

LIBRARY SIGNPOST

By REV. BENEDICT EHMANN
Atoms and Saints

It is our duty to say frequently the Act of Hope. But in these days especially we have to be watchful that it is in our hearts as well as on our lips. In his book on God and the Atom, Monsignor Ronald Knox gives an encouraging word to the fearful of today. He says:

"However discouraging we find the portents of our time, we are not necessarily justified in abandoning the old instinct we had that there is a Providence watching over human affairs. It is not necessary to conclude that the world is hurrying to its dissolution. . . . It may be that mankind is being called upon to exercise the virtue of hope; and, if so, Christian people must think twice before they abandon themselves to the luxury of world-deceit; before they wash their hands of our communal guilt, and betake themselves, singing, 'O Paradise, O Paradise' to the hilltops. We shall do better, I think, to help man the pumps of the labouring ship, and let the world see that hoping is one of our specialties." (p. 122).

God has given us Christians of the later centuries a lot of help for the virtue of hope. We have the experience and the lesson of nineteen centuries as encouragements to trust in Providence. Looking over the long and turbulent record, one's conviction grows unshakable that, without the Divine Hand being always with her, the Church could never have survived the many enormous shocks which she has sustained. In *The Everlasting Man*, G. K. Chesterton has a chapter called "The Five Deaths of the Faith" which marvellously captures the spirit of tension and even the excitement of the worst perils through which the Church has passed.

With that special aptitude he had for getting at the very heart of matters, he says:

"Europe has been turned upside down over and over again; and at the end of each of these revolutions the same religion has again been found on top. The Faith is always converting the age, not as an old religion, but as a new religion." (p. 312).

I am reminded of these matters this week by the fossils of St. Patrick and St. Benedict. Men like these should stand as emblems against the present mood of world-deceit. The times they lived in were as dire and terrible as our own. Read about them in Father Dunne's book, *CHURCH HISTORY IN THE LIGHT OF THE SAINTS*. If a man knew history, he wouldn't say that the Church has gone through the centuries, dominating and tyrannizing and on the march for power; he wouldn't say that back has been with her, or that she had what a gambler would call "the breaks." Not if he knew history would he say or think such things.

But the point I want to make is not this, so much as the even more important point of our Christian hope in the Providence of God. In every one of these black times, God's man (and sometimes it was God's woman) was there, ready with grace and skill for the tremendous mission. And for the most part, their power was not the power of flesh and blood, or of domineering personalities. Most of them were humanly weak, some of them even sickly. They suffered setbacks of the worst kind. They were tried as gold in the fire. But what they all had, the great, divine power they all wielded, was holiness — surrender to God, union with Him, living always in the cloud of His presence by day and the pillar of fire by night.

Such was Patrick in the fifth century. Mighty Rome had fallen, and with it Western civilization came tumbling down to ruin. On every frontier, savage barbarian hordes were pressing through in a fireless flood of invasion and bloodshed and rapine. In Patrick's youth, the great Augustine was writing *The City of God* while the Vandal savages were pounding at the walls of his earthly city. And Patrick was a slave-boy on Irish hills, made captive in a barbarian raid. He nourished his soul in hope and prayer, eventually escaped to the Continent to prepare himself by devotion and study for his great mission, and finally at the age of sixty became a missionary to Ireland where, after thirty years of preaching and mighty labor, he changed the face of the land to a beautiful garden of God, studded with churches and monasteries and fair houses of learning. And it was from these holy places that there went out to all places of Europe for the next six or seven centuries, thousands of saints and scholars to restore order to a broken and blackened Europe.

Working hand in hand with them were the men of Benedict, the Benedictines, whose abbeys became centers of reconstruction, where the now tamed barbarians learned the arts of peace — what Peter Maurin has called "cult (worship), culture, and agriculture." It was during Patrick's final years that Benedict was born, to carry on the great lineage of providential men. The rebuilding of Europe after collapse of the Roman Empire was entirely the work of the Benedictines and of the Irish monks and scholars. You can get a very good bird's-eye view of all this from the following books: *Founders of the Middle Ages*, by Edward K. Rvand; *The Gateway to the Middle Ages*, by Eleanor Shipley Duckett; *The Wandering Scholars*, by Helen Waddell.

Our hope today lies in this: looking to God's guiding hand, and living in devoted and faithful service. What He did through Patrick and Benedict, He can renew in our times. "Lord, make us holy: Give us the Saints we need; May we know them when they are with us!"

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Fr. Ehmann Says



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Own Story



Lewis F. Riedman, former managing editor of the *Commonwealth "Daily Worker"*, now on Notre Dame University faculty is penning "This is My Story," due in October. The book will compare, his friends say, his experiences as a freethinker, as a Communist and tells why he decided to return to the Catholic Church.

Children's Books For March
New York — (N.C.) — The Catholic Children's Book Club has announced its March selections: "Belinda's New Shoes," by Wilfred Bromhall, and "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," by Wanda Gag, for children 6 to 8; "Gold of Gianara," by Maura Lavery, for children 9 to 11; "Barbaric Iron," by Herbert Best, for boys 12 to 14, and "In the Same Boat," by Kitty Burne, for girls 12 to 14.

