

Letter to Mr. Menzies

by T. E. Ruth, Seacliff, S.A.

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The Right Hon.
R. G. Menzies,
P.C., K.C., LL.M., M.H.R.

Dear Mr. Menzies,

Being British, and believing in equal freedom on equal terms for all the religious Faiths under the flag; and regarding you as a British-Australian statesman, I am profoundly disturbed by your statement, Melbourne, May 5, 1947:

"The Roman Catholic Church has fought Communism from the outset and — and I say this as a Presbyterian — I give it full marks for the fight. Now in the world of industrialism, Communism is based on a rampant sectarian brawl. This kind of nonsense illustrates the cunning of the Communist machine which is aiming to split the people by sectarianism."

You and I know devout Roman Catholics who are of the salt of the earth. Neither of us would cast any reflection on any man's religion. But you could certainly give the Roman Catholic Church full marks for sectarianism, and full marks for its fight against democracy wherever, by the help of Protestant toleration, it has secured a foothold.

Listening to a Canberra broadcast, I was amused to be reminded of your "rampant sectarian brawl." And there are no Communists in the House.

Roman Catholics have a majority in the Cabinet. The most important portfolios—Supply and Shipping, Information and Immigration, Army, Navy, Munitions—are in the hands of Catholic Actionists. In none of these things have Communists any part or lot. For the parliamentary "veto" they are not to be blamed. Nor did they engineer the "salary grab." Or did they?

You couldn't even have a United Religious Service at Canberra on Anzac Day because Roman Catholics object!

Communists care as little for the community as Roman Catholics for catholicity. Neither of them cares anything for the British Commonwealth of Nations. But it is obvious that the "Four Freedoms" have no greater enemy than Papal Politics. Dictatorship for proletarians would be preferable to dictatorship by priests. Sectarian dictatorship is even worse than the dollar dictatorship of democracy.

I cannot understand how you can compare Communistic "cunning" with the Roman Catholic kind, or the Communist machine with Roman machinations. Would you airily dismiss as "nonsense" the suggestion that Catholic Actionists may be "cunning" enough to exploit your fear of Communists?

"Cunning" Communists have no monopoly of cunning. One of Britain's greatest Liberal leaders and most eminent of English statesmen, W. E. Gladstone, declared:

"There has never been any more cunning blade devised against the freedom, the virtue, and the happiness of a people than Romanism."

And Francesco Crispi, the great Italian statesman "whose importance in Italian public life depended less upon the many reforms accomplished under his administration than upon his intense patriotism, remarkable fibre, and capacity for administering to his fellow countrymen the political tonic of which they stood in constant need," distinguished between Roman Catholicism and Christianity; and declared in the House of Deputies that "The day is coming when Christianity will kill Roman Catholicism."

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At the moment, Mr. Menzies, I am interested in the importance you attach to the parenthesis "And — and I say this as a Presbyterian" —

As a Presbyterian you could say: "The Roman Catholic Church has fought Presbyterianism from the outset — and is fighting it still in Scotland, as it fights Anglicanism in England; fighting it in the U.S.A. and in Australia; fighting it to the death in Italy at this moment; fighting it in Spain, in Portugal, in Latin America" — and I am afraid you could add, "And, generally speaking — if I am a typical Presbyterian — Presbyterians in Australia do not greatly care."

But some do. And now and again, some Presbyterian "fighting Larry" in Melbourne, some Presbyterian "Dill-Macky" in Sydney, risks ridicule and dares to defend the faith for which their Church stands. Occasionally, the Presbyterian Church officially carries the fight into the enemy's camp, as in Perth in 1943, when the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Western Australia determined to face the virulent propaganda over the air, sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church "which we then felt and still feel was quite uncalled for, particularly in a time of war, and we were forced into the position of answering the challenge to, not only the Presbyterian Church, but to every branch of Protestantism in this State."

And they did it. The sessions, "Through Presbyterian Eyes," were carried on for six months over 6KY and 6IX and

"Many people declared that the facts brought to light convinced them that the teaching of the Church of Rome is on all the vital issues with which we have dealt, at complete variance with the teaching of Scripture and the verdict of history, and consequently it must be concluded that if the claims of Rome are not true, then they constitute the most daring blasphemy of history."

That was said in the final broadcast, according to the brochure bearing the title of the sessions and "Issued by the authority of the Public Questions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Western Australia."

