

The Freethinker

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IN his remarkable monastic autobiography, *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, the late Joseph McCabe concluded with a critical assessment of the future of the Roman Church and of its "infallible" chief, the Pope. McCabe's conclusion, based upon his exceptional knowledge of the practical working and theological teaching of the Church to which he had formerly belonged, was that by the end of this century, the then president of the Catholic Church would bear a generally analogous relationship to Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) as by the same date the social democratic president of the then German Republic would bear to Kaiser Wilhelm II (1888-1918). For in both cases, so McCabe predicted, the mediævally-derived regimes of pope and kaiser would have given way to democratic regimes of a more modern character.

The Second Vatican Council and the Papacy

This intriguing prediction of the former Father Anthony, seems already to be in process of effective fulfilment. For at least as regards the German empire, the medieval Hohenzollern dynasty has long since vanished from the map of Europe, and the bones of the last German kaiser moulder in foreign soil. It is true that the German Social Democratic Party—in its heyday the classic party of orthodox Marxism—has been nowadays superseded in that role and even within the confines of the German Reich has not quite made good its claim to be the authentic successor of the Hohenzollern Kaisers.

However, it may still do so; and in any case the restoration of the monarchy in Germany seems to be definitely out of the question either now or at any foreseeable time. Regarding what was when McCabe wrote, the strongest and best-organised monarchical regime in Europe, McCabe's prediction may be said to have been already fulfilled. Will it also prove true with regard to the Papacy? Will what Lord Macaulay once described as "the most august dynasty on earth" also succumb to the changing facts of human evolution and develop into a democratic regime of the modern type? This question is not merely an academic one for, in particular since Pope John reassembled the Vatican Council (adjourned *sine die* in 1870) signs have been multiplying which indicate that the papal autocracy of the Counter-Reformation (which—mainly due to the untiring efforts of the Jesuits—received its final seal and official confirmation at the time of the original Vatican Council of 1870) is nowadays approaching its end.

It was the Papacy itself, then represented by that very remarkable pope, John XXIII (whom future historians will surely regard as one of the greatest popes) which initially called together the second Vatican Council, yet since the accession of the suave and subtle ex-papal career diplomatist, Cardinal Montini, the initiative appears quite unmistakably to have passed from the Papacy to the Council. And throughout the sequential sessions of the Council, power has been passing steadily from the formerly all-powerful and ultra-conservative Roman Italian-domi-

nated Curia (the ecclesiastical "Whitehall" of the Papacy) to the bishops, who represent the overwhelming non-Italian majority of the Church and who are necessarily far more closely in touch with present-day social and cultural developments in all parts of the world.

The already announced intention of Pope Paul to set up a permanent advisory senate of bishops as a kind of apparently permanent ecclesiastical parliament to advise the Papacy would appear destined to foreshadow the perhaps gradual evaporation of the papal autocracy, traditionally based on the centralising despotism of the Curia in Rome, and its also perhaps slow but eventually sure reversion to the ecclesiastical equivalent of

a constitutional monarchy. For it must always be remembered that papal infallibility *de jure* as defined in the Infallibility Decree of July 10th, 1870, is of comparatively recent origin—and, rather ironically, the result not so much of the efforts of the Papacy itself, but rather of the Jesuits who, ever since the Council of Trent at the Counter-Reformation (mid-16th century), have steadily advanced their own power under cover of advancing that of the Papacy. To adopt the apt analogy of a German (Protestant) historian of the Papacy: ever since the Counter-Reformation, the all-powerful successors of Loyola, so often the *real* rulers of the Church, have effectively transformed the pope into the role of the king upon the chess board; into a figure of majesty that nominally dominates the board, but in reality has little power of independent movement and has in practice frequently (as at the First Vatican Council of 1870), been little more than a papal puppet of the "black pope", i.e., the General of the Jesuits (Cf. Gustav Krueger—*History of the Papacy*).

For it must not be forgotten that papal *de facto* autocracy and *de jure* infallibility reality only date from the Counter Reformation along with the Jesuits themselves. In the Middle Ages, general councils asserted their independence of popes and even deposed them (as at the Council of Constance in 1415). And even in post-Reformation times, the powerful French Church energetically repudiated the dogma of papal infallibility, an opposition continued even in the first Vatican Council, which finally proclaimed the dogma (Cf. Pompanio Leto—*Six Months at Rome*).

New Trends in the Papacy

At present it would appear to be sufficiently clear that the Church of Rome, and the Papacy along with it, are moving into a new era. The often sensational developments at the present Council, if they do nothing else, at least afford fresh and striking proofs of that recurring resiliency that already in 1840 Lord Macaulay, had noted as the underlying characteristic of the Papacy.

