

CORRESPONDENCE

THE CHURCH AND THE CINEMA,

SIR,—With reference to the article on the Cinema in last month's *BLACKFRIARS*, which stressed the need of some control being exercised through informed and public Catholic criticism, it seems to me that mere negative action is not enough.

In a recent letter to the Archbishop of Utrecht, the Pope writes that those devoted entirely to God and the Church should *make use* of the Cinema, and he foretells a great future for the apostolate when this course is adopted.

We Catholics are always defining 'essentials' and 'accidentals,' and yet we act as if we could not distinguish between the two. We spend millions on schools, little on the press, nothing on the cinema. A school may be said to be an association for imparting knowledge. On this count, there is little difference between a Catholic school, a Catholic newspaper, and a Catholic cinema. The school is one line of communication. Why neglect the others? The last two Catholic schools built cost respectively £11,000 and £26,000, yet no one thought of having one of the large class-rooms designed and thoroughly equipped as a cinematograph hall.

I have no theories as to the educational value of the Cinema, but I do know that it is one of the most powerful instruments of creating those impressions by which, rather than by calculated thinking, people are moved to-day. Great opportunities are being lost by not having such cinematograph halls where children could receive Catholic impressions, and where *at night* the parents could also profit by the expensive buildings they have paid to erect. The parents need education, and it should be given to them in this simple and enjoyable way. And such shows might be run at a profit.

Is it necessary to enlarge on the effect on vocations, for instance, if such Catholic themes as life in the cloister, or life on the missions, were thrown on the screen? An intelligent scenario of early Christian times would help to dissipate the vague Protestant conception of a primitive Christianity that never really existed. Is it realised, also, that there exists a type of Catholic who estimates the importance of the Church by the attention given to it by the films, and who can only be reached through them?

Portable apparatus is quite easy to operate, and little change would be needed to turn every Catholic school into a cinema by night.

Blackfriars

If the Pope's words mean anything, they mean that nuns and priests must make use of the Cinema, just as they do of the Typewriter and Telephone. Other interests have seized on it. Are the children of this world wiser than the children of light?

GERALD O'CONNOR, T.O.S.D.

PICTANTIAE

If among the signatories of the letter condemning the 'Outline' I had found a modern St. Francis, or a living Father Damien, I should have been more impressed.

Mr. Victor Gollancz, reported in the *Sunday Times*.

I am glad there were no women among them.

Mrs. Naomi Mitchison, reported in the *Observer*.

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Private letters inform us that humiliation alternates with indignation in the minds of responsible Irishmen at this moment. Both in their own land and in all the countries affected by their multitudinous Diaspora, the sons and daughters of Erin were proud to believe that, although few of them were rich, all of them were ladies and gentlemen.

The Tablet.

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About six hundred people were present, and the meeting was led by ———, who described how he had come to find in a life of witness the intellectual satisfaction and the adventure which he had formerly sought in philosophy and motor-cycle racing.

From a *Church Times* report of a Buchmanite meeting.

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Parish churches of the Established Religion are not the only breeding-places of Muscovism in England. *The Tablet* can (and, if necessary, will) name a Ladies' School, in the best part of a residential town on our South Coast, where Bolshevism receives material aid.

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