

Under the Banner of Christian Charity: A Reply to Mark Mallett

Kevin J. Symonds, M.A.

Developments continue to occur after the alleged mystic Fr. Michel Rodrigue was “disavowed” by Bishops Robert [Bourgon](#) and Gilles [Lemay](#). Mark Mallett has penned a broad [response](#) over on *Countdown to the Kingdom* (CTTK) entitled *Scripture—If I Have Not Love*. I have noted the following problems in his post:

1. Broad-brush criticism;
2. Circular reasoning, accompanied by an *a priori* acceptance of prophetic claims;
3. Not recognizing the possible gnostic-like appeal of “advance knowledge;”
4. A presentation resulting in a “fear-based” message.

Broad-Brush Criticism

Mallett begins with a citation from 1 Corinthians 13:2, setting the tone for the article. In it, St. Paul talks about having prophecy, comprehension, knowledge and faith *but without love*, for then we have nothing. This citation might well silence (if not shame) CTTK’s critics with an alleged use of biblical authority, as well as serve as an indirect criticism of various critics of CTTK.

It is true that no Catholic would argue the authority of the Scriptures, but a particular *application* of Scripture is quite open for criticism. Mallett’s argument here is that the critics of CTTK do not have love in their criticisms. Is that the case? What evidence does Mallett provide in his article?

The only thing that Mallett provides is a blanket assertion that CTTK’s critics do not believe in the gift of prophecy.

Mallett provides an example by citing a critic, without naming him, stating that some of the material on CTTK was “‘baptized astrology, End Times speculation sold as ‘prophecy,’ and fear-based gnosticism.’” Mallett then belittles this person by saying, “Yes, this is how some of the ‘intellects’ in the Catholic media today view prophecy, a gift of the Holy Spirit affirmed in Scripture and Tradition.”

Mallett does not name the critic, but he is actually quoting Catholic media personality and former *Catholic Answers* apologist Patrick Coffin, who made this remark on his [Facebook](#) page:

Two Canadian bishops have come out strongly against the pronouncements and predictions of Fr. Michel Rodrigue—his own bishop and the one from the Diocese in which he was ordained. I am doing a feature on this inside www.coffinnation.com. Why have they rejected his efforts? Because it's mostly looney tunes, guys, new variations on an old problem: baptized astrology, End Times speculation sold as “prophecy,” and fear-based gnosticism. The perfect bit of theater to step forth to exploit the Covid-19 lockdown/BLM/AntiFa/cultural upheaval time known as “2020.”

Mallett has made a sweeping generalization about Coffin, an unwarranted judgment of his intentions. In a rather circumspect manner (itself a bit problematic here), Mallett accuses Coffin of virtually rejecting prophecy as a gift of the Holy Spirit. That is a very serious claim because Mallett has actually accused Coffin (and others) of rejecting an article of the Catholic Faith (i.e., prophecy as a gift of the Holy Spirit). This assertion is not the same as stating that Coffin (and others) reject every or some alleged individual prophecies on the CTTK web site.

Here, the burden of proof is upon Mallett to provide evidence where Coffin and CTTK’s other critics rejects prophecy as a gift of the Holy Spirit. I have spoken to Coffin in the past about private revelation and he left no impression of having denied prophecy as an article of divine and Catholic

Under the Banner of Christian Charity: A Reply to Mark Mallett

Kevin J. Symonds, M.A.

Faith. Mallett seems to have fallen into the trap of conflating the true, supernatural gift of prophecy with the individual alleged prophecies promoted on the CTTK web site.

The two are not the same thing.

Now, I cannot speak for *everyone* who has criticized CTTK, but Mallett seems to me to be broad and himself rather judgmental of CTTK's critics. Judging one's *intentions* is certainly a difficult task. One has to know the inner workings of a person's heart, and that is not easy to do without knowing the person and knowing him or her well. I don't know if Mallett knows Patrick Coffin personally, or even at all, but Mallett has made a judgment on the man's heart that is not warranted by the quotation given in the article.

Mallett develops this theme of being judgmental toward CTTK's critics in the rest of his article. For example, he accuses his critics, directly or indirectly, of not being "childlike" (here read: "docile") to prophecy. He even goes to the extreme of referring to CTTK's critics as spreading "fear-mongering." From context, this likely means people who fear (reject?) prophecy. Again, Mallett accuses people of harboring certain intentions, but provides no evidence. In fact, the expression can be turned on its head to show that the exact opposite is true.