It is a strong, straightforward, salutary, and essentially catholic-minded publication. It recognizes that

"none of the signs of aggressiveness which are so manifest in Australia would alarm the Protestant or be regarded as a menace to personal and religious liberty if they emanated from any other church than that of Rome. The Papal Church is a political institution as well as a religious organization and her emissaries are past masters in intrigue and cunning."

Note the "cunning," Mr. Menzies.

Indeed — speaking as a Presbyterian, giving full marks to the Roman Catholic Church — I suggest you spend an hour or so reading what these Presbyterians — speaking as Presbyterians — have to say.

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It was, of course, as a party politician you were actually speaking — the "Presbyterian giving full marks to the Roman Catholic Church" was incidental. As a Liberal leader, you were "nursing the Catholic vote" — a party political necessity, I have no doubt,

but essentially a dead-end occupation. It may seem to persuade Roman Catholics to "eat out of your hand." But even if it wins the next election it will lose the next generation.

Roman Catholics will use your Presbyterian opinion for all it is worth, and use you too, for their own political purpose and then throw you out like a sucked orange.

They are, by tradition and training, essentially illiberal, irrevocably and relentlessly opposed to Liberalism in all its forms, and are quite frank about it. Probably more than the Westminster Confession and the Shorter Catechism mean to you, their religious instruction, from their infancy, means to them. Their "liberty" ultimately means liberty to proscribe your Liberalism and you, not only as a Presbyterian but as a Liberal.

And they say so, in season and out of season.

The Christian Brothers publish a "Manual of Religious Instruction — not only in the novitiates and scholasticates of teaching congregations, but also in the classes of high schools, academies and colleges." Here are some of the Questions and Answers:

Q.: What more should the State do than respect the rights and liberties of the Church?

A.: The State should also aid, protect, and defend the Church.

Q.: Has the State the right and the duty to proscribe heresy and schism?

A: Yes, it has the right and the duty to do both for the good of the nation and for that of the faithful themselves.

Q.: What name is given to the doctrine that the State has neither the right nor the duty to be united to the Church to protect it?

A.: This doctrine is called LIBERALISM. It is founded principally on the fact that modern society rests on liberty of conscience and of worship, on liberty of speech and of the press.

Q.:Why is Liberalism to be CONDEMNED?

A.: Because it denies all subordination of the State to the Church . . .

The Church, of course, is always and only the Church of Rome. And in "Through Presbyterian Eyes" the Grand Old Man of British Liberalism, Mr. W. E. Gladstone, is quoted as saying:

"Whilst all other Christian bodies are content with freedom in their religious domain, whilst Orientals, Lutherans, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Nonconformists one and all in the present day contentedly and thankfully accept the benefit of the civil order, she (the Roman Catholic Church) alone arrogates to herself the right to speak to the State not as a subject, but as a superior: not as pleading the right of a conscience staggered by the fear of sin, but as a vast corporation, setting up a rival law against the State in the State's own domain and claiming first, with a higher sanction the title to similar coercive means of enforcement."

And you will remember the Grand Old Man's warning: "to distrust that lazy way of thought which acknowledges no danger until it thunders at the doors"

and
"against the velvet paws and smooth and soft exterior of a system which is dangerous to the foundations of Civil Order."

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Is this "Liberalism --- liberty of conscience and of worship, of liberty of speech and of the press" --- Liberalism, condemned by the Roman Catholic Church because it denies the subordination of the State to the Church --- of any concern to you? If so, what are you doing about it? Apparently you and your party supinely submit to the over-lordship of Rome.

Instead of saying with the French statesman, Leon Gambetta:

"I am fighting that sinister conspiracy which uses the forms of religion to destroy human liberty and the freedom of states,"

you watch, without protest, Australia being made a "Greater Ireland": the Civil Service being captured and Trade Unions controlled by Catholic Actionists, and Australian Marriage Laws being flagrantly flouted, Australian law-abiding citizens declared to be "living in sin" and Australians born in wedlock branded "illegitimate."

You did not even resent John Curtin's domestic integrity being impugned and his family's legitimacy questioned because he married a Protestant and would not be a party to priestly impudence and interference.

Does it not trouble you at all to see the Roman Church which openly scorns your political principles quartering itself on the Commonwealth Treasury? You might --- as a Presbyterian, and in the name of public equity, at least insist that your own Presbyterian ministers in this Protestant country should enjoy the same exemptions from income tax as Roman priests and prelates.

You accuse Communists of the very vices of which Catholic Actionists are conspicuously guilty --- infiltration; white-anting; overseas domination; foreign principle; foreign philosophy; and, amusingly enough, cunning. Communists are so few and feeble that they are not influential enough to secure the election of their candidates. They are represented only in one out of six Parliaments and there only by one member!