Two new trends currently making their presence felt are the growing power of the hitherto immobile laity (now organised in Catholic Action and already vocal at the Council) and the dawning cosmopolitan trend inaugurated by Pope Paul's successive visits to Palestine and to India. The traditional role of the pope as both the centre of

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Future of the Papacy

By F. A. RIDLEY

the exclusive Roman Curia and as the erstwhile "prisoner of the Vatican", cannot fail to be profoundly modified by these growing trends. For it seems clear that (as, indeed, McCabe also predicted) the Catholic laity will no longer accept their traditional passive role as eternally subordinate to the clerical caste.

Similarly, recent papal peregrinations beyond the confines of Europe, show unmistakably that the "infallible" Papacy has its ears close to the ground, and is keenly

cognisant that the centres of world power are changing; that the influential centres of influence are no longer as in past centuries exclusively confined to the white races and to the civilisation of European origin. Future successors of St. Peter may be Asiatic or African.

Both the above developments must surely exert a profound influence upon the future evolution of the Papacy, and Joseph McCabe's prediction may well prove to be correct.

Whom the Gods Love

By H. CUTNER

OVER a number of years I received cuttings from readers, and I read a number of articles myself, regarding the "miraculous" cure of a Miss Dorothy Kerin who, when she was only 22, was dying from tuberculous peritonitis, and had been given up by nine doctors. How did I explain it?

Naturally, I could not explain it, for I was not in possession of the facts; but as I did not believe in miracles, or in the supernatural, I was quite convinced that if she had been cured of anything at all, there was nothing miraculous about it.

What were the facts as we had them from Miss Kerin herself? It appears that when waiting for the inevitable end, her mother and other children saw her open her eyes which were "blue and bright and strange"; she called out, "Don't you hear?" and, "I am well, I must get up and walk", which thereupon she did. "I am hungry", added Dorothy—and she was completely cured.

She maintained that it was God Almighty, or Jesus, or the Holy Ghost, or an angel—it depended on which account one read—who told her to get up and walk, and though other doctors were consulted, the fact remains that Miss Kerin was cured. Not only that; she was sure that she had been called back from death for a "special purpose". She was, "through God, to heal others."

Within a year—so we are told—she began "healing", and soon she was taken up by "the wealthy, the influential and by prominent churchmen"; she even addressed meetings. But it was not until 1923 that she considered herself ready for her great healing campaign, which began in Ealing at the Chapel House, with the full backing of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, three bishops, and five Harley Street doctors, as well as various "English aristocrats and foreign princesses". No wonder that her story was eagerly publicised, not once, but over and over again. It was too good for any journalist to miss.

She cured dozens of people, old and young, who all poured gifts and money into the chapel. Soon, so great was the crush (or rush) for her healing powers that five houses and a resident chaplain were added to the chapel; and later, Miss Kerin moved to a large mansion, Burrswood, which stood in a 250-acre estate. Thenceforth, Miss Kerin's story was one of tremendous success in healing the sick and the incurable. In fact, apart from the numerous articles about her, TV claimed her, and we got some wonderful shots of a very gracious lady and her blue-eyed innocence, her healing chapel, her chaplain and resident doctor, and at least a few of the very grateful people she had healed. The charm and beauty of it all, infused with reverence and holiness, should have overwhelmed me when I saw the divine show, but they didn't. I was certain however that Miss Kerin was quite sure of her holy mission

on earth—self-mesmerised I would rather call it. But I might well have been deceived.

Not long after her TV appearance, Miss Kerin died very suddenly in 1963, and some of the lavish obituary notices underestimated the "supernatural" in her life, or thought it best to ignore it. For myself, I was fairly sure at the time that the spate of articles about her would not cease, and I was right. In the *Sunday Express* (November 8th) nearly a whole page was devoted to her by Dr. Cedric Carne, embellished with a photograph of Miss Kerin and some children she had adopted. It bore the headline—"The strange healing powers of a woman's hands".

As Miss Kerin had healed a woman who had a "lump"—it may have been cancer—and a boy of four who had been blind for two years, Dr. Carne went to see how they were some years after being cured. The lady had had no more trouble, and the boy could see perfectly. In other cases, he found that the doctors were amazed, always amazed.

But all these cures and the upkeep of the healing chapel together cost money, and there were 25 people working there. Moreover, Miss Kerin built a new church which cost over £30,000. Yet money flowed in continuously, and some of us at least are not surprised when, after her sudden death, it was found she had amassed £180,580 and left no will.

Dr. Carne accepted the truth of the cures he himself had followed up but was alas sceptical about their being "supernatural"; and this in spite of the fact that eminent churchmen and doctors all supported Miss Kerin, and evidently thoroughly believed in her healing hands. He listed some of the people who helped her in her healing work—or perhaps it was only financially—and among them we find Dr. Hopewell-Ash, Dr. Leonard Browne, Lord Horder, Dr. Burnett Rae, and Dr. Maurice Wright; and I find it most difficult to understand how, with such a galaxy of medical opinion behind her, he remains "sceptical" about her healing powers—or even that she had been ill herself. If she had, then it was possible that she had been only "an hysteric"—though he was not sure.

