

BENNETT STEVENS

THOSE CHRISTMAS BELLS

Hypocritical cant about the "spiritual meaning of the life of Christ who died for the sins of man" will ooze forth in greater volume than ever this holiday season. Enormous accumulated stocks of goods held from the market for profit by capitalists while millions are hungry and poorly clothed await disposal and require insistent ballyhoo for gift-buying on the mythical birthday of the mythical saviour. Charity campaigners will make a demagogic appeal to the "Christmas spirit" to remind the rich that it is more blessed to give than to receive especially when the giving will serve to counteract the rising revolutionary spirit among the workers. Catholic priests and Protestant ministers will chant more loudly the theme of prayer, charity and personal salvation through faith as their cures for the capitalist crisis. The Christmas bells that in fairy tales are reputed to tell of "peace on earth, good will to man," will call the church goers to hear sermons stimulating sentiments of hate against the Soviet Union. On the other hand the message of peace and Christian brotherhood will be directed toward pacifying the resentment of the masses against unemployment and wage cuts, which well-fed clergymen will ascribe to man's "neglect of Christ," and towards checking the workers' active participation in the class struggle.

Their soft Christmas preachments cannot hide the churches' ignominy in the past year, during which they have played their traditional role as counter-revolutionary agents. Their zeal in this direction has not been confined to attacks on the Soviet Union. The dominant Catholic church threw its forces with royalty against the Spanish middle-class revolution; in Mexico it fought bitterly the decision of the government of Vera Cruz to restrict the activity of the parasitic priests. The pope issued his much heralded encyclical on labor attacking Communism and declaring that "differences in social conditions in the human family which were wisely decreed by the Creator, must not and cannot be abolished." The Archbishop of Canterbury who had just returned from a trip on the Mediterranean as the guest of J. P. Morgan, criticized the English workers who were protesting against the cut in unemployment payments and supported the election of the fascist National government. In the United States, striking workers in the textile and mining regions found the Protestant and Catholic churches arrayed against them. In every capitalist country, the clergy has functioned as a faithful accessory to the police. Workers, conscious of this fact, have during the past year organized in the United States a Workers' Anti-religious League which will serve to expose the churches' teachings and activities against the working class.

Adam And Eve Had Navels—

Christmas myths are typical of the supernaturalistic moonshine that the churches serve their believers. At the recent worldwide joyous Catholic celebration of the anniversary of the Council of Ephesus which in 413 decreed to the Virgin Mary the title Mother of God, a prominent New York priest adorned in a white satin robe embroidered with gold, appealed: "If God chose Mary above all women to be his mother, is it not right that we too should show our devotion to her." Such assinities which characterize the mental level of the rationale of the churches' creeds, are certainly not worthy of the credence even of nit-wits. Yet the churches by pervading them with an aura of sanctity, by enveloping them in warm ritual and ceremony have made them the dominant beliefs of millions of people. Indoctrinated by religious dogma from infancy, these millions remain in adulthood, victimized and enslaved by ignorance and fear.

The pope recently attacked public schools as teaching "pedagogic naturalism which denies original sin" and demanded that all Catholic children attend parochial schools or be denied absolution—which will cause them to burn in purgatory forever. Protestants having no parochial schools perpetuate their influence by

introducing the teaching of the Bible in the public schools. The effect of the teaching of the Bible in childhood is revealed by the fact that in answer to a recent questionnaire on the subject, seventy-seven per cent of 3000 United States "educators" (hear, hear!) affirmed that one should never allow his own experience and reason to lead him in ways that he knows are contrary to the Bible.

The churches are not, however, content with relying on the efficacy of their own teaching in counteracting enlightenment that will give the masses power. In their attack on scientific thought as a formidable foe to their obscurantism, they are using their resources—aided and abetted by capitalist authorities—to pass anti-evolution laws and to temper scientific teachings as they conflict with church dogma. Churches develop canons of "good taste" and taboos that make it appear offensive to challenge religion in the name of science. They give wide publicity to the religious imbecilities of such scientists as Millikan, Eddington and Compton who found God at the end of a cosmic ray. Had they the power, the churches would bring contemporary science to the level of the scientific discussion of St. Thomas Aquinas who argued learnedly on the question of whether Adam and Eve had navels.

The churches' obscurantist offensive is not merely in the immediate field of science; it attempts to curb enlightenment in all branches of literature. The very first publication of the restored Vatican State was the revised *Index of Prohibited Books* which contains a list of over 4000 authors whose works must not be read by Catholics. In his passionate introductory defense of the Index—on which Voltaire, Montaigne, Zola, Defoe, Balzac and France are prominent and which includes the names of such respectables as Joseph Addison, Oliver Goldsmith and Immanuel Kant—Cardinal Merry del Val frankly states the churches' stand; "Literary and scientific merits cannot make legitimate the circu-



Herb Kruckman

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