

Courier Journal

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Dr. Higgins Says:

Private Little History

The story is told—though it is difficult to believe—that this was the cynical answer of a certain gentleman (who should have known better) when he was confronted recently with a quotation from a Papal letter during a discussion on the social responsibilities of present-day Catholics.

The gentleman in question had been arguing that there is entirely too much talk among the present crop of seminarians and priests about the social problem. The clergy, he said, should stick to the last and, as for the laity, it ought to concern itself exclusively with its personal sanctification.

Which of the many Papal letters on this subject was called to his attention by way of rebuttal is of no particular consequence. It might have been, for example, the famous letter of Pope Benedict XV to the Bishop of Bergamo in which it is stated: "Let no priest think that there is question here of an activity which is foreign to the sacred ministry because it has to do with economics; for in this very social question the eternal salvation of souls is imperiled. Wherefore we desire that they count among their duties to apply themselves as much as they can, in their studies and by their vigilance and activities, to the theory and practice of social science."

It could have been this letter, or any one of a dozen others equally famous and equally pertinent.

But that is not the point. It is that our present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, has just written another letter on the social problem obviously intended for all of us to read. Our friend, if he overcomes his cynical scruples long enough to look at it, will derive from it very little comfort and no support whatsoever for his private little history.

His Holiness makes it clear in his recent letter to the president of the American Bishops of France that Catholics are not yet doing enough about social and economic reform. Of even greater significance is the fact that the Holy Father goes out of his way to reply formally and authoritatively to those who argue that personal sanctification is all that is necessary.

"The present times demand," this letter says, "that all Catholics should with all their energies restore to the social doctrine of the church its maximum efficiency and its maximum results. One would be creating illusions for oneself if one were to believe, as some people do, that one could disarm anticlericalism and anticatholicism by restricting the principles of Catholicism to the domain of private life. This 'minimalist' attitude would, on the contrary, merely give new pretexts to the adversaries of the church."

The Holy Father is using strong language to express what must be very strong convictions: "With all their energies... maximum efficiency... maximum results." This is the language of a father who is concerned about the spiritual and temporal welfare of his children and is conscious of his duty to arouse in them a sense of responsibility and to urge them on to the highest standards of conduct.

It is the language of the common father of Christians working about the good name of the church and worrying about its future in a world which again seems to be on the verge of disaster.

His Holiness realizes—more vividly perhaps than the rest of us—that the only bible which millions of people, and particularly the hungry and the dispossessed, ever look at is the example and the practice of the Christians who live in their midst. It is only from our example, such as it is, that they can be brought to learn about Christ and His mysteries. And it is only from our example that they can be brought to learn about the church which Christ has founded.

The moral is obvious and has been drawn by the greatest possible emphasis by the Holy Father himself.

The moral is this: The cause of Christ can flourish in our times only to the extent that Catholics represent His Church in the marketplace and in the political forums of the world as the friend and courageous advocate of social justice. To the extent that Catholics misrepresent the church by this indifference to social and economic problems and by their reluctance to convert their intimate convictions into actions in the whole domain of life, both public and private, the cause of Christ will suffer and the church will be held up to ridicule and scorn by her adversaries.

As a footnote to the warning of His Holiness we have at hand a recent statement by a competent American Catholic journalist who has only recently returned from Europe: "The leaders of the church over there know—perhaps better than we do over here—that denunciation of Communism simply does not meet the bill. I am sure there is not one person in Europe who is not fully aware of the fact that Catholicism is diametrically opposed to Communism. But the masses, desperately looking for a way out of their misery... are not satisfied to know what the church is against. They demand to know what the church stands for."

Individual Catholics and groups of Catholics, whether in Europe or in the United States, are the only ones who can tell the desperate masses what the church stands for. The Pope, to be sure, has told them repeatedly in the social encyclicals. But the very people who without further delay must be won to the cause of Christ have not read the encyclicals. For practical purposes, all that they know about the church is what they can learn from our example.

Do You Remember?

15 Years Ago—Aug. 15, 1932

Incorporation papers for the new St. Thomas Church, Rochester, were filed in the County Clerk's office.

10 Years Ago—Aug. 15, 1937

Conservation is fifth Bishop of Syracuse of His Excellency, the Most Rev. Walter A. Poretsky, of Rochester, brought a distinguished assembly to St. Patrick's Cathedral, Rochester. Present were four archbishops, 12 bishops, state and civic leaders.

5 Years Ago—Aug. 26, 1942

Citing cooperation given by pastors and assistants to the free citizenship education class movement, His Excellency Bishop Kearney in a letter to his priests gave the movement "heartiest approval." Movement was sponsored by the U. S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and was conducted by the Rochester Board of Education.