For my own part, I am sure and always have been, that all over the world people have been cured by all sorts of drugs and herbs, by hypnosis, by cold water treatments, by suggestion, and even by witch doctors. The *veritable* cures are actually precious few, but they always make a big splash. The millions who are never cured are utterly ignored by doctors, priests, and parsons alike and this is the case with Lourdes. We rarely, if ever, get the names of the unfortunates who die in spite of the laying on of hands, the massage with olive oil, or the prayers of earnest believers.

Whom the gods love . . . !

German War Crimes

By GERDA GUTTENBERG (Nürnberg)

I send the following as a contribution to the discussions at present taking place on the formal prolongation of prosecutions for war-crimes, and the Catholic attitude towards National Socialism, as openly discussed since Hochhuth's *The Representative*. (Certainly this play could not have been published if Protestant circles had not backed the author).

The 20-year rule which applies for murder in Germany, will free all those from prosecution who committed crimes during the 12-years of the Third Reich, but succeeded in obtaining documentary papers, changed their names or escaped to foreign countries. All those could feel free to shed their camouflage by May 1965 and jeopardise that fragrant blossom of democracy established in Western Germany after World War II.

From this point of view and generally speaking, there is practically no reason why this 20-year rule should not be prolonged in advance to 30 years, as the reform bill (under discussion for years) provides anyway.

The real problem, however, lies elsewhere. As the once assistant prosecutor at the Nürnberg Trials in 1945 to 1948, Dr. Robert Kemptner (now an attorney in the United States), said on December 3rd—only a few weeks ago—at a lecture given at Nürnberg: "The belatedly installed research institution at Ludwigsburg, working since 1958, is hopelessly understaffed. They will not be in a position to cope with the truck loads of documentary material. More could be achieved only if, in the future, sufficient personnel worked on those documents offered from the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Russia, Hungary, and elsewhere." He pointed out that staffs of those ministries, and the personnel surrounding the Führer, who dealt with "the East" had not even been scrutinised, less still had anybody been put on trial.

However, one basic consideration must be made first. The Bundesrepublik was allowed by Western consent to grow into another stronghold against "the East". A lot of people active during the Third Reich, experts on "the East", whose services cannot be disposed of, are most actively holding this present bulwark again.

Kemptner had to admit that pressure groups in Western Germany forced the liberation of thousands of convicted in 1949 to 1952 for reasons of remilitarisation of this country—for another spearhead against "the East". All those already tried at that time, or under prosecution, and released in spite of all, cannot be put to trial again: *non bis in idem!*

How can you accuse the military personnel of the Hitler army, when they are now trainers and officers of the new army? How put blame on those in industry and administration who helped to rebuild capitalism, the stronghold against "the East"?

It was one of those treacheries and trickeries that will not be forgotten in this country, that the churches escaped any purgatory measures after the war. Now more material is coming to light on the role the churches played in Hitler Germany and the support they gave him. In 1945 and during the decisive years right after the war, they were in a position not only to whitewash their own clergy and lay helpers, but all those who in past or present or future might assist their aims. They produced, what the people called "Persil-Scheine" keeping those who were hypocritical enough to return to the church they had left. Thus not only did important Nazis escape

measures; back they often were in some favoured position.

Small wonder that rightist groups now ask for a general amnesty. The more so as they consider those war crimes committed under political circumstances, not threatened by penal code paragraphs. They point to Dresden, where almost a million Germans died because the city had to be flattened. The Russians planned to put up their headquarters there! They stress that no war trials had been staged against those who built and permitted the use of atomic bombs on Japan. They point to the crimes those suffered who had to leave their homes in East Prussia, Silesia, Sudetenland. They point to warlike actions in Korea, Vietnam, Algeria, Congo, Suez, Cuba, Angola, etc., and ask who was held responsible, or will be held responsible?

Those martyrs of the Church who lived and died in concentration camps were individuals opposing their Church. The Church was claiming them as it has claimed others. When in 1933 the socialists and liberals began to move out of their positions everywhere, Catholics in large numbers moved in, took over Jewish stores and shops. No bishop protested against euthanasia, as long as only state-owned infirmaries were closed and cleared. It was 18 months after the action started that the bishop Graf von Galen protested: when church-owned institutions were at stake and with it church income!

To believe that National Socialism was a unique ideology is mistaken. It was a collection of resentment groups, some with the intention of re-establishing a Germany as in 1914, some for expanding towards the east for economic or ideological reasons. By far the strongest pressure group was the Catholic bloc. The barons of the Rhine and the Ruhr were all Catholics, and had strongly supported Hitler ever since World War I was lost, and they recognised that sooner or later he would attract all those who were dissatisfied with the Weimar Republic.

Two eminent war criminals, Schacht and von Papen, put on trial at 1945, were released: because of international backing.

Von Papen gave a speech on November 9th, 1933, three days before the election, which when successful, brought a merging of state and party, thus overruling the Weimar Constitution.