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But there can be no doubt that Roman Catholics do deserve full marks for fighting. Presbyterians have been from the outset the first to recognize it.

With remarkable perspicacity, Dr. Alexander Robertson, a Presbyterian minister in Venice, gave

the Roman Catholic Church full marks for the First World War, 1918-1918, five years before the war began. His book on the Papal Conquest bears the publisher's imprint --- Morgan and Scott, Paternoster Row, London, 1909. He wrote:

"The Vatican looks to the government of Austria, its bond-servant, to restore the temporal power: but England blocks the way. The Pope and the Church must find a Power that will dare to make war upon England. The Pope and the Church have found such a Power in Germany, and in the person of the Kaiser the very man to inspire and lead the nation in this enterprise.

"It has long been known in Italy, and Italy has warned England of the fact that the original date fixed upon by the Pope and the Kaiser for carrying out their nefarious enterprise was 1911-1912. This date has been mentioned in the British Parliament and in the press. The partial awakening of England to the danger of the situation has probably spoilt the project for so early a date. . . . It will not be the fault of Britain's enemies if the scheme were not carried out later."

And during the last war, Mr. Menzies, the Victorian Presbyterian "Messenger" published this conviction:

"When history comes to be written it will be found that the present struggle was largely brought about by the action of the Papacy. World War II really began with the Spanish Civil War, and in Spain the Roman Catholic Church gave its blessing to Franco and his Fascists. The overwhelming aid offered by the Roman Church made a rebellion against a duly elected Government possible.

"It did more. It allowed Hitler and Mussolini to pour troops into Spain and use the illiterate people of that country as cannon and bomb fodder for the purpose of trying out

and perfecting new and terrible methods of warfare. . . .

"By supporting Hitlerism and Fascism the Papacy has done much in many lands to destroy democracy. The public will not easily forget the crimes committed in Spain and Abyssinia and in Albania. . . ."

Through "Presbyterian Eyes" we see "picture postcards representing the invasion of Abyssinia as the entrance of Christianity into a heathen land, portraying the Virgin and the Child riding on a tank into Abyssinia, escorted by Italian soldiers and aeroplanes."

In Melbourne the Presbyterian Sir Keith Murdoch, a son of the manse, wrote with the pen and the passion of a prophet ---

"When the reasons for the strange policies of Australia are sought it is necessary to ask to what extent the old bitter Irish hatred of British people and the British Empire influences some powerful minds.

"Do those who carry on the old Sinn Fein feeling permit it to dominate them on matters purely Australian? They claim to be Australian patriots, but they are un-Australian, anti-Australian.

"Is it realized that the neutrality of Eire costs Britain the loss of many fine ships, fine seamen, . . . and the children of Britain much of their food? Germans and Japanese glory in their special immunities. . . . Australia is paying heavily, paying in shipping, in materials, in allotment of British naval units. . . ."

The Sinn Fein press described Sir Keith as a "man with a load of mischief" and Dr. Mannix administered a sedative.

Another Presbyterian son of the manse, one of the wisest and wittiest and most widely read of Australian essayists, Professor Walter Murdoch, Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, perhaps unwittingly

tingly provokes uncatholic Romans to protest against his completely unsectarian catholicity.

"Through Presbyterian Eyes" insists:

"We Presbyterians who claim to be the greatest fighters in all history for the principles of liberty of conscience and for the liberty of the human spirit occupy not a negative, but a positive position."

Despite the tremendous concentration of Papal forces in the U.S.A., American Presbyterians with hundreds of other leading American churchmen in a signed statement to President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Marshal Stalin (note his inclusion, Mr. Menzies) said:

"It is tragically significant that when, in 1929, the Papacy re-entered the political field it did so in alliance with enemies of those very cultures in which its Church has thrived. As a political power it gained its first fatal successes in friendship with Fascist powers.

"Supporting Mussolini in Italy, Dolfuss and Schuschnigg in Austria, Hitler in Germany, Franco in Spain, and Petain in France, the Papacy has thrown its weight into the scales on the side of the enemies of democracy."

Are all the Presbyterians out of step, except you, Mr. Menzies?

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But the most serious situation has yet to be faced. The fight for which you give the Roman Catholic Church full marks belongs to the initial stages of the Papacy's Third World War.

History repeats itself. The Infallible Pope is saying precisely what the Infallible Fuehrer said. He is afraid, as Hitler was afraid — of Bolshevism. He calls on Great Britain and America to break with Russia. He wants the U.N.O. to excommunicate the Soviet Union. Hitler exploited the fear of Bolshevism with Papal approval and with Papal cunning.

