



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

News in Brief

Christ and Christmas . . .

The leader of Roman Catholics in England, Cardinal Basil Hume, has called for Christ to be put back into Christmas! He said that it was not "his intent to empty Christmas of enjoyment. I want us to rediscover the real reason for partying and enjoyment."

In truth, Christ was never in "Christmas." The partying, to which the cardinal refers, does not have its origins in the birth of Christ. Indeed it is a blasphemy to suggest that such occasions of drunkenness could be a means of rejoicing at the birth of the Saviour. He Who came into the world to save sinners cannot be worshipped by acts of sin.

Confessing to a shortage . . .

Because of a shortage of priests, a Passionist Retreat in Crossgar, Co. Down in Northern Ireland, has had to cut the number of confessions it can now hear from Roman Catholic penitents. Confessions can be heard there now only from Wednesday to Friday. There has been a dramatic fall in the number of new priests in Ireland over the last few years. Only 47 new priests were ordained last year. How far removed the whole foolish system of auricular confessions is from the teaching of the Bible on confession of sin. Forgiveness of sin is obtained, not by repeated confessions to a man, but by a true confession to Christ, *the only Mediator between God and man* [1 Tim 2:5]. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, 1 John 1:9. Christ makes the priest of Rome redundant!

Unholy row . . .

The episcopalian Church of Ireland newspaper, *The Church of Ireland Gazette*, has stirred up strife between its church and that of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland. The trouble started when the Gazette criticised the Roman Catholic Church for remaining quiet on the relationship between Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern and his common law wife, Celia Larkin, who has become the first lady in Ireland. Mr. Ahern is separated from his wife and lives with Miss Larkin. The questioning of the silence of the Church of Rome on this open immorality is what sparked the row. The suggestion that the constant stream of court cases involving priests, accused of sexual crimes, has robbed the Church of Rome of any moral authority to speak on such issues infuriated the Roman hierarchy. It called the suggestion "outrageous." The immediate result was the clamour of leading Church of Ireland clerics, stridently seeking to tell all who would listen that it was not they who wrote the article!! Indeed, one cleric, Rev. David Frazer of Co. Kildare, even demanded that his church apologise. A strange stance indeed for one who claims to be a servant of Christ!!

The official response of the Church of Ireland was to say that Mr. Ahern's relationship with Miss Larkin was his personal affair. A Mr. Ivan Yates, a former Fine Gael minister and member of the Church of Ireland, also attacked the article and said that the relationship was not that strange in a modern state. He also refused to be interviewed by The Belfast



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Telegraph, thereby causing one journalist to comment that the reaction of prominent southern Protestants to the row gave added impetus to the view of Northern Ireland Protestants, that tolerance of Protestants in the Irish Republic was enjoyed only by those who kept their heads down and their mouths shut! One retired Irish politician speculated that a compromise had been reached between Mr. Ahern and the Roman hierarchy on the matter.

No divorce by Ahern -- no criticism by Rome. He could be right.