Among many other things he said in this lecture: "The get-together of Catholic ideology and National Socialism must be welcomed wholeheartedly. It does not mean an acceptance of promising conditions, but a fully-fledged basic agreement with all elements of National Socialism... As the Holy Father said on October 29th, 1933: 'Heavy though the hour seems to be, great hopes will come out of it'... We have to face facts seemingly unavoidable in the sequence of a great revolution. They may bring duress and misery personally, Christian love may deplore them, but they must be understood from a healthy standpoint of sternness and intolerance, without which no mental changes ever have been accomplished... German Catholicism has to understand that in the November 12th election it must be found in the front line against the era of liberalism... it has to decide for a return to the natural order, as provided by God. There is no comparison with the position of Catholics during the Weimar Republic. The apparent outer freedom they enjoyed, the subsidies they were given for organisations and institu-

(Concluded on page 7)

This Believing World

It must have been a dreadful admission for the Christian writer of the London *Evening News* (December 12th) "Saturday Reflection" to say—and at Christmas time too—that Christianity "has produced no modern Utopia because it has never promised anything of the sort". But is it not Utopia to sit with Jesus in Heaven for eternity? Really, the way in which genuine Christians are denigrating their own sacred religion staggers us.

★

Whether there ever was an "Atlantis" or not is still hotly discussed, though the preponderance of opinion is that this great Atlantic continent is purely mythical. Be that as it may, there is, according to *The People* (December 27th) a Church of Atlantis in Hertfordshire with the Rev. Father Laurence as its Hierarch, and on Sundays, it holds a solemn communion of remembrance and a liturgy and meditation, among its other sacred services. Its creed is particularly holy.

★

With other solemn declarations it has, "I believe in the Divine Triad of God, the Father-Mother-Son, Three perfect Beings in One, who doth dwell in Divine Heaven." Mr. Laurence himself is Osiris-Isis, though why Horus is not added is perhaps one of those theological puzzles never to be solved by blatant unbelievers. In any case, *The People* calls his holy faith a "weird religion"! What an understatement!

★

It is bad enough to have the usual troubles in a Church—the question of unity, or whether the Jews did or did not crucify Jesus. But for a bishop to have to reprimand a vicar because he no longer believes in baptism is a little too much. The Rev. R. Vick of Westcliffe, Essex, claims that there is no proof that "infant baptism is agreeable to the Word of God", and therefore he is baptising no more babies in his church. Naturally, his bishop (of Chelmsford) is furious, and instead of turning the other cheek, threatens to sack him. And Mr. Vick is ready to go. A curious thing about the affair is that Mr. Vick's own children were baptised. But these baptisms "no longer count", he says. If they insist on being "re-baptised" when older, they will (we are told) have their parents' blessing!

★

Although the Bishop of Woolwich appears to be very heretical, he has not so far given up either God or Jesus, both of whom are alive somewhere. And in the *Sunday Mirror* (December 5th) he deals with the Second Advent—"Will Christ really return to Earth? Needless to say, he pours scorn on the pious Christians who really believe in this "mumbo jumbo" as he calls it. "And he insists that no "intelligent" Christian believes it. What the Second Coming really means, he declares, is that "Christ must come into everything"—a proposition which millions of Christians no doubt will find even sillier than the idea of a Second Coming.

★

Daisy Loman, writing from Paris on December 18th to the *Guardian* had a sensible suggestion that the Crathorne Committee seemed to have overlooked—that libraries should be open on Sundays. "Neither the amount of extra employment involved nor the risk of noisy crowds would be very large," she said, "and reading is eminently a Sunday occupation." Yes, even the Sabbatarians read on the Lord's day, though rather restrictedly.

Waste

To have to admit failure and defeat after four and a half years of hard work and considerable expenditure of money, (£30,000) is a discouraging state of affairs, but one can only agree with the Rector of Woolwich in the, for him, depressing conclusion that the Christian Church can "never again be the centre of urban community life." In his article "Failure of a Mission" (*The Observer Supplement* December 6th, 1964) he stated that the ecclesiastical structures that have served society fairly well for hundreds of years are becoming "increasingly irrelevant, and secular ones determine the shape and tone of society". The Rector believes that the affairs of the Christian Church will become more difficult still, as formal Christianity disappears and is replaced by secularisation of the community. A very true assessment.

Apparently the concentrated efforts of a high-powered team of clergy in Woolwich have achieved little. Especially so in the field of infant baptism. Spectacularly arranged christenings with processions of mothers have failed to entice the parents to become churchgoers. They apparently look upon baptism as some sort of initiation ceremony these days, which has to be gone through to render the child socially "with it" and that is the end of it. Even parish suppers, coach outings, and theatre visits have proved futile. The old "bread and circuses" trick has lost its magic it seems, as has house to house visiting. Conversion of the side aisles of the large church into a coffee bar and lounge have met the same fate as far as the religious life of the parish is concerned. People are just not interested any more, and it seems a shocking waste of talent that a team of young men with high university degrees should spend their days trying to bolster up a dying cause.