Now the Pope, supported by Mussolini's millions, and backed by what Henry Wallace calls "America's disgusting opulence," appeals to Protestants, for war purposes only, to join with the Roman Church in a crusade against Russia and Communism. WHY?

The American "Christian Century," whose Melbourne correspondent is a Presbyterian minister, says:

"Any realistic analysis of the purpose of the Pope should rouse Protestant resentment. What the Pope really wants is to see a stop put to Communist advance across Europe, which has already cost his church concordat agreements, vast land-holdings, and great financial subsidies . . . he would be naive indeed who failed to take into account the part which these have played in moving the challenge of open battle at this juncture."

And Dr. C. Clayton Morrison, who is one of America's leading publicists, adds these words which I ask you, Mr. Menzies, to underline:

"Protestants can hardly fail to see that what this involves is a titanic struggle which may easily become the First Atomic War, defined by Catholics, precipitated by Catholics, led by Catholics, but largely to be fought by the Protestant nations."

His Holiness the Pope is, as Hitler was, in supreme military command.

His new Cardinals are acting like Vatican Field Marshals.

The Chinese Cardinal, as soon as he was appointed, wanted America to declare war immediately on Russia; and Cardinal Spellman declared, "A true American can be neither a Communist nor a Communist condoner. No American can dare to compromise with the crooked courses of Communism or surrender to it, without jeopardizing the security of our country." He wrote an article which impressed a reviewer as "recklessly scattering abroad words like 'blood-battles,' 'bigotry,' 'befoul,' 'perjury,' 'sinister,' and

"slavery." But he set the pace for American thought and action and the Vatican anti-Russian propaganda is spreading all over the world like a prairie fire. Everywhere the Papacy is fanning the flames of hate. It has put "Third World War" on the world's lips.

* * *

And all who treasure the British way of life are alarmed.

Poor old Britain! When she was being crucified, other countries sat at the foot of the Cross casting lots for her possessions. Now they are crying—"She saved others, Herself she cannot save."

But she will be expected to bear the brunt of yet another—and probably the last—Pope-inspired World War. Perhaps the ministry of mediating between America—so "strong and afraid"—and Russia—so "weak and unafraid"—will fall to Britain. Her magnanimity and genius of understanding would fit her for the tremendous task of reconciliation.

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Anti-Communist propaganda usually lends itself to a sort of *mutatis mutandis* exercise. Substitute "Catholic Actionist" and, the necessary changes being made, the argument becomes naturally, and more reasonably, anti-Roman.

An impartial observer in Russia finds a remarkable resemblance between the two rival totalitarianisms.

Mr. John Fischer, in *Harpers Magazine*, writes of the Communist Party of Russia as a "priesthood," and says:

"The Soviet regime resembles the government of medieval Spain. . . . It alone purveys the True Faith, and its Inquisition, the secret police . . . mercilessly ferrets out all heretics. Its missionaries carry the gospel to benighted

lands at the risk of prison, hardship, and sometimes of life itself. And occasionally, like Cortez, they find the sword a great help in making converts. . . .

"The holy relics are preserved in the Lenin Museum on the Red Square in Moscow, and replicas have been provided for branch museums in every major city. . . . Before they view them the faithful remove their hats. . . . The most sacred relic of all, naturally, is Lenin's body, displayed in its black marble tomb like the incorruptible bodies of the saints in the Lavra catacombs: every day long lines of worshippers file past the bier, their faces rapt and grave. . . .

"The trained Communist tends to think in formulas, which he has been assured will provide the infallible answer to every question. If a fact doesn't quite fit, he would not dream of revising the formula, for that would be heresy: he simply rejects the fact. . . .

"The Kremlin—a sort of Red Vatican—is the sole fountain head of the faith, claiming authority beyond challenge on all questions of doctrine."

To the Russians, democracy means government for the people. "There is no pretence of government by the people," says Mr. Fischer. "The people may be permitted to vote. But there is no need so far as the Communist can see to confuse them by putting more than one name on the ballot. Indeed, the very idea of a second party to an election would strike him as wicked."

That was Mr. J. Benedict Chifley's method of appointing Mr. W. J. McKell as our Governor-General. The King had only Hobson's choice even in selecting his own personal representative!

Russia has a real place in the world. Rid of the remnants of evil ecclesiasticism which produced Rasputin, she may communicate to the democracies a greater regard for discipline and learn a greater conception of democracy.

