

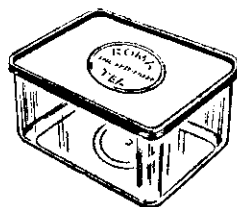


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R12/54

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(continued from page 5)

WHY ARE CHURCHES EMPTY?

Sir,—There is need for a certain kind of "apartness" from our fellow men in following a spiritual life, but it issues again in a more real "nearness" to them. We must put our attention on God, or Christ first, so that all personal and individual attachments rank second to that—which done, we find our love transformed into an unemotional but much deeper and self-sacrificing power than ever before.

We need clergy, men whose primary preoccupation is with unseen things, not "practical" ones—all the world is already busy with those—priests who are learning to live spiritually first, getting to know the mind of God, becoming experts in that line in order to minister as Christ's hands on earth. Christ Himself "went apart" many many times, always before His crises, got into the mind of God, then came and put it into practice. He was with people, but at the same time was not loved with possessiveness by anyone, nor loved anyone possessively. Please let us keep our clergy as our spiritual experts, not wear them out on secular committees; the best of them always manifest a marvelous breadth of interest—but only those who are the best spiritually are able to do the rest wisely. After all, they give out love in a much more trying way than most of us—at every funeral they mourn with the mourners, at every wedding they rejoice; they give to the sick, to the sad and to the penitent as our Lord gave, so far as they are able; and they minister grace in the Sacraments; that is their life.

So with us all, as Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul and with all thy strength—that is the first and greatest commandment—and the second is, namely, this Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That is what He did, and because He did the first He could do the second.

HELEN M. G. SHAW (Wellington).
(Abridged.—Ed.)

Sir,—On the subject of why are the churches empty may I offer a few comments? It seems to me a basic reason is that the Church cannot reflect even to a moderate degree the spiritual significance of its founder.

Once a form of religion becomes identified as an institution, it inevitably conforms to the cycle of development and decline implicit in all things on this plane of existence. The organisation itself may remain, but without constant spiritual revitalising, its perception of ultimate reality dies. Its voice loses conviction and is ignored. Small wonder, then, if there is some anxious stock-taking among church people.

Some comments of the late Dean Inge have a bearing on what I have written: "There is no evidence that the historical Christ ever intended to found an institutional religion. . . He treated the institutional religion of His people with the independence and indifference of the prophet and mystic. . . Institutional Christianity may be a legitimate and necessary development of the original Gospel, but it is something alien to the Gospel itself."

It seems questionable how long something which is alien in spirit can perpetuate the original message.

STUDENT (Petone).

RECOGNITION OF CHINA

Sir,—It is a pity that "Lubber's Point," who castigates Margot Ross for the opinions expressed in her *Lookout*

talks, does not use his leisure to read more widely than he obviously does. Most of his remarks are prejudiced, and some inaccurate. He speaks of "Red China's aggression in Korea," but the facts show that China did not intervene until her own power stations on the border were bombed. He speaks of her "barbarous cruelty," attributing it to the fact that she is a Communist country, but he should realise that throughout the ages China's attitude to physical cruelty has been totally different from that of the European peoples, and that Chiang Kai Shek's adherents use the same methods. He should read Rene Cutforth's book *Korean Reporter*, an objective account of a BBC reporter's impressions while travelling about Korea, and note the disgust expressed by English troops at the tortures and cruelties perpetrated by their South Korean allies. "Lubber's Point" speaks also of "aggression" in Indo-China, where facts declare that China did not intervene in the civil war until after America began giving active aid to the French forces. As for Malaya, there is no scrap of evidence that China is taking part in the guerrilla conflict in that country.

This is not in any way condoning Communism as such; but logically, if it is right to recognise the present Government in Guatemala, so recently established there by armed revolution against an elected government, then the same excuse cannot be used to deny recognition to the Communist Government in China. His suggestion that China should "turn to the improvement of living standards of her own people" is belated, as responsible reports show that much has already been achieved in this matter. In accusing Margot Ross of emotionalism, the writer has overlooked the beam in his own eye.

NOUS VERRONS (Roxburgh).

"THE GOLDEN BUSH"

Sir,—May I express my appreciation of, and pleasure in listening to, the reading of the book *The Golden Bush*, now coming over 3YA four mornings a week? Would that we could have more features of the same quality over the air! It is a delightful piece of writing, full of information and humour, with such vivid word pictures of bush and scenery that one can almost "feel" that intangible smell of the New Zealand bush. Knowing the district somewhat and being a dog lover, I am enjoying it to the full and only wish it might be my good fortune some day to meet the writer and his wife.

I had not been able to read the book owing to poor eyesight. Had I done so I should probably have missed the added pleasure of hearing it so admirably read aloud.

EX-NELSONIAN (Hanmer).

GRAVITY AND THE VEINS

Sir,—The text of a health talk by Dr. H. B. Turbott as printed in *The Listener* of August 27 makes interesting reading except for the remarks implying that at one time mankind maintained a different posture and method of locomotion from the present ones. I venture to suggest that such statements are nonsense because neither Dr. Turbott nor any other authority to date has produced any factual evidence to prove that at any time in history mankind "walked on all fours" or "popped up and became two-legged and two-footed."

HOMO SAP. (Christchurch).