It is hardly surprising that Christianity, which has been a persecuting religion during most of its existence, and has never been forthright in condemnation of war, should now be treated with scepticism and distrust when it seeks to present itself as a model of loving-kindness, all sweetness and light. Urban industrial and scientifically educated populations, which have mainly replaced the agrarian superstitious and illiterate peasantry of medieval Europe can no longer tolerate the unsupported, self-constituted authority of the early Christian Fathers assisted by the pious fictions of monkish writers. To say, as the Rector does, that the people need God is just nonsense. Human affairs would have been in a lamentable state if reliance had been placed solely on gods, the Christian God included. Everything beneficial to man has been achieved by his own efforts, often in the face of tremendous difficulties and tough opposition from the Church, and people are beginning to realise it.

The inability of both Anglican and Roman Churches to come to terms with the needs of the modern world becomes more apparent every day. The Rector of Woolwich is not alone in trying to cope unsuccessfully with this problem. After an expensive and largely ineffectual Ecumenical Council, the Pope himself has had to take to the road, and try what effect a little spectacular salesmanship will have upon an unsuspecting and partly illiterate India.

When Marsiglio of Padua wrote his *Defensor Pacis* in 1324 (for which he was excommunicated) he visualised the "secular state as the only cohesive force which could create a civilised life for man on earth" and he advocated the exclusion of the Church from all civil power and jurisdiction. "Failure of a Mission" gives some indication that Marsiglio's ideal may be approaching fulfilment.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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OUTDOOR

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North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead)—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY

INDOOR

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 3rd, 6.30 p.m.: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT. "Morals, Religion and Education."

Notes and News

MONICA FURLONG, a member of the BBC's Central Religious Advisory Committee, believes that "the kernel of the joy and happiness of Christmas" lies in what she called the "vulnerability" of Jesus (*Radio Times*, 17/12/64). "He arrived in the world as naked and helpless as all the rest of us", wrote Miss Furlong (apparently overlooking the supernatural protection afforded to the Son of God) but "unlike the rest of us remained for the whole of his life without defences." We, on the contrary, "fence ourselves round with various devices to keep other human beings at bay." Perhaps, then, Miss Furlong concluded, "glad tidings of great joy" means "no more than breaking out of our private loneliness and learning to live with one another." Which is hardly the traditional (Christian) Christmas message.

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CHRISTIANITY took another beating in *Not So Much a Programme* on December 20th. Not only did playwright Peter Shaffer repeat his historical criticism ("By their fruits..."), novelist Brigid Brophy made the more fundamental criticism that it simply wasn't true—no more so than the stories of Zeus. Miss Brophy rightly contested the Rev. Nicholas Stacey's claims that the Church had been the pioneer in education, medicine and other fields. But these were secondary to the question of its truth or falsehood. A rather stunned Mr. Stacey asked if she could disprove the story of Christ. No, said Miss Brophy, but neither can I disprove those of Zeus.

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SAN FRANCISCO City Council finally voted to accept a gift of \$10,840 to set up a voluntary family planning clinic at the General Hospital, *Church and State* reported

(November, 1964). The Roman Catholic mayor, John F. Shelley, had "knocked the item out of the city's budget, but Mrs. Henriette de S. Lehman stepped forward with a donation for the programme." Mrs. Clarissa McMahon, a Catholic member of the Finance Committee, voted against accepting the gift on the grounds that the clinic might be "hopelessly overcrowded."

★

In a letter to the *Guardian* (17/12/64), W. Barrett of Belfast described Northern Ireland as a place where "the Victorian Sunday to a large extent, still holds sway." Churches of all denominations are packed twice daily on the Sabbath, no public houses are open, and it is difficult until late in the afternoon to find a filling station open. Worse still—as other papers have noted recently—the swings in children's playgrounds in Belfast are padlocked. Three members of the Queen's University staff, including a professor, attempted to cut the chains with a hacksaw in protest, and the absurd restriction has been debated in Belfast City Council. Fifteen of the controlling Unionist councillors promptly walked out. Anyway, as the *Belfast Telegraph* remarked, Ulster people can go about their Sabbath without the Crathorne report spoiling their day, for its terms of reference "do extend beyond the pagan borders of England and Wales."

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ANOTHER letter in the *Guardian* (17/12/64) pointed out some deficiencies of the report. You seek in vain, wrote David J. F. Pollock of Kent, for the principles that guided the Crathorne Committee's recommendations. It has "merely taken each law in turn and decided whether or not it should be changed... instead of adopting some such basic principles as that religious observances should not... be enforced by the law; and that it is restrictions in the law, not relaxations, that need justification." If the Committee had done this, we should not have new anomalies about the AAA being allowed to stage an athletics match on a Sunday but professional football being forbidden.