America may be taught the limitations of Big Business.

And even the Roman Catholic Church may become catholic.

You seem to suggest a Scottish Presbyterian with an Irish-Australian complex. It is only a pose. You are a British Australian statesman with a contribution to make to the comity of nations, international security and world peace.

I understand your repudiation of sectarianism. Before Dr. Mannix opened my eyes thirty years ago to the sinister designs of the Papacy, I was preaching in Collins Street on such subjects as "The Passing of Pope X: A Protestant Appreciation," conducting missions of mutual understanding in the Auditorium, considering "What Protestants have in common with Roman Catholics," and urgently advocating all possible united action.

Then the Roman Catholic Benjamin Hoare, leader-writer in "The Age," attacked his ecclesiastical chief's anti-British campaign, his "sedition" and "defaming of the Empire"; and in the name of the God who rules by events, I was called to do a bit of work for England. But I never ceased to have fellowship with any Roman Catholics who would have fellowship with me. When the fight was hottest I said sincerely that I would confess my sins to Dr. Mannix if Dr. Mannix would confess his sins to me.

When all fellowship was denied I could still stay —

*He drew a circle that shut me out:
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.—
But Love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in.*

* * *

Sectarianism -- Roman and Russian --- is the open sore of civilization and clericalism is the enemy of character.

Jesus was not a clergyman. He was a carpenter. The Church He founded on a rock is as unlike the Church of Rome as the Pope is unlike Peter. The Kremlin is at least as Christian as the Vatican. Russians are as religious as Romans. As a Presbyterian

you would have more liberty in Moscow than in Rome or in any Roman Catholic country in the world. And atomic energy belongs as much to Russia as to America. Not even America can claim a monopoly of the secrets of Nature and get away with it, as the Roman Catholic Church which claims a "God-given monopoly of religion in the world."

When you speak with such superb scorn of sectarianism, Mr. Menzies, do not forget that the Pope is the World's Supreme Sectarian — not related to any other world religion: out of communion with every other church in Christendom; having no fellowship with Anglican Archbishops or American Methodist Episcopal bishops; and so completely unchurching you and your Presbyterian Church, and every other church in Australia, that Father Peter Finlay, S.J., in the Australian Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, No. 247, writes, "The Catholic Church alone was established by God. Every Catholic professes as an article of Faith the falsity of all separated churches. He cannot even deliberately doubt that God reprobates and detests them. And knowing this, is he himself, in mind and judgment to tolerate them?"

"God reprobates and detests you," Mr. Menzies, "speaking as a Presbyterian." Your Catholic electors "cannot even deliberately doubt it." But it won't worry you.

THERE IS NO SUCH GOD. Neither the Shorter Catechism nor the American Declaration of Independence would recognize Him or give Him place in Christian doctrine or political standing in democratic or republican politics.

When an Irish Catholic barrister prays:

"Oh, that we could put an end to the exclusive ownership and monopoly in Christ — which the priests so unjustly claim for themselves and on which they trade so grossly?" wouldn't you, as an Australian barrister, say "Amen"?

I say "So mote it be!"

Only so will the Presbyterian George Matheson's prayer be answered —

*Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all,
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold! . . .*

*Thine is the Roman's strength without his pride,
Thine is the Greek's glad world without its graves,
Thine is Judaea's law with love beside,
The truth that censures and the grace that saves;
Gather us in.*

And I ask you to believe that if I were not so concerned with the menace that confronts the Commonwealth --- if my regard for you personally were not so warm --- if my faith in the service you could contribute to the common weal were not so strong and steadfast --- I should not have written this letter.

Yours faithfully,

T. E. RUTH.

P.S.: As corroborative evidence from another angle, and with the emphasis of repetition, I send you five booklets of "Questions Men Are Asking" about the R.C.'s fighting Presbyterianism, common Christianity, and Australian democracy.

"Why Bother about 'Catholic Action'?"

"5KA Politically Compelled to Broadcast Romanism."

"World Arbiter? — Is the Italian Pope, in fact, 'Father of Princes and Kings' (King George, for instance?), 'Ruler of the World' (Australia, for example), 'Vicar of Christ' ('given by Almighty God a monopoly of Religion in the world')? Or is the imposing claim a Colossal Imposition?"

"Rome and Russia — Is the Papacy Preparing a Third World War? — In Australia the Fight is on!"

"Cardinals on Parade — Why? An Exposure. My reaction to the charge that decent Australian citizens are 'living in sin'."

T.E.R.