The critics of CTTK are *not* the ones spreading "fear-mongering." That unhappy characterization is applicable to CTTK. Alleged prophecies on CTTK (refuges, three days of darkness, etc.) have been tossed around for years. I myself have heard them since even before becoming Catholic in 1997. The three days of darkness was one of the earliest ones that I became familiar with.¹ I hear stories of late about the havoc that many contemporary "prophecies" on this topic have wrought in people's lives and even families. The picture is quite tragic and I doubt that Mallett is aware of the damage he and others have been causing over the years. In fact, I'd like to remind Mallett that he, himself, had a [hand](#) in the [promotion](#) of Charlie Johnston's disputed mystical experiences. This was despite *obvious* signs from the get-go that all was not well in that particular case.

Mallett heaps further opprobrium upon his critics with a not so well-veiled attack against Bishops Bourgon and Lemay, Mallett takes a swipe at their recent letters concerning Fr. Rodrigue's "authenticity." "[Y]es, there are bishops who disavow the prophecies published here...etc." He follows this statement with saying that "clergy and seers and visionaries are all human and thus prone to mistakes and misunderstandings." Does Mallett contend that Bishops Bourgon and Lemay have made a mistake with respect to Fr. Rodrigue? If so, how? Mallett provides no evidence, but that does not deter him from continuing to accuse (directly or indirectly) them and CTTK's critics along these lines.

Towards the end of the article, Mallett wishes "that there be no jealousy toward seers who are gaining more attention than ourselves." Mallett apparently believes that there are at least *some* critics who are motivated by jealousy. While I cannot prove or disprove this particular assertion, I don't believe it's fair for Mallett to make an obviously broad stroke toward his critics in general. Such characterizes are better left to the individual case, not the broader picture.

Circular Reasoning, Accompanied by an a priori Acceptance of Prophetic Claims

¹ According to the story I heard then, demons would be lurking outside of our homes, rapping on shut blinds/shades, talking in voices of loved ones. We would need to have three lit (100% beeswax!) candles that will miraculously not melt. In college, some 20 years ago, a friend of mine joked to me about getting super soakers loaded up with holy water and have a go outside during the three days of darkness.

Under the Banner of Christian Charity: A Reply to Mark Mallett

Kevin J. Symonds, M.A.

It is at this point that a word needs to be stated about the intellectual foundation upon which Mallett has based his article. Mallett's article contains circular reasoning and an *a priori* acceptance of prophetic claims.

Early on, Mallett states the following:

In the prophetic words posted daily here at Countdown, we hear the cry of the Blessed Mother from seers around the world who've never met each other, who speak different languages, who celebrate different rites... yet, saying the same thing: we have been warned, but we have not listened. Heaven has sung a dirge, but we did not weep.

The opening sentence is presumptive in that it asserts the "words posted daily here at Countdown" are indeed "prophetic" and that CTTK has people who "hear the cry of the Blessed Mother." On what authority does Mallett base these statements? Contextually, one is led to believe that these words are "prophetic" based on nothing more than the say-so of the founders of CTTK who have editorial control over the site's content. Who are *these* four people to declare something to be truly "prophetic?" Do they claim to have the charism of discernment? If so, who has verified that they possess this charism? What proofs exist for this conclusion? Mallett says of CTTK's work in this regard:

For our part, we who work behind the scenes of this website continue to have daily discussions to carefully navigate the graces but also dangers that are present in the discernment of prophecy. There is a lot of theology, research, weighing of magisterial statements, etc. that goes into everything we do. We take our responsibility seriously. We back everything here with Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the Church Fathers, and the Magisterium and are ready to defend this work on those terms. Why? Because this is about souls—not about seers.

Some circular logic is beginning to develop. The statements on CTTK are declared to be prophetic because (alleged) contemporary prophets *say* they are and CTTK agrees with them. It necessarily results in the question: by whose authority? Mallett claims that CTTK uses theology, research and magisterial statements, but they appear to be using these resources rather poorly.

Mallett's phrase about hearing the "cry of the Blessed Mother" is a criterion of discernment in his thinking. He takes as a marker for authenticity the wide variance of peoples and languages, yet the same message. Such variance and uniformity, however, does *not* constitute *de facto* proof of a supernatural character concerning an alleged private revelation. There is a lot more to factor in discernment of these matters than Mallett has presented.

In the present day, we have to factor-in things like the Internet and a nearly instantaneous, global communications' facility. What an alleged visionary says in Africa may harmonize with someone in Siberia, but to argue that such is proof, itself, of authenticity is a *non sequitur*. Other supportive facts would have to be present in order to draw such a conclusion. I would also like to point out that the above example is rooted in the *human* sphere of influence. As practicing Catholics, one must also factor-in the possibility of *demonic* machinations.

