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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

CANTERBURY AND ROME

For a century a large part of the Church of England seemed to have been striding with seven-league boots toward Rome. Until ten years ago the Roman Church in Britain leaned more and more toward Canterbury. Yet neither could call the other friend. Like Hadrian's Wall, which barricaded Roman Britain from the Picts and Scots, the question of the Papacy still cleaved clean lines.

Pusey, Newman, and the Oxford Movement willed to the Church of England an appreciation of the color and warmth of Roman tradition and liturgy. Now, many Church of England clergy no longer hesitate to use Latin in their prayers, to employ the Roman missal, or to say a Requiem Mass on occasion. In vestments and liturgy, under the pressure of the more extreme Anglo-Catholics, some sections of the Church of England seem to have become more Roman than Anglican.

For years Rome has attempted with considerable success to shore up its claims to Britain. As a constant builder of churches, it has not hesitated to appropriate names which have always been Anglican, for example, St. Edward the Confessor. It has broadened its base by instituting an English missal. It has sought out men of influence like Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, even though their mantles do not always fit quite so precisely as it likes to advertise. It has established its prime cathedral in Westminster, as a rival to Westminster Abbey.

The Roman accent on the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the past five years, especially the dogmatic definition of the Assumption, has brought sharp rebukes from moderate Anglicans. The sharpest of these has been a smallish monograph, *Infallible Fallacies*. First printed in October, 1953, by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and now in its eleventh edition, it has effectively answered the extravagant claims of Rome.

In the mind of the ordinary Roman Catholic, a priest of the Church of England holds an improper ordination. Therefore his sacerdotal functions as a representative of God are invalid. To the Anglican, whose insistence on apostolic succession is one of the touchstones of his faith, this is the rankest of insults. For while many an Evangelical in the Church of England is in doctrine closer to his Presbyterian or Methodist neighbor than to the Anglo-Catholic, his historical position on apostolic succession still tends to bind him closer to the Anglo-Catholic.

Roman Catholic accusations against Canterbury center chiefly in the validity of its orders. They insist that the line of succession was irreparably interrupted during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, they insist, had no authority as a bishop, because of alterations in the ordinal used at his consecration.

One of the most resented Roman accusations insists that it was Henry VIII who was the founder of the Church of England and that the king or queen is still its Supreme Head. The Anglican would quickly retort that the proper title should be Supreme Governor, not Supreme Head, a change which Elizabeth brought about in 1559. He would probably also add that Henry chose the title to get easy access to church property and funds, not because he desired to be its spiritual head.

The history of Roman difficulties in England goes back to the Council of Whitby in 664 and the debates on the date of Easter and the shape of the tonsure. Irish Christianity never did blend well with the Latin. Rome never had so firm a hold on England as on other provinces, and the Anglican can quite justifiably still claim membership in the Holy Catholic Church, the church from which Rome herself branched off during the Middle Ages.

The brief return of a Roman Catholic monarch to the English throne in the person of Bloody Mary offers Anglicans good ammunition. One need not even count the number of her martyrs to argue tellingly. Cardinal Pole, her special nuncio from Rome, apparently thought more highly of the validity of Anglican ordination than do modern Roman Catholics. He failed to reordain and reconsecrate bishops and priests who had won their character since the time of Henry's break with Rome. Thus he tacitly admitted the efficacy of Anglican ordination.

Even with the accession of Elizabeth the Pope failed in political astuteness. For one thing, he delayed the excommunication of queen and people for twelve years; thus he tacitly admitted they were still loyal members of his fold. For another, the Jesuit plot to assassinate Elizabeth won him no more popularity than his intrigues with Philip of Spain, who was soon to launch an armada.

Current differences of opinion between Rome and Canterbury revolve chiefly about three modern dogmas—papal infallibility, the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her assumption. Even in practical church work, however, the Anglican sharply resents the totalitarianism and intolerance of Rome, its double-facedness, its proselytizing. However much some Anglicans like Roman practices

and customs; however much they call themselves Catholics, the Church of England is still as far from Rome as an Eskimo from the equator.

THEODORE J. KLEINHANS

A NEW THEORY OF CHRIST'S BIRTH

An erroneous view of the birth of Christ has recently been espoused over the Mutual Network and international short wave radio stations by M. R. DeHaan, M. D., of Grand Rapids, Mich., on the program "The Radio Bible Class." Dr. DeHaan's explanation of Christ's birth, which we might call the "blood-birth theory," gives a physical explanation to the article of the Apostles' Creed, which affirms that Christ was "conceived of the Holy Ghost." This semiplausible but heretical theory, briefly put, asserts: The Bible teaches that Jesus was conceived in the womb of a Jewish virgin by a supernatural insemination of the Holy Ghost, apart from any generation by a human father; furthermore, this Child, Jesus, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of a supernaturally inseminated mother, was sinless.

The theory is an attempt to answer the question, "How could Jesus be born of a woman and yet be sinless?" Some theologians have answered this question by making the Blessed Virgin Mary out to have been sinless. The "blood-birth" theory answers it through deductions from obstetrics.

