

The Freethinker

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THE Roman Catholic Church is not "pure spirit" freed from all earthly events. If the Church is a divine institution it has its roots firmly attached to time and space. It breathes the air of its own time. For in order to enjoy a spiritual or mystical experience, one first has to be sustained by material food. This applies even to the Church of Christ. For we know how much it costs to train and to support a missionary, however simply he may live. The 500 or 600 millions of Catholics [a much exaggerated numerical estimate F.A.R.] scattered all over the world, could not remain united without a centralised administration. This central administration is the Roman Curia, which usually seeks to build up reserves for the purpose of satisfying the current needs of Christianity. What are these reserves and how much do they amount to in all?

Delicate Negotiations

At present a conflict in which the Vatican and the Italian Government are the opposing parties has raised the question of the exact value of the current investments of the Vatican.

The Lateran Treaty signed on February 11th, 1929, between the Italian state represented by Mussolini and the papacy represented by Pius XI exempted some of the Vatican's Italian investments from taxation. However, at the end of 1962, the Italian Government of the Left-Centre imposed the notorious *Cedolare*, a tax upon dividends of a kind similar to that already levied in several other countries, and payable by all Italians as well as by foreigners with investments in Italian concerns. However, exceptions were made in the case of the subjects of a number of states with whom reciprocal bilateral arrangements had already been concluded. The Holy See claimed exemption under this clause, under the 1929 Treaty and, in particular, on account of the special status accorded to the Vatican City, as also because the Vatican during this period was the only institution that provided free assistance to the poor.

After a good deal of procrastination, the Italian Government addressed a confidential circular to the various Italian companies in which the Vatican owned shares, authorising them to pay dividends to the Holy See without previously deducting tax. But the appointment of a Socialist as Minister of Finance, re-opened the issue, for the Minister demanded that the whole question of the Vatican's exemption from taxation should be referred for ultimate sanction to Parliament where the whole matter could be debated.

The present Italian Government of Signor Moro regards the Vatican as having moral and historical justification for its claim. But the left wing suspects that this special exemption may allow numerous Italian capitalists to evade their fiscal obligations in various ways. The Government must also take into account the contingency that, if the Holy See were to decide suddenly to get rid of its Italian investments and were to dump them simultaneously upon

the open market, it might have undesirable repercussions upon the country's economy.

It is estimated that the Holy See at present owns about 10 per cent of the entire number of shares registered on Italian Stock Exchanges. Enormous values are evidently involved since, at the end of December 1964, total Italian investments were valued at 5,500 milliards (thousands of millions) of lire, there being about 1,700 lire to the £1.

This would make the total capital invested by the Vatican in Italian securities at 550 milliards of lira—£323½m.

However, if we are to believe the English *Economist*, even this staggering sum falls short of the truth.

This is without pausing to

consider the absurdly exaggerated figures quoted by the anti-clerical press—not 10 per cent but three-quarters of the total Italian capital.

Stupendous Investments

What is certainly true, is that the specifically Italian investments of the Holy See represent only a tiny part of its world investments. Precisely what proportion, was, the *Economist* admitted, difficult to say. Probably a tenth or perhaps a twelfth, which would swell the Vatican investments to at least five thousand, six hundred millions of dollars. This estimate, let it be clear, covers only the holdings on Stock Exchanges and in other negotiable values; in a sentence, in liquid capital reserves. It entirely excludes its properties, domestic possessions, works of art, etc. We know, of course, that the Vatican collections of works of art and the like, are the richest in the world, quite incalculable in monetary terms. Nor do we include either the property owned by the Catholic Church in Europe, nor the Americas: properties that it is difficult to distinguish from the goods of dioceses, convents, colleges, etc., altogether independent of the Holy See itself.

This survey, then, is solely concerned in calculating the liquid reserves at the disposal of the Holy See. In order to give an idea of the figures cited above, it can be said that the Vatican's reserves equal the official holdings of France both in gold and foreign securities and not only in dollars. We may add in this connection, that the holdings of the Church of England amount only to £243 millions and, further, that the dollar reserves of the United Kingdom, are estimated at a thousand million (one milliard), or only a fifth of that of the Vatican, which is only surpassed by the collective totality of all the American life insurance companies. Accordingly, we must agree with the *Economist*, that the Vatican is one of the most powerful monopolies in the contemporary world, if not actually the most powerful of all.