★

ULSTERMEN might have nothing to fear from the Crathorne report, but Scotsman should be gravely concerned, according to the Rev. Murdoch Campbell of Ross-shire (*The Scotsman*, 16/12/64). True the report referred "at the moment" only to England and Wales, but it had come as "a grave shock to many thousands of Christian people"—north of the border as well as south. For Mr. Campbell, "the Sabbath law is an integral part of God's moral law for all mankind": the words "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy" stand in the same moral context as "Thou shalt not kill". And at a time when "our moral and spiritual foundations are rapidly disintegrating... it ill becomes those who are, under God, entrusted with the preservation of our great Christian heritage, to open wider the gates of moral desecration".

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UNDER the heading "Bishop on 1944 Act Burden", the *Catholic Herald* (18/12/64) reported on the proposed new Roman Catholic school at Kettering which is expected to cost £70,000. Bishop Parker of Northampton had expressed the hope that some British Government or other would see fit to amend the 1944 Education Act with regard to voluntary-aided schools. "With the great increases in population in the area", the Bishop said, "new schools are needed. Yet the Church cannot get Government help to build them—all the money for this school will have to be found privately." Such burden as there is on Catholics with regard to denominational schools is, we may say, self imposed: the unjustified burden is on the rest of the community.

Rome's "New" Morality

By GILLIAN HAWTIN

WHY do people become Catholics? Old-fashioned Protestant notions are that it is because the music or the sensuousness of Rome's worship attracts them. It is very plain that people who think along these lines can hardly even have been inside a Catholic church. In a cathedral, the distance of the laity from the sanctuary, and the slow pace of the liturgy, make it very difficult to follow, while the very perfunctory nature of the manner in which low mass is said in the ordinary parish church—some scruffy acolyte barely able to give the responses—has little to attract the senses. The fact is, as Ronald Knox wrote in *The Belief of Catholics*, this is but the shop window, and "our High Church friends do it as well or better". The Church counsels considerable self-control, even for the laity, and in the religious life, a highly articulated asceticism. Only through the purgative way, is it possible to reach the illuminative way.

Is it then due to the historic grandeur and majesty of the Church, of which a committed Catholic will speak with love in his eyes, and holy fervour in his voice? Certainly the very age and continuity of the Church can attract those with an historic sense; Catholic apologists are wont to quote Macaulay's famous passage—out of context. They do not avert to the more critical words which follow! "Who is She that stands united? triumphant?" before whom "empires rise and sink like billows". Examine some of the *realpolitik* of the Roman Church and it becomes clear that her amazing recuperative powers are due not to a promise that God shall be with His Church all days so that even the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, but to natural means—the active rethinking of its position in every age and clime. A considerable amount of such thinking has, of course, taken place at the recent Vatican Council.

It is here, I should suggest, that Rome's chief attraction lies for the better and more thoughtful minds among us. Augustine of Hippo—whose *Confessions* are a classic analysis of the motives, hidden and apparent, of the human heart—turned from the sensuousness and lust of his youth, to purity and abnegation in his Christian days. As many before, and many since, he was attracted by the twin powers of unchangeableness and adaptability, of the Church. "O Beauty ever ancient, ever new," he cried.

There are some minds to whom to be in doubt about certain fundamental questions of life seems intolerable. It is hard to see why this is so. An adult and educated person, even if he is not an Agnostic, has to live with his own ignorance in many fields and departments of life. An Agnostic faces with equanimity, even rejoicing, the fact that there are no hard and fast rules laid down for us in most of these departments of life, according to his way of looking at things. An old rhymster in *The Reasoner*, the 19th-century rationalist magazine of George Jacob Holyoake and his brother Austin, wrote:

Our ingress into life is naked and bare,
Our progress through life is trouble and care;
Our egress out of it, we know not where,
But doing well here we shall do well there;
I could not tell more by preaching a year.

Such words are compatible with humanism and rationalism; even, for that matter, with Christianity. But the Christian is not content to leave it at that. For him the next world is a fact, and preparation for it depends absolutely on our behaviour here—in the family, in any number of voluntary and obligatory societies, and in

society at large. The Church teaches that to her God gave, once and for all, on Sinai, and then, enlarged upon in the New Testament, the "means whereby we shall be saved." To this extent morality is ever ancient, it cannot change. But new conditions require it to be worked out afresh by casuists and theologians in every age. There is, in short, *development* in moral theology and Christian sociology, and how this is done, for the reasoning and educated laity, may be seen in such works as those as *Society and Sanity* and *Theology and Sanity* by Frank Sheed.

Their starting point is the social nature of man. Man, even in order to survive, to develop to his full stature certainly, needs society. Man only becomes human, writes Sheed, in so far as he lives in society. Within the context of this necessary society, how then is the old morality to be applied to the changing conditions of today? Before it can answer these questions, the Church has to examine in what way, precisely, conditions have changed since, say, the French Revolution.