Abp. Stepinac's Darkest Hour

WORLD NEWS

PROTESTANT MINISTERS REPORT PRELATE GUILTY

JAILED ARCHBISHOP HAD ANTI-NAZI RECORD

WASHINGTON — For my part, I'll string along with Archbishop of Yugoslavia Stepinac of Zagreb.

Seven Protestant ministers from the United States, poised for their departure from Yugoslavia after enjoying the hospitality of Marshal Tito for two weeks, held a press conference and said: "Churchmen who had been tried and convicted were punished, not as religious believers, but as individuals guilty of crimes against the people for which they were morally accountable. In this number are clearly to be included the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojz Stepinac, whom we visited in the Lepoglava prison, and other monks and priests who belonged to the Ustashi movement and supported the wartime puppet state of Croatia as the time of the Ante Pavelic regime."

Archbishop Stepinac, addressing the Tito tribunal which tried him last fall, said: "I was not persona grata to either the Germans or the Ustashi, nor was I an Ustashi, nor did I take their oath as did your clerics here present. The Croatian nation unanimously declared itself for the Croatian State and I would have been a blackguard if I did not recognize and acknowledge the desire of the Croatian nation which had been enslaved in the former Yugoslavia."

Observers Romano, Vatican City newspaper, said the trial of Archbishop Stepinac would never have taken place if the Catholic hierarchy and clergy of Yugoslavia had been willing to accept the so-called liberation of any kind that there is of their country's de-Christianization.

The American Protestant ministers said they made their statement after viewing the documents used in the trial. One wonders what pains they

went to, before making such atrocious statements about religious persons, to make sure that they understood the foreign-language document they were permitted to see, and how they verified the authenticity of such documents, even if they said what the American visitors thought they said.

At the same press conference the ministers from the United States also said: "In the light of what we have seen and the inquiries we have made, we wish to state without reservation or any kind that there is today in Yugoslavia complete freedom of worship and respect for religious beliefs and institutions."

Again we say, this statement means nothing. Nobody denies that there is some freedom of worship in Yugoslavia. You can't stop worship; an individual can worship in his mind. What we do say, on the testimony of Archbishop Stepinac and countless others, is that there is no freedom of religion in Yugoslavia. To have freedom of worship the church as an institution must be free to exercise its full mission, which includes teaching, ministering, charities and other labors.

If you think there is religious freedom, not worship, mind you, in Yugoslavia, listen to the words Archbishop Stepinac addressed to the Tito tribunal which tried him: "Our Catholic schools, built at the cost of great sacrifice, have been taken away from us. The work of our seminaries has been made impossible... Our orphanages have been made useless... Our printing establishments are destroyed, and I do not know if one still exists. It is not, then, a scandal to allege that nowhere is the church so free as in Yugoslavia? ... Then there is the question of religious instruction in the schools. You have laid down

the rule: in the higher grades of the secondary schools religious instruction is forbidden, and in the lower grades according to choice. How can you give to children the right to determine for themselves when they have not grown up? And those in the higher grades who have the right to choose are not allowed freedom of choice in this respect... Our nursing sisters in the Catholic hospitals must bear untold miseries and hardships."

The report said the visiting ministers did not talk with Bishop Joseph P. Hurley, representative of the Vatican in Yugoslavia, or with the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The visitors, it was added, did not talk with any member of the Catholic hierarchy in Zagreb, but did talk with a Monsignor described as holding an official government post in Croatia—Bishop Hurley and the Orthodox Patriarch. It was said, were both out of town.

Well, Tito can import and export his visitors as he chooses, and they can issue statements over there and over here, but the fact remains that Archbishop Stepinac is in jail, following a trial by a Tito tribunal that even our own State Department had something to say about. I don't believe that seven hand-picked ministers from the United States can in less than two weeks learn more about the case of Archbishop Stepinac and his trial than the on-the-scene representatives of our State Department learned over months and years.

For my part, I'll believe Archbishop Stepinac who had the courage to tell Tito's court that the so-called national liberation movement in Yugoslavia had already taken the lives of between 260 and 270 Catholic priests. Yes, I'll string along with the archbishop.

It is notable, however, that the Protestant Revision of 1946 has corrected many of these differences. Now that the heat of impassioned controversy has died down, it is possible to view the ancient manuscripts with a more scholarly detachment and impersonality.

It makes us very happy to think that all Christians—Protestants, Orthodox, and Catholics—rest their belief in great part on the Bible, the written part of God's Word; and that it is a solid foundation on which all of us rest our belief in Jesus Christ, our God Who died that all of us might live.