Special Administration

We may inquire how the finances of the Church have evolved up to now. Before the Lateran Treaty the Vatican was already a considerable economic power, but in an area confined to Italy. But the financial stipulations of the treaty enabled the Holy See to modify its economic policy, and soon resulted in a rapid increase in material

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Finances of the Vatican

Translated from the French

By F. A. RIDLEY

resources. For the Italian state had turned over to the Holy See a generous sum in compensation for the loss of the pope's temporal power (ended by the Italian occupation of Rome in 1870)—bank notes and state securities to a nominal value of a thousand million lire.

Pius XI had created a special administration for the express purpose of administering these funds which is under the special charge of that remarkable Italian financier, Bernardino Nogara. This administration launched the policy of international investment that culminated in the present financial situation. It was a policy characterised by exceptional foresight and prudence. This new body took over from "The Administration of the Goods of the Holy See", originally established by Leo XIII in 1878, after the Vatican economy had been transformed by the loss of Rome and of the papal states. And we may add in passing that the Vatican has played a leading part financially in the modernisation of Rome: banks, finance companies, gas, electricity, tramways; it is also largely concerned with the housing programme in present-day Italy.

The "Special Administration" obviously has numerous key agents, specialists in posts of trust, whose first duty is to observe an oath to maintain strict secrecy in relation to highly confidential affairs with which they are entrusted, a rule that is usually strictly enforced in the Roman Curia. The Administration business is aided by the unique position that it occupies in world affairs. For it is not responsible to any parliament or cabinet, or any kind of popular supervision. Above all, it transcends national frontiers and controls capital resources guaranteed in every part of the world, thanks to its highly effective "clearing" system and thanks to the special diplomatic facilities of which the Holy See, in its capacity as a sovereign state, is able to take full advantage. The Vatican has permanent facilities for acquiring information that enables it to assess and to manipulate the current financial situation.

World-wide Investments

The financial policy of the Holy See is under the supreme control of Bernardino Nogara, who is advised by a "brains trust" of financial experts, conspicuous among whom are the Italian Luigi Mennin and the Swiss Henri de Maillardoz. The funds, as well as the gold reserves, are located in numerous banks in both America and Europe, but particularly in Switzerland and England. Among the banks where the Vatican is a regular client, one may note the Jewish European banks of Rothschild Hambro and Samuel Montague, besides the Morgan Bank, one of the most important in the world.

In addition, the Vatican has its own financial institutions, over some of which at least it possesses an effective control. Among these are the Bank of the Holy Spirit founded in Rome in 1608, although nowadays the Holy See has only very limited connection with it. However, its director Marquis Giovambattista Sacchetti, is one of the highest dignitaries of the papal court. We may also mention the Bank of Rome, founded in 1808 (the Director of which, Signor Vittorino Veronese, is a leading figure in the Catholic Action Movement in Italy), the Società General Immobiliare (a building society whose director, Signor Eugenio Gualdi, is one of the most trusted collaborators of the Holy See, and whose vice-president, Signor Enrico Galeazzi, was an intimate friend of Pius XII and is one of the leading advisers of the Holy See on its economic policy). Amongst Immobiliare's directors is Signor Vittorio Valletta, controller of Fiat; and the society controls numerous companies and has extensive interests in transport and the tourist industry. For example, it owns three-quarters of the shares in the Roman Hilton Hotel.

The Vatican also possesses extensive interests in such societies and companies as Sogene, Pantanella, Biond (in Florence), Fingider, Bastoggi, Italpi; in the big insurance companies, Assicurazioni Generale, in Italgaz, Richard Ginori and Ceramica Pozzi. In more recent times, the Vatican has actively concerned itself with the business enterprises of the IRI of which it is at present the largest shareholder.

Just after the war, Canada and the United States were the then major fields of Vatican enterprise, but the Special Administration also invested both in the Casino of St. Remo and in Perrier Water in France. Nor did its preoccupation with such investments prevent it from looking further afield to Spain, Italy and Germany.

A special Vatican Bank, the Istituto per le opere di Religione, founded in 1942 by Pius XII with the express objective of preserving and administering the capital sums belonging to the religious orders, is the flexible intermediary which co-ordinates all these numerous financial activities. Cardinal Amletto Cicognani, the Vatican Secretary of State, controls this co-ordination under the supreme direction of Cardinal di Jorio. And it is Cardinal Cicognani who is conducting the complex negotiations with the Italian Government on the question of Vatican exemption from taxation upon its dividends.

