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## Rev. Dr. Owen B. McGuire

### A Fixed Easter and Calendar Reform

This war has pushed into the background many questions that were widely discussed before it commenced. Among them were a fixed Easter and Calendar Reform. These two questions are not entirely identical: for the advocates of Calendar Reform want much more than the "stabilizing of Easter." We can regret that the discussion has ceased "for the duration"; and I do hope it will be renewed when the world has returned to sanity. My reasons for

this wish and hope will appear below.

To explain what is meant by Calendar Reform and a fixed Easter is beyond the bounds of this column. But if you wish to see a discussion of the problem thoroughly set forth, with all the arguments for and against, also an analysis of the two principal plans proposed for the change, I can recommend to you a pamphlet from the pen of my friend, the Rev. Doctor Schwieger, a priest of the Buffalo diocese.

The subject should be of interest to Catholics even if the Reform never becomes a reality. It should be of interest also to Protestants, for one of the two chief plans proposed is "The International Fixed Calendar" of which says Doctor Schwieger, "the late George Eastman, of Kodak fame, was the 'Angel' and Mons Cotsworth of Canada is still the prophet."

#### THREE ARTICLES

Dr. Schwieger's brochure consists of three articles published respectively in *The Columbian*, in *The Ecclesiastical Review* and in *The Fortnightly Review* (now defunct) of St. Louis Mo. At the request of the World Calendar Association, the Doctor revised these three articles in order to give them unity as a whole. You can obtain a copy of his pamphlet, on request, by writing to The World Calendar Association, 465 Madison Ave., New York City.

I have said I hope this discussion will be renewed. It did much good while it was proceeding. It can do much good, and no harm, if it is revived. We hear much now-a-days about Western Civilization which means, and can only mean the Civilization of Christian Europe from which the Civilization of all the Americas stem. And the discussion of this problem necessarily brought into view many historical facts that show the enormous influence of the Catholic Church in the development of that Civilization.

Take, as an instance, the history of the Calendar now in use. During the first three centuries of our era, the Calendar used by the Church was the Julian Calendar, so called because it was Julius Caesar who, with the aid of an Egyptian Astronomer, dethroned the moon and based his calculations on a solar year of 365 days and 6 hours. That was in the year 46 B. C. But the point here is that the first reform of the Julian Calendar was made by the authority of the Catholic Church assembled in Council at Nice in 325 A. D. **STROKE OF GENIUS**

The Catholic Church again assembled in Council, this time at Trent, discussed the necessity of Calendar Reform. Gregory XIII following the recommendations of the Council and after consultation with the governments and Catholic astronomers of the day, proceeded and decreed the use of the Calendar as we now have it.

"It was," says Dr. Schwieger, "a stroke of genius."  
"A little and a little make a mickle," says Poor Richard, and the little matter of 11 or 12 seconds had made a big mickle in the years that ran from 46 B. C. to 1582 A. D. Caesar's year had then lagged ten days behind the sun. So Gregory XIII decreed that the new Calendar should go into effect on the night of Oct. 4, 1582, and that the next day should be counted as Oct. 15, not as Oct. 5. (It was, by the way, on Oct. 4, 1582, that St. Teresa of Jesus died at Alba. The next day was Oct. 15; and after her canonization her feast was decreed for that date.)

The Eastern separated Churches still follow the Julian Calendar, so that their Christmas, for instance, now lags 13 days behind ours. An English Protestant historian referring to this "old style" dating of the Russian Church and State said that they preferred to be at war with the heavenly bodies rather than be in agreement with the Roman Pontiff. But those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The Englishman's own government adopted the Gregorian Calendar only in 1582—170 years after the reform. And even then an orthodox Protestant mob marched through the streets of London shouting: "No Popery! Give us back our eleven days!"—that being the number of days that in 1753 put them "at war with the heavenly bodies."

**SABBATH CHANGE**  
But that it was the authority of the Catholic Church that gave us our Calendar was not the only way the most telling historical fact revealed in the discussion. There

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