Know It!

(Answers on Page 16)
If you answer all five, you're perfect; three or four, good; if only one or two, not so good.

1. A certain kind of fish is called "St. Peter's fish" because it has a black spot, like a fingerprint, back of each gill. What Gospel incident, connected with the temple tax, gave rise to this legend?
2. Why does the church bell toll the death knell?
3. The following designations of religious faiths and their main characteristics are a bit mixed up. Straighten them out by placing the characteristic against the religion to which it refers:
Catholics — believe in one God, but not in Jesus Christ.
Protestants — believe that the Pope is infallible.
Orthodox — worship creatures as gods.
Jews — separated from the Church in the eleventh century.
Pagans — believe that the Bible is the only rule of faith.
4. What two animals in the Old Testament are represented as speaking like humans.
5. Why does "Job's news" means bad news, and why is the bringer of such news called "Job's post"?

The Literary Cavalade

Spring Cleaning

By John O'Connor

The quarterly dilemma has arrived. The reviewer, faced with the Spring Book, must make up his mind to neglect several books and treat one at length or to review several briefly and give no thorough treatment to any. Capsule criticism and pocket magazines being the order of the day, we might as well adopt the fashion for this week.

"The Autobiography of William Allen White" has finally been released by Macmillan, (\$1.75). The world famous editor from America's mid-west recalls his life with great detail but with a polished style that carries the reader on to such succeeding chapters. The book even somewhat abruptly in 1933, for that was twice the author had come to his memoirs when death interrupted him two years ago.

Thus, a number of interesting details about events in which he was an informed observer or an active participant are not recorded. His son, W. L. White fills in the last pages — and well. Older readers, especially the men, will find a great deal in the book that will carry them back to the days of Teddy Roosevelt, the Washington Disarmament Conference and other events in American history. To younger people it is an excellent introduction to a history of more normal times.

White, self-made and American to the core, looked on journalism as more than just a means to make money. One of the last of that vanishing American type, the small, independent publisher, he believed in local organs of opinion and in local news coverage as well as an interest in international affairs. In the light of this, I can't help including his famous short editorial the day that Frank Murray, who killed so many newspapers, died. Wrote White:

"Frank Murray, the great publisher, is dead. Frank Murray contributed to the journalism of his day the great talent of a social parser, the words of a money changer, and the backbone of an underdog. He and his kind have almost succeeded in transforming a once noble profession into eight percent costality. May he rest in trust."

Few Americans were more representative of their age and their area. William Allen White was — and he was and is an outstanding example of honesty and common-sense in American life. He lifted himself by his own efforts — something not understood in many parts of this country for the past thirteen years.

C. S. Lewis is with us again. Those who enjoyed the famous *SCREWTAP LETTERS* and *PIEHLANDIA* will be anxious to get *THE GREAT DIVORCE*, (Macmillan, \$1.00). In this short and intelligent fantasy, Lewis boards a bus that is taking a group of people from Hell to Heaven. Each guest is to be given another chance. If he or she will, deny and disown the sin that brought them to Hell, they may have another chance of Heaven.

All turn away except one man — and his was the sin of lust. Mr. Lewis, it seems to me, makes a great point there. There are six other deadly sins and if you look about you, within and without the Church you will find that people are preoccupied with only one sin — the abuse of sex. This works out in the highest of circles and I have known one highly touted editor to justly condemn a bad movie, hit at international politics — and then lend his support to one of the most corrupt political machines in the country. The other visitors to Heaven, incidentally, refuse to take off their mantles of false pride and self-justification . . . and the bus goes back.

Whether you are acquainted with the works of the Russian giant Tolstoy or whether he is just a name to you, you will profit from and enjoy *TOLSTOY* by Susan Lavin, a Yugoslav publisher in England. (TOLSTOY Macmillan).

New to American readers, Dr. Lewis has written an excellent and brief introduction to the works and the teachings of the great novelist. Despite the strange and evil shapes that come from Russia, you do not have a complete panorama of world literature if you omit the works of the men of the steppe.

In Political Reconstruction Karl Llewellyn, who wrote the excellent *Brand Under Vargas* several years ago, steps past the boundaries of scholarship and into the arena of debate. While the debate will be there — and a heated one — I suspect that the Professor's thesis that the internal affairs of other countries are our concern will meet with great opposition. It is true that internal affairs affect us — but to stir up trouble in other nations is really asking for unrest forever.

Nor do such obviously fallacious reasons such as . . . political democracy is an end in itself and the opponent of all spiritual values . . . lead to the depth of the West. The author hardly cites the words of the Catholic Bishops who were here a year ago . . . a nation which refuses to accept its own people the full enjoyment of innate human rights, civil and religious, cannot be called upon to cooperate in the international community.

Do you think the Mallow papers might carry that statement, Doctor?

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