The French Revolution surged forward with the great rallying slogan "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.*" The ideas of the French Revolution—this is a commonplace among Catholic historians such as Belloc and Christopher Dawson—have not yet "worked themselves out". I do not think this notion is so common among non-Catholic historians, who are committed to theories of linear progress, or at any rate do not envisage European history as a struggle between the domination of the Church and secular forces. The Catholics consider this slogan ridiculous. Men are plainly not equal, and never can be, for it is against nature. English Catholics may quote the Conservative Burke in their support. Liberty is not wholly possible, for society needs law and order. And finally it follows, if liberty and equality be impossible, so must be fraternity. If this seems a pessimistic viewpoint, we should remember that those who express it believe in original sin. And the Catholic will tell us that ours is the pessimistic view; the gospel brings redemption to fallen man worked out in Catholic social principles.

Look around the world of today, says the Catholic, and we have an "explosion of knowledge." We have sex equality, or very nearly so, and a new equality between the generations, needing a new rationale. Such things may be the fruits of protestantism, agnosticism, and the interplay of economic forces (it is very dubious if there would have been anything like the equality that exists, between the sexes, and between the generations, if the strict doctrines of Catholicism had been adhered to in Western Europe during the last couple of centuries) but—the necessary progress in this field having been achieved by the wicked heretics and unbelievers—the Catholics play their old dodge of baptising the results, and banishing the authors to the outer darkness.

Now, because man is a social being, society must take the blame in part, for his misdeeds, in addition to whatever blame may fairly be apportioned him. This is the doctrine of collective responsibility. Confessions of sin in Christian services very often speak in the plural. We are members one of another; no members of the Mystical body of Christ can suffer, or do wrong, without all the others likewise suffering. With those conditions of human life which change then, morality changes; but, in so far as human nature is unchangeable, morality does not change.

Not even the Ten Commandments are absolute. They have been in the Protestant tradition, which rejected the authority of the interpreting Church, but not in the Catholic. Our morality *appears* to be under change, argues the Catholic, because we have not established the conditions for morality.

All this talk about morality, still more about moral obligations will seem strange to freethinking ears. But it is important we should understand how it concerns the Catholic thinker today. For, he says, we must see what the new conditions are; we must safeguard long-term interests when threatened by short-term impulses. In short, the Catholic Church is up to the old trick of working out to what extent she must move with the times in order not to be engulfed by them, and in what manner her accommodations must be made in order to safeguard those things she has always felt to be basic.

When, therefore, the Catholic Church concerns itself—to give one instance—with the problem of contraception, it is not just trying to come to grips with the fact that 40 per cent of Catholic laity is believed to use forbidden methods, or with its seeming callousness to problems of world hunger. The issues lie deeper than this. It is the eternal problem of reshaping modern man to eternal needs and unchanging morality. This is where Freethinkers need to be on the look-out. The Church is not striving to achieve a “new look”; she is on a salvaging expedition. Those would-be converts who cannot be lured by music or liturgy, or even historic continuity, but who are led away by theories of development in morality, may do well to remind themselves how old, indeed, morality can be.

GERMAN WAR CRIMES

(Concluded from page 3)

tions of all kinds were basically achieved through liberalism, a state that allowed political Catholicism a strong position, but resulted in a neutral state, which allowed likewise liberties to atheistic movements... We must admit with courage that National Socialism will restore the world order as we see it and as it is set up by God... The pillars of National Socialism comprise family, community, and nation, engagement and authority... Destiny enabled me, to assist on January 30th this year in establishing this government of national resurrection... ”

Von Papen succeeded in getting a high pension from this state. He was honoured by the Papal See with its highest order.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society was held at 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1 on December 16th. Present: Mr. D. Tribe, (President) in the chair, Messrs Barker, Collins, Condon, Ebury, Hornibrook, Kuebart, Michael, Millar, Miller, Shannon, Sproule, Timmins, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. McIlroy, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths), and the Secretary.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. W. Collins, who was attending his first Executive Committee as representative of the Manchester branch.

A report on Secular Education Month (November) was given. Meetings had been reported in nearly 50 newspapers, and the campaign mentioned on several radio and television programmes. The final meeting at the Alliance Hall, London, had been exceedingly well attended, and had been filmed by Independent Television.

Three new branches had been formed recently, and the largest number of new members for several years enrolled. The financial report was accepted. It was decided to apply for permission to hold a rally in Trafalgar Square, London, to mark the centenary of the Society, and the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in 1966.

The next meeting was arranged for January 20th, 1965.

Points From New Books

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

I HAVE written before in this paper about the historical novels of Peter Vansittart. His latest, *The Lost Lands* (Macmillan, 21s.), is set in fourteenth century Europe and is as brilliantly packed as ever with priests who have good reasons for doing evil things (“Slavery is no offence to God to Whom all men are slaves, etc.”), and mysterious Templars who commit dire sins to prove their nobility in the Christian hierarchy. Indeed the book has a wonderful texture of dread and superstition and an astringency. For instance: “In late summer Plague had ridden through Angiers, a punishment, priests declared, for fornication and tolerance too often shown to Jews. But it was often maintained that, as priests were seen to die as painfully as anyone else, the scourge was as much due to the sins of the Church.”

