not as instruments but as occasions of God's gift.'²

We do not expect to find, in a controversial pamphlet in defence of Anglicanism, any presentation of Reformation history but that peculiar view of it, so puzzling to the European mind, which claims complete continuity for the Church

² At this point the authors put in a dissuasive from popery by denying *in toto* the possibility that they can be, from the Catholic point of view, in good faith concerning the Roman claims, since they know quite well what these are and entirely deny their validity. Unfortunately they seem unaware that the *invincible ignorance* which leaves a person in good faith is ignorance not of the claims but of their truth.

of England with the pre-Reformation Church. The Church of England did in fact preserve many elements of traditional Catholicism rejected by the continental Reformers, and in this sense it can claim a greater measure of continuity with the pre-Reformation Church than other bodies that sprang from the Reformation upheavals. Yet the decisive test scarcely receives an oblique reference in the pamphlet. This test is the traditional conception of the unity of the Church, as it existed unquestioned in Christendom from the earliest times up to the sixteenth century. That conception does not allow of the existence of a permanent schism within the Church; schism was then understood as a cutting off from a divinely guaranteed unity, and though both sides might claim to represent this unity, each refused to admit the other's claim. The cardinal heresy of the Reformation was the divisibility of the Church; the idea that there could be permanent schism within its boundaries. On this fundamental doctrine of the nature of the Church the pre-Reformation Church and the post-Reformation Church of England were and are utterly at variance. Here is the decisive point at which the Church of England has separated itself from traditional Catholicism in East and West, and has ranged itself on the side of Reformation Protestantism. This was the issue which led Fisher and More to the scaffold, and moved the Elizabethan martyrs to the acceptance of a terrible death.

It is no doubt the unconscious influence of the radical difference between us on this point that leads the authors to treat the doctrine of papal infallibility with almost incredible superficiality, and, what is worse, with a certain impertinence, in their assertion that the doctrine they have not taken the trouble to understand is nonsense. That they have not taken the trouble to understand it is abundantly evident. There is no hint in their treatment of it of its relation to the infallibility of the general magisterium of the Church, and implicit in the argument of the thirty-odd lines devoted to this doctrine is the idea, still unfortunately widespread in Anglican controversy, that papal infallibility involves a kind of inspirational knowledge.

The Vatican Council in defining the doctrine makes it clear

that the personal infallibility of the Pope is a function and expression of the Church's infallibility. If one can speak of two infallibilities at all they are so wholly dependent upon each other as to be virtually one. An infallibility of the Pope apart from the Church is impossible, and when the Pope speaks infallibly, whether by means of a general Council or apart from it, he does so as the focus and final determinant of the Church's expression of its mind. The universal consensus of East and West attests the fact that the Church from earliest times has claimed to teach and interpret the revelation of Jesus Christ by a magisterium which, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, is preserved from error.³ The first expression of this teaching was the formula used by the Council of Jerusalem: *For it has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us* (Acts 15, 28). Today the infallible magisterium of the *ecclesia docens* is held by the Catholic Church and by the Orthodox Churches of the East. The Reformation in rejecting the doctrine of indivisible external unity, and of its function in the preservation of tradition, rejected by implication the possibility of an infallible magisterium, though the early Tractarians and some of their Anglo-Catholic successors have held that the decisions of the 'undivided Church' were so guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. Latter-day Anglo-Catholicism, however, has more and more rejected the idea that there is any infallible endowment in the Church, the motive for this probably being a realisation of its incompatibility with any theory of a *divided* Church, and perhaps also the desire to avoid acknowledging the existence of any final court of appeal in matters of doctrine.

The Catholic Church maintains that the doctrine of the Pope's infallibility is an articulation and precision of the doctrine of the infallible magisterium of the Church, viewed in relation to the *de jure divino* primacy of the See of Rome. This has become clearer to the mind of the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, during the ages, and,

³ The argument used by the authors that this could not happen because it would be an interference with human liberty is an untheological limitation of God's omnipotence, which would effectively rule out the possibility of his providential guidance of human life.

as many other doctrines have been in the course of her long history, it was finally defined by her magisterium in a great Council of the Church. It is of course possible for intelligent men to disagree with this definition on many grounds, but one would not have thought it possible for intelligent men, genuinely seeking the truth, to take so little trouble to understand what they were disagreeing with. It is natural and right that members of the Church of England should wish to defend their position against those who attack it; it is right too and to be expected that they should hold the best form of defence to be attack in turn. But in a matter which concerns the whole of Christendom, and at a time when the Church of England is playing a leading part in promoting Christian unity through the Ecumenical Movement, it is, to say the least of it, a pity that the attack should by-pass the fundamental realities of the situation, and occupy itself with spreading prejudice by setting up and liquidating men of straw.

We have done no more, in this article, than attempt to bring out, without argument, these fundamental realities, and set in contrast as clearly as may be, the two positions, Anglican and Catholic. Only this method can bring opportunity for conscience to make free choice. It remains to be said that of the minor inaccuracies and misconceptions in the pamphlet few radically affect the main issue, and they have all been competently dealt with elsewhere. But they should not be there, and we cannot help feeling that many of our Anglican friends must be ashamed that they are. Neither side, in this or any other controversy, is ever completely guiltless of propaganda in a bad sense, and on our side we make no claim to be so. It is much to be regretted, however, that this particular instance of it should be so formally raised to an official level of approval. The impression it leaves is that no very deep effort has been made to penetrate into and master the problems discussed, or to see them as they are viewed from the Catholic side. The aim seems to have been rather to score a victory, which will prevent Anglicans themselves from becoming unsettled. But to achieve this by the use of propaganda weapons, though it may secure immediate results, will not serve the cause of ultimate truth.