Demons can attempt to deceive people through some rather extraordinary means. Sticking to our Africa/Siberia example, it is possible that the demonic powers may attempt to fabricate a message uniformity across nations and languages. Having far-superior powers of intellect, when compared to humans, the demons (as fallen angels) could understand the value the appearance of an

Under the Banner of Christian Charity: A Reply to Mark Mallett

Kevin J. Symonds, M.A.

apparent, but false uniformity, when encountering an often uncritical, human mind. Given that man is fallen and prey to concupiscence, we must, therefore, be all the more careful.

On this note, I'd like to point out that Mallett himself states, "[t]here is nothing the seers are saying today that is not already in the news headlines." If that's the case, then we have *all the more reason to be cautious of these alleged seers!* Are they getting their information from authentic, divine sources or are these "messages" emanations from their own minds having read the news headlines? Does Mallett not see a cognitive dissonance present here in his post?

Continuing on, there here appears to be a problem with Mallett's *modus operandi* on prophecy: he has taken an *a priori* intellectual stance towards prophecy. In other words, Mallett takes as his starting point that an alleged revelation is *authentic* and then works from there. His justification for this approach appears to be the Scriptural mandate not to "despise prophecy."² Further evidence of Mallett's *a priori* reasoning can be found throughout the article in the following examples:

- "we hear the cry of the Blessed Mother from seers around the world...etc."
- "we have been warned, but we have not listened."
- "Heaven has sung a dirge, but we did not weep."
- "...some of the prophecies here...."
- "yes, there are bishops who disavow the prophecies published here...."
- "we rejoice in the truth of Our Lord's and Lady's words, even if they are difficult to hear."
- "...including the prophecies on this website that are authentic...."

Here, Mallett's methodology is mistaken. In matters of alleged private revelation, one does *not presume authenticity* from the get-go. Doing so is not to "despise prophecy" nor to dishonor or disobey God. It is mistaken or misguided devotion to think otherwise. I once heard someone characterize such wayward devotion in terms of "if you doubt, you're out." Again, this is *a priori* reasoning and it is not the proper starting point in matters of alleged private revelation. In assessing private revelation, a reserved stance is best, as the facts become available. This does no violence to Christian piety. At the same time, this kind of neutrality helps guard against a falsely pious gullibility.

There are many levels in play here, all inter-connected, having a dynamism all their own. Rather than engage in an unnecessarily protracted response, I will state simply that this inter-connectedness and dynamism is very complicated and involved. It is why ecclesiastical authorities usually take their time with alleged private revelation (unless there is *obvious* evidence).³

Not Recognizing Possible Gnostic-Like Appeal of "Advance Knowledge"

People like to feel special, to have the "inside scoop" on what is going on in the world, to feel superior to other "unenlightened" people.⁴ There is hardly a better way to get this feeling of "specialness" than by attending to the latest "visionary" or "message from heaven." With language like "we hear the cry of the Blessed Mother," Mallett is setting himself up to creating not only an "us

² 1 Thessalonians 5:20.

³ There is an important distinction between the *authenticity* of an alleged private revelation vs. the *integrity* of the person alleging it. A person may be *sincere* and have *no guile* in claiming to receive a private revelation. Sincerity, though, does not mean the alleged revelation is *authentic*.

⁴ Such a feeling is exacerbated when one is lacking in proper guidance.

Under the Banner of Christian Charity: A Reply to Mark Mallett

Kevin J. Symonds, M.A.

versus them” mentality. By this, he also opens himself to the possibility of accusations to promoting a kind of neo-Gnostic “advance knowledge,” accessible to only some.

This concern comes out consistently in Mallett’s article when he speaks about prophecy. Remembering that he fails to make a critical distinction, Mallett gives the impression that somehow, if you are not on board with “prophecy,” you are a bad Catholic (again, “doubt/you’re out”). You have to be “plugged into” this knowledge that emanates from today’s alleged prophets in order to be a devout, practicing Catholic. This is nothing more than the application of social pressure. Nobody likes to feel “left out,” especially from what appears to be rather extraordinary things (visions, messages, etc.).

People *desire* union with God; it is built into our nature. While there are many paths that lead to God, there are also many other paths that lead us *away* from Him. In the case of people who succumb to seeking the latest alleged private revelation, they risk becoming spiritual “gluttons” chasing after the “next fix.” It is *not* God’s desired path for us to greater union with Him.