Having been impressed by Andrew Sinclair’s *The Raker* (noticed in these columns in the issue dated November 13th), I’ve been looking up some of his previous novels. There are certainly plenty of bright laughs in *My Friend Judas* (Faber, 15s.): and I particularly like the hero’s gimmick of putting up “inspired” quotes in his sitting room:

I always thought that Jesus Christ was a snubby or I should not have worshipped him if I thought he had been one of those long spindled nose rescals [Blake].

I have not had the pleasure of reading previous novels by Christopher Short, author of *The Black Room* (Cape 21s.): but now I intend to do so. The new story approaches a scandal in the eighteen nineties when the Archduke Friedrich George was found drowned with two other men in less than three feet of water. Official circles hushed up the mystery; but the novel purports to present a diary from which the astute reader can entertain himself by guessing at the scandalous truth, and also remind himself that many Germans believe that any transgressions can be permitted in the sacred cause of duty. Finally, the reader is left to question whether means sanctify the end, and to wonder whether it is true that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make alive.

The fictional diary, although it reveals the character of an ambiguous aristocrat, is full of witty and profound observations, and many thoughts will appeal to freethinkers. For instance: “The idea that children are born with natural sin (and in it) was, of course, invented by the Church to excuse the shortcomings of its members. In the Middle Ages even popes could give way to greed, lust and murder, assuaging their guilty consciences with the comforting doctrine that man is naturally sinful and all one need do is to shrive oneself in time before one dies in order to go to Heaven. Churchmen today are not much better—although murder is no longer fashionable—and they conduct their little ‘affairs’ more discreetly.”

“All along the line we adopted pagan customs,” writes the Archduke, “pretending that they were Christian in order to seduce ignorant fools from their own religions.” So he says: “There has probably never been a more unscrupulous religion than Christianity. The end, which we admit to be unknown and unknowable, has always justified the means for Christians.”

OBITUARY

We regret to announce the death, at the age of 73 of Leslie Allcock, a popular and respected member of Nottingham branch of the National Secular Society. When a young man Mr. Allcock was a Sunday school teacher but eventually became a Freethinker.

Mr. T. M. Mosley conducted a secular funeral ceremony at Mansfield Crematorium on December 15th.

Provincial Dialogue With Two Young Artists

"GOOD God, what's that old-time squiggle?"

"God."

"What d'yer mean? The boys were painting those kinky circles when the Beatles were in their rockabyes."

"Why shouldn't it be god? I mean if there's a god, that's it."

"Wouldn't a square be better than a circle, more apt like?"

"Man, arbitrariness is the nub. That's why there's more to this than meets your short-changed eye. See, if there's a kid called god, he could appear in any way he wanted."

"With all that choice, he'd choose to crawl out from under his stone as your circle? Fellow's mad."

"Wait for it. Ever since the priests started to curse the gooks from a height, our chums have been selling junk to their churches. They had to show god as a man, when the creeps were uneducated like. Now we're climbing up in volume, kid; and it's called the twentieth century. The nut-cases who copulate with atoms want to have their IQs flattered. Even the toadies of the tonsure have been struggling to be 'with it' and getting themselves conned by daubers who tart up the old representational lark and bung in a few distortions so that they can say it's modern life. Time's come to give the straight gimmick."

"Who's going to love your circle, fat-head?"

He didn't want love. He wanted someone to name a bridge after him or a disease. What's love got to do with it in 1965?"

"If you think you can con the vicar into buying your wonky circle, my canary's going to crawl into a serpent's mouth."

"Why not? How emetic can you get? What the hell do you think it is, if it isn't god?"

"God knows..."

O.B.

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CORRESPONDENCE

INDIAN RATIONALIST CONVENTION

The Seventh Convention of Indian Rationalists will be held at Hyderabad on January 23rd and 24th, 1965. The Convention meeting after five years in the midst of many difficulties. Our National leader Mahatma Gandhi mixed up his religion with politics and it is difficult in India today to effect a separation. Our late prime minister Pandit Nehru tried his best to establish a secular state, but he hardly succeeded. The advent of the Dalai Lama into India and the visit of the Pope to our country have confounded the issue. There is great need in India, as probably in the rest of the world, to effect a separation between religion and politics, between church and state. Pakistan and other Islamic countries on our borders are theocratic. Burma and Ceylon have become states with Buddhism as state religion. Surrounded as we are by theocratic states it is difficult for us in India to function as a secular state, but nevertheless that is our only salvation if we are not to further dismember the country as we had to do in the case of Pakistan.

Apart from the issue of secularism, the wider issues of rationalism and civil liberties are still hanging fire. Our Convention therefore has to give a proper lead to the country in this situation.

S. RAMANATHAN,

Secretary, Indian Rationalist Association.

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