There are a few other differences, notably in the division of the Ten Commandments: the sixteenth-century Protestants split our First Commandment into two commandments, then made it come out

U. S. Protestants Visit Tito

Records Cited Against Ministers' Report

By J. J. GILBERT

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Dr. Gillis Says:

Dr. Shipper and Ep. Manning

No thoughtful Catholic can rejoice in the discussion between Bishop Manning and Dr. Shipper on the subject of divorce. Nor will any decent Christian indulge in ridicule or raillery at the spectacle of two prominent Episcopalian ministers bawling it out in the press while unbelievers laugh and scoff. The matter under discussion is tragically serious. It involves fundamental morality as well as the logical truth. To see two representatives of a Christian church contradicting each other on such an essential must make the judicious grieve.

No please don't expect any unholy glee on my part, or any facile but perhaps cruel witticisms at the expense of the prelate or the reverend editor. I wish with all my heart that Episcopalian would take their stand beside us Catholics in the fight against an evil which threatens disaster to Christian civilization. If the various schools of thought in the Episcopalian body cannot go all the way with us in defending the sacrament of matrimony and in defining as adultery the marriage of divorced Christians, the next best thing would be that they legislate against excessive laxity in their own doctrine and practice.

That brings me to the one point in the Manning-Shipper controversy upon which I would like to make an observation. In his editorial in The Churchman, Dr. Shipper asks, "How can Dr. Manning be so sure as to what the Christian teaching is?" That question touches the heart of the problem. What is at issue is not merely the sanctity of marriage and the sin of divorce, but the authority of the church. Has the church the right to define a doctrine, and reject from membership any who will not accept the doctrine as defined? Has the church received good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong in regard to marriage and divorce or for that matter, in regard to any other matter of doctrine and practice?

Bishop Manning would say "Yes." Dr. Shipper seems to say "No." Under the Episcopalian system there can be no final decision between the contestants. The bishop may continue to think in his own way, and the editor of The Churchman may continue to "disagree in toto," as he says, with the bishop. When doctors disagree the patient may do as he pleases. When two Protestant clergymen in the same church come to antithetical conclusions as to what our Saviour is teaching on marriage and divorce, the members of the church may think what they please and act as they please in the matter.

To us Catholics such a situation argues the impotence of the Episcopalian Church. It is as though that church wasn't sure of itself, and in consequence doesn't dare teach in the name of Christ. Not only the text, "If any man shall put away his wife and marry another, he committeth adultery, and she that is put away if she marry another, committeth adultery," has been whittled down to nothing, but the text, "He that heareth you heareth Me," has ceased to have any meaning. In that case a church is no church but a debating society.

Such a church abdicates in a time of crisis. If, as Dr. Shipper suggests, Bishop Manning cannot be certain about the right or the wrong of divorce, neither, on Dr. Shipper's principle, can he himself be certain. How then can any member of that kind of church be certain?

If the trumpet sound an uncertain note who shall gird himself for battle? It looks more and more as if the Catholic church will have to fight that battle all alone. But if Episcopalianism cannot as a body come to our side to fight, perhaps those who feel as we do about marriage and divorce will come over as individuals.

Calendar of Saints

SUNDAY, AUG. 24—St. Bartholomew, apostle, carried the Gospel through the most barbarous countries of the East, penetrating into the remotest Indies. He was martyred in Armenia.

MONDAY, AUG. 25—St. Louis of France, king. He led two crusades against the infidels and was noted for his great zeal for the faith. He died in Tunis in 1270 while leading his army on his second crusade.

TUESDAY, AUG. 26—St. Zephyrinus, Pope and martyr, succeeded Victor in the Pontificate in 202, and reigned 17 years.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 27—St. Joseph Calasanctus was born in Aragon in 1556. Entering the priesthood he went to Rome and founded the Order of Clerics Regular of the Pious Schools to care for children of the poor.

THURSDAY, AUG. 28—St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo and one of the great doctors of the church, was born in Tagaste in Africa in 354. His father was a pagan, his mother St. Monica. He was reared a Christian but was not baptized. He lost his faith and innocence, and persisted in an irregular life until 32. When converted he began to make amends for his wasted years and was consecrated Bishop of Hippo in 395. For 35 years he was the center of ecclesiastical life in Africa and a mighty champion against heresy. He died in 430.

FRIDAY, AUG. 29—The Beheading of St. John the Baptist on the order of Herod, who yielded to the request of Salome, daughter of Herodias, whom Herod, in defiance of all laws, married despite the fact that she was the wife of his brother, Philip, who was still living.

SATURDAY