A Presentation Resulting in a “Fear-Based” Message

Following closely upon the previous discussion, Mallett’s largely fear-based message of end-times apocalypticism arises, and an attending emotionally-driven hysteria. With this as the hook to “get on the train or be left out,” Mallett potentially guilt-trips people into his worldview of end-times apocalypticism. This happens primarily through his accusations of people rejecting the gift of prophecy (considered *in se*). No one wants to stand accused of such a thing and Mallett’s later usage of Our Lord’s words about the childlike of heart entering heaven is nothing more than adding fuel to the fire.⁵

Thinking he is faithful to what Jesus says in the Gospels about what is revealed to the simple, Mallett has pitted “intellectuals” against the “childlike.”⁶ The picture Mallett paints essentially divides his readers into two camps:

1. **Camp 1:** those who question prophecy are non-devout (evil?) intellectuals who are not childlike in that they do not simply roll-over and accept the loving words from heaven.⁷
2. **Camp 2:** CTTK represents the childlike of heart and are the favored ones of Heaven because they “simply accept” the (alleged) words from heaven.

Setting aside Mallett’s apparent presumption here, we see his earlier failure to distinguish between the charism of prophecy and claims to be exercising it. Moreover, Mallett again fails to address the possibility of a “pink elephant” in the room: who decides these *are* words from heaven?

The proper answer is, of course, the Church. Mallett’s division into camps does not support this necessity. After providing a citation to the *Catechism*, he makes his not so well-veiled statement against Bishops Bourgon and Lemay, both having “disavowed” Fr. Rodrigue as we saw earlier. In other words, when two Bishops publicly indicate that there are problems with Fr. Rodrigue, Mallett disparages their rightful authority.

It is clear that Mallett casts these two Bishops in with the evil “intellectuals” who don’t believe in the charism of prophecy. Mallett is beyond walking on thin ice here, publicly taking two Bishops

⁵ Matthew 18:1-5. Mallett builds upon this in the next paragraph by stating, “But not so with the humble of heart who are not intimidated by the indignant fear-mongering of those who would sooner stone the prophets than carefully discern them.”

⁶ Matthew 11:25. Mallett does this despite a call to “unity” at the end of his article.

⁷ I am, of course, speaking here using Mallett’s terms. The reader is to keep in mind the earlier-mentioned distinction between the *charism* of prophecy as an article of Catholic Faith from individual alleged prophecies.

Under the Banner of Christian Charity: A Reply to Mark Mallett

Kevin J. Symonds, M.A.

to task with no proof to back up his assertion. Mallett's guilting them (and others) by further quoting St. Paul's words about love being patient just adds salt to the open wound.⁸ I don't believe that Mallett sees just how contumacious he appears by this point of his article.

Unfortunately, Mallett's missing the mark propels him to write even more in the article that is simply baffling. After quoting 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, he states that this passage:

...is the key mindset necessary in continuing to discern the alleged prophetic words that are being compiled here. That patient discernment is necessary; that mockery of the prophetic is out of place; that there be no jealousy toward seers who are gaining more attention than ourselves; that we are not rude and inflated in our own speculations and opinions on the times; that we do not rejoice when a seer may be censured; and when they are, that we do not brood over the injury caused and turn against our bishops. And that, above all, using the gift of discernment, the tools of Sacred Tradition, and reading the "signs of the times," we rejoice in the truth of Our Lord's and Lady's words, even if they are difficult to hear.

Interestingly, Mallett himself characterizes the "prophetic words" on CTTK as "alleged." This is the only time he uses this word in the article. If they *are* "alleged" and people choose not to heed them because they come across as "fear-based gnosticism" to them, then why is Mallett complaining in the first place? Perhaps because his tendency is to attribute *all* rejection of prophecies to evil intentions within a person's heart.

Mallett ends the above paragraph with the same presumption that we saw before, that claims that Our Lord and Our Lady's words are being spoken through these purported visionaries and mystics. Despite claims to be aware of the "dangers that are present in the discernment of prophecy," his presumptions continue on, adding that CTTK "take[s] [its] responsibility seriously." He wishes to chalk up people's alleged present "stoning of prophets" to the "spirit of rationalism" that has "infected...our times."

I don't disagree that Rationalism is certainly present on the world scene today. The problem is Mallett's *application* of it with respect to private revelation. His presentation lends itself to thinking that anytime a purported visionary is "disavowed," that the legitimate ecclesiastical authority is acting from Rationalism, having "lost the capacity to hear the voice of God." That is not necessarily the case whenever said authority renders an opinion or judgment in these matters.

Mallett concludes: "[T]hose of us who are heeding Heaven's Messages need to be the face of mercy, the face of love: of patience, kindness, etc. Let us strive to keep unity, even if we disagree." Once again, the same projected supposition is in place: "We" who keep the "Messages" are the faithful ones and (by implication) are witnesses to "those" who do not "believe" the "Messages."

It is truly baffling how this piece by Mark Mallett, under the banner of Christian charity, is engaging in what amounts to disrespect for his readers, self-assertion against legitimate Church authority, and potential manipulation of the faithful.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.