Research in the process of human reproduction has definitely established that the blood which flows in an unborn baby's arteries and veins is not derived from its mother but is produced within the body of the foetus itself. An unfertilized ovum could never develop blood since the female egg, without the introduction of the male sperm, does not contain the elements necessary for the production of blood. The hen's egg is an example. An unfertilized hen's egg is just like the unfertilized human ovum except that it is on a different scale. If the unfertilized hen egg is placed in an incubator it would never develop into a baby chick, but eventually would decay. If, however, the incubated egg is fertilized by the introduction of male sperm, in a very few hours signs of life are recognizable, and it is not long before red streaks are seen in the egg. The male sperm uniting with the female ovum has produced life in that egg, the theorists explain, quoting Lev. 17:11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." From this they deduce: The male sperm is the source of blood, the seat of life.

Again, while from the time of conception to the actual birth blood does not go from the mother to the child, the mother's blood, however, does transmit to the child through the placenta (temporary tissue,

afterbirth) all the needed soluble nutritive elements and carries away the wastes from the child. This is accomplished by osmosis.

On the basis of these facts, the "blood-birth" theorist asserts that medical science has given the answer to how Christ, the Son of Man, with a body derived from Adam but without Adam's carrier of sin, his blood, could be sinless.

Here Heb. 2:14 is made to fit their picture. The fact that Christ took of man's flesh and blood, but not in the same way as all other men, means He did not take their blood. One of DeHaan's addresses, on the "Chemistry of the Blood," affirms the new belief as follows: "In the creation of man, Adam's body was made from the dust of the earth, but God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Since life is in the blood, this act resulted in the formation of blood in Adam's body, but the first Adam's blood was corrupted and sin transmitted through it to all mankind. In the last Adam and the second man, new and divine and sinless blood is produced in a body that was the seed of Adam and by this resulted in the production of divine blood."

According to its adherents, this theory proves other important teachings of Scripture. Since Christ had divine, sinless blood, it is only natural that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." When the Apostle says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," the "no good thing" dwelling in his flesh is sinful blood. The teaching on Christ's death also takes a new twist: Sin made human blood corruptible. Soon after death decay sets in, and it begins in the blood. Christ, with divine blood, had no such experience at His death, hence He was only apparently dead on Calvary; His blood enabled Him to die for the sins of others without ever dying itself. Lazarus, in the grave only a day more than Christ, was already decaying because his blood was sinful; Christ did not start to decay because His divine blood never would cease to be the life of His flesh. Other similar deductions can be drawn from this theory.

In evaluating this theory, let us note first that biology itself invalidates it. While a mother contributes no blood to her child, it does not follow that the father alone contributes all the constituents of blood. The father contributes some of the essentials of blood. Without sexual union, foetal life, which makes its own blood, is impossible. Blood potentials, however, are not the only contribution of the male; conception would be impossible without other factors, such as genes.

Scripture likewise contradicts this theory, totally and finally, and points out the fallacies in its conclusions.

1. According to the theory, divine blood was received into the human body of Christ, since only divine blood would save us. Obviously such a statement is based on the erroneous assumption that "sinless" and "divine" are synonymous words. Adam before the Fall was sinless, but his blood was not divine. He was created sinless.

2. Divine blood was not given to Christ in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary from heaven. Jesus did not bring His human nature with Him from heaven. Jesus was truly "Abraham's seed," "David's Branch," etc. Heb. 2:14 expressly says He partook of flesh and blood. It was earthly, human blood, blood of the generations of His forebears.

3. The theory would have us believe Christ's blood was only *borne* (carried) by Mary and not *born* of her. Scripture assures us that Christ, in every human essential, was truly the "Fruit of thy [Mary's] womb." Natural generation is the fruit of male and female union, Christ's birth was out-of-the-ordinary generation. The Holy Spirit caused the Blessed Virgin Mary to conceive Him without genes, the contributions the male makes in ordinary generation. When the Blessed Virgin Mary asked how she could conceive without a husband, she was told: "The *power* of the Highest shall overshadow thee."

4. Scripture tells us the Incarnation involved not merely the birth of our Lord's divine nature, which had existed from eternity, but the birth of Jesus Christ.

5. God is a spirit, and blood cannot run in nonexistent veins. Human blood is human.

6. The theory that Christ's divine blood saves sinners who have sinful blood as the "no good thing" in their flesh is based on a complete misunderstanding of the nature of sin. In Aristotelian terms, sin does not belong to the substance of man but is an accident. The "no good thing" in human flesh is not sinful blood, but a part of our total depravity.

7. To say that Christ's blood had to be divine blood so that He could die and yet not die is untenable because of two considerations: First, Christ, although with human blood, was sinless. He did not have to die. He gave His life voluntarily; it was a true ransom. Second, the assertion is a contradiction in terms.

Ultimately the "blood-birth" theory turns the personal union of Christ into a personal combination. Medical science cannot explain the unique union of natures in Christ. Science can shed increasing light on the birth process of other children, but the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem eludes human understanding and remains a miracle.

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