Immense Revenue: Vast Expenses

Its foreign and Italian dividends constitute a major source of the revenues of the Holy See. To which one can also add Peter's Pence, upon which the Pope draws when he wishes to assist poor dioceses and parishes, or the victims of catastrophe. Usually such assistance is not given publicly. However, in general its local resources barely suffice to meet both the extraordinary and the ordinary expenses of the Curia. Amongst such normal expenses, one must include the current cost of the central administration (that is, of the Curia itself) the upkeep of the papal embassies, legates etc., and of the entire diplomatic apparatus. Among its special expenses we note, for example, the enormous cost of the Vatican Council, as well as such special outlays as papal conclaves. And it is particularly necessary to take into consideration the enormous cost of the foreign missions, which are under the supreme control of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, part of the Roman Curia. These missions absorb a substantial proportion of the pontifical revenues, including most of the collections that it organises throughout the globe.

So heavy is the drain upon its available funds that, despite its vast resources and the professional reluctance of the financial experts to draw upon its current holdings, the Holy See in this present era is often obliged to use some of its capital resources in order to meet its current obligations. This goes far to explain why the Vatican is at present so anxious to safeguard its rights and to secure a favourable outcome for itself in its present dispute with the Italian state over the question of its exemption from taxation where its Italian dividends are concerned.

[This article originally appeared on April 15th, 1965 in *Le Rivarol* under the signature St. M. It was reprinted in the French Freethought paper *La Raison* (July) from which Mr. Ridley's translation is taken.]

MODERN METAPHOR

Girls should never go alone to the flats of strange men or invite them to their own rooms, says the Bishop of Leicester, the Right Rev. Ronald Williams. He warns girls in his Diocesan Leaflet: "All virile men carry a tiger in their tank which, once out of control, can easily lead them into situations and actions they would not have contemplated in a calmer moment".

—Sun

A Meditation on the Crucifix

By PHYLLIS GRAHAM

(Continued from page 255)

AND this macabre vision-in-reverse reveals yet another even darker, aspect of the Super-Blackmail. What the divine victim cannot extract from victimised man through love, shame, remorse and pity, can be looted from him by more sinister forces. Those who will not be coaxed must be coerced. And so we have fear, which we are assured is love's arch-enemy, yet which appears as the trump-card of the God of Love. It is, of course, no new thing that fear should be the basis of superstition. No marks to the Christian hocus-pocus for originality in that department. Its achievement lies in the unique combination of milk and honey with sulphur and brimstone, a banquet of gods somewhat difficult for merely human stomachs to digest. (Did any, I wonder, ever really accomplish it without at least a twinge of belly-ache?)

Well, our nun sincerely tries to. Whatever the weakness of her human feelings, she subscribes with all the fervour of her faith to the inhuman revelation: her Lord as the implacable gaoler of a prison sans pardon, sans pity and sans end. Eternal Love, it appears, can contain its anti-thesis. Eternal Hate is its necessary complement, the reverse side of the shining orb of justice. The very scales of justice demand a Hell wherewith to balance Heaven. That is logic (Scholastic, of course) and there the faithful soul can reasonably follow. It becomes more difficult and painful on the personal plane. Can one look sincerely in the eye a lover whose right hand plays the charming melody, "Love me as I love you", while his left thunders in the bass, "Love me not and you burn eternally"? Disconcerting, to say the least. Yet even to her Bluebeard the nun must be loyal. There may be millions of victims in his gruesome cupboards, but with faith, hope and charity and a bit of holy luck she may rely on retaining his favour and escaping their most horrifying fate. (Which, his favour and escaping their most horrifying fate. (Which, consoling thought, they have deserved). Curiously, contemplation of the Auschwitz of Eternity does not seriously affect her with nausea. Perhaps because the idea is too frankly, too grotesquely, too naively horrid to be real. She believes, yes: (doesn't the Creed say, "He descended into Hell?") but with her lips, parrot-fashion, keeping her heart separate, letting her mind go numb. (There have been those who could find no anaesthetic. There still are. Either they persevere in anguish until death, or risk all and get a divorce from Bluebeard).

But with whatever innocent diplomacy our nun conducts her eschatological affairs, fear there is and fear remains, the inescapable skeleton at the Feast of Love. Fear of the judgment after death, more dreadful than the fear of death itself. Fear of the torments of Purgatory, escaped only by a few perfect souls, and likened (by the best authorities) in all but duration to the agonies of Hell. Fear of the Last Judgment: the final stripping of the soul, exposing its most secret sins and vanities before the eyes of all. (As if, incidentally, anyone in a pickle like this would be particularly interested in anyone else's jam!) And always and everywhere, fear of offending God (a touchy character, by all accounts), of incurring his wrath and temporal punishment (a "judgment" always ready to hand); fear of the Church, who has always specialised in fear-therapy and remains the undisputed chief expert in the art. Her more spectacular operations in this field may be temporarily curtailed, but on the individual mind her pressures do not relax.

A simple but charming illustration is that of a child of my acquaintance who attends a Catholic primary school directed by nuns assisted by lay teachers. Fond of drawing (fortunately for the relief of a much-abused nervous system which might otherwise rebel) she spends much time composing pictures of the worlds to come, according to detailed accounts of those realms supplied by her teachers. I am not particularly impressed with the Paradisal ones, preferring Fra Angelico; but Hell and Purgatory are positively stunning. Absolutely orthodox and proper, in the best medieval style and Thomistically authentic, down to the last black devil, tail and horns complete, shovelling human fuel on to the eternal bonfire. They make me shiver quite realistically. And that is no exaggeration: for the child is all of nine years, and will grow up and marry and present the world with a bunch of little Papists . . . and so the unconquerable lunacy of brainwashed and brainwashers repeats itself ad nauseam.

What percentage of the neuroses that cram our mental hospitals and feed our prisons could be traced to fear generated in the gloom of the crucifix? How much has the rooted fear of hell-fire to do with the "secular" fears that harrow our tormented world and undermine our civilisation? Psychology may not come up with the answers, but I think it cannot, sincerely, ignore the questions. What is certain is that fear is the keynote of this distracted age . . . the declining years of the Christian era display, unmistakably, a character in accordance with the darker, more ferocious aspects of the gospel of sweetness and light. It is at least possible that the arch-fear, the impending doom of nuclear destruction, is itself the projection of that doomsday dread implanted and nurtured in our minds—conscious and unconscious—by the stark cruelty of Christian eschatology. I will go further—if I am hanged for it!—and postulate this dread, working its blind will in the collective unconscious, as the dark force perverting the glory of our advance in knowledge to destructive ends, driving us to an almost fatalistic acceptance of "the end of our world". It is a fact of terrible significance that the death-wish, the negation of all natural law, should be the final offspring of Christian culture; and that the power to realise it should be the ultimate gift to the world of the Christian peoples.

(Would the irony be too blatant in a suggestion that this "do-it-yourself" might be the delayed action of a long-term Christian dissatisfaction, a secret, nagging impatience with the failure of the Lord's insistent prophecies of doom?)

Guilt and fear being bedfellows, the displeasing nature of their progeny should not astonish. Its name is legion, infecting our world like a swarm of hidden germs: but for want of any accurate nomenclature I "christen" this brood of misery by the twin titles of Gloom and Blood.

"Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean", sang Swinburne, "the world has grown grey from thy breath".

Indisputably true, but only half the truth. The colour-scheme is not confined to half-shades. Old Testament Jehovah had a crude, insatiable appetite for enemy slaughter and animal sacrifice; but his "Son" far outbid him with a subtler technique. By his gory demise he plunged the world into a bloodbath in which it still wallows. The sacredness of blood as a wiper-out of sin and a peace-offering to offended Divinity, an idea conceived in the bar-

(Continued on page 262)

This Believing World

IT WAS ONLY to be expected that a biography would appear of Mrs. Jeane Dixon, the greatest "seer" the world has ever seen, since her "prophecy" of the murder of President Kennedy became known. It is written by Ruth Montgomery, and an abridged version appears in the *Reader's Digest* for August. From it we learn that Mrs. Dixon would or should have changed British history, for it appears that in 1945 she met Winston Churchill and begged him not to have an election then, for he would lose. For twenty years she correctly foretold all the American Presidential elections so it was child's play to foretell an English Parliamentary one. In fact, she was almost always right in all her "uncanny" predictions.

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AS FAR as we have read the story, the only evidence for most of it is what she herself says; and nobody need be surprised that Mrs