

Current Topics

Protestant Countries

It is a popular delusion in Britain and America, and also in New Zealand, that Protestant countries are superior to Catholic countries, and that this superiority is due to the influence of Protestantism. Britain and America are referred to as countries of great wealth, and this is said to be due to Protestant ascendancy. Britain may be very wealthy, but precious little of her wealth finds its way among the masses of the people, while statistics show that the bulk of American laborers do not receive living wages. As far as it affects the majority of the people Protestant prosperity is a myth. Catholic countries, such as Spain and Italy, have, on the other hand, many advantages which Protestant countries have not. It is said that Madrid, a city of a million inhabitants, had only one murder last year. Compare that record with New York's or London's. As for the Italians, all who go about them are impressed with their beautiful national characteristics due as much to their Catholic faith as to their Latin blood. Protestant missionaries in the East just now are making a strong point of the great wealth of Britain and America in order to impress the Orientals with a sense of the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism. They say nothing, however, about the masses of poverty-stricken humans who are forced to herd in noisome slums which stand as a reproach to the wealth that can tolerate such conditions at its very door. The accumulation of great wealth is not the test of religion or civilisation: the use that is made of it is the test. People are known not so much by their ability to make money as by the manner in which they spend it. In countries in which Catholicism predominates wealth is used in accordance with reason and good morals; but what is wrong with those secular countries which are styled Protestant is that the people who have had the opportunity of making much money have never learned how to spend it.

Dividend Civilisation

To those who have developed swelled head from gloating over the greatness and grandeur of the civilisation in great Protestant empires we commend the following, which was published some time ago in the *English Review*:—

"Our present civilisation is really higher than any in the past because we do possess in greater abundance means of higher satisfaction, of higher interests. But the actual manifestation of that higher quality, the actual use of those available means, is apparent only in the few, the very few. The rest remain barbaric. The way in which the vast majority of the members of our civilisation spend their wages or their dividends shows that they are barbarians, that is, primitive, uncultured, unevolved. You know the way in which the wages of the wage-earners are usually spent. They are spent in alcoholic stimulants, in fornication, in amusements of the most barbaric kind, in cinema shows of the usual blue-murder type.

If exceptionally they are spent in, say, the building and adorning of a home, the taste manifested in that home is such as to set any artist's teeth on edge. The tastes of the dividend drawers are, in general, no better. A large proportion of the dividend spending is a manifestation of crude, savage vanity. It consists in the mere advertising of the fact that the spender is a drawer of large dividends. That is his pleasure. The tastes manifested by some of the best classes of dividend drawers, the remains of an old aristocracy, are practically identical with those of the redskins—to hunt wild animals, to rejoice in muscular exercise, to eat flesh, to consume alcoholic stimulants. In order to measure accurately the tastes, the pleasures of the majority of the members of our civilisation it is sufficient to do a round of their places of amusement, of our theatres, of our music halls, to inspect our book shops. The real concrete measure of the condition of our civilisation is displayed, not by our political economists and their figures, but by W. H. Smith and Son and their book-stalls. W. H. Smith and Son are the real visible representatives of our dividend civilisation. Our civilisation, in the opportunities it affords for the satisfaction of the most highly-developed human desires is greater than any civilisation in the past. But in the enormous majority of the members of our civilisation those human desires have not been developed: they have on the contrary been stamped out. In great literature they take no pleasure. In great thought they take no pleasure. In science they take no pleasure. In great art they take no pleasure. In great drama they take no pleasure. In great music they take no pleasure. In the very questions upon which the existence of the world urgently and poignantly depends they take no interest. Any theatrical manager, any art dealer, any bookseller, any publisher, any newspaper editor, any musician, any artist will tell you that THOSE THINGS DO NOT PAY. In other words, people do not want to spend their money upon such satisfactions. What does pay in drama is what the Revues provide; what does pay in literature is what W. H. Smith and Son sell; what does pay in music is 'The Bing Boys'; what does pay in thought are the leading articles in the *Morning Post*."

Censure for Bishop Barnes

Bishop Barnes of Birmingham evidently is as great a nuisance to his own people as he is to those of other faiths. His frequent insulting references to the Catholic Church and to the Anglican High Church party have caused the English Church Union to appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury, asking his Grace to bid the Bishop hold his tongue. The appeal is couched in dignified terms, but the essence of it is that the English Church Union does not think it becoming that an Anglican bishop should be an ordinary Popery ranter, and that, all things considered, Bishop Barnes is making an intolerable nuisance of himself. So say all of us.

An Exasperating Church

The Catholic Church cuts into everything, interferes with everything, and, up to a point, exercises control even over those bodies that repudiate her as a stumbling block to progress. Of late years a large number of representative Protestants, finding that large families entail a good deal of responsibility, have discovered that patriotism demands a declining birth rate. It is a mark of the modern Pharisee that he always has a sanctified motive upon which to hang his cowardice and selfishness. Therefore, the advocates of birth control try to make a virtue out of shirking their obligations by saying that the Empire will collapse unless large families are discouraged. But a disturbing thought, however, arrests the attention of a writer in the *London Outlook*. "The Roman Catholic Church," he says, "has made up its mind quite definitely on the subject [of birth control]; and I invite the attention of the Bishop of Birmingham and the Dean of St. Paul's—both of whom are advocates of birth control—to the fact that one result of this attitude is that the Catholic population is going up and Protestant down all over the world. I do not in the least suggest, of course, that the Vatican was influenced by this consideration (which, so far as I understand its premises and arguments, seems to me logically flawless), but it is at least a point of some practical importance. If the Catholics are going to produce children and the Protestants are not, then it does not really matter very much how loudly the Protestant hierarchy denounce the lay world for breeding—from its worst stocks. The time will come when the Catholic survivors will rewrite history in very different terms, and the Protestants, having birth-controlled themselves out of existence, will find it difficult to answer."

Catholics and Anglo-Catholics

English Catholics are not greatly impressed with the Anglo-Catholic movement. Henry C. Watts, writing in *America*, tells us why. There exists to-day in England nothing so entirely and unmistakably English as the Catholic Church. On every side, by cathedrals, by titles, by customs, and by traditions, people are reminded of England's Catholic past. But between the Catholic past and the present stands the Reformation and all that followed from it. It marked the parting of the ways for many in England. Some chose the way that led to suffering, death, and a clear conscience; others rode to wealth and power with troubled souls. The Anglo-Catholics of to-day are the lineal descendants of those who would not suffer for the faith; the plain Catholics are the lineal descendants of those who paid the price and kept the faith. The difference is too great to be bridged over by mere imitation of Catholic ceremonies. Catholics see a non-Catholic ecclesiastic, nominated by the Prime Minister of the day, sitting in the Chair of St. Augustine, bearing an honored title conferred by the Roman See upon the Apostle of the English, and held by his successors. They think of their ancestors ruling the historic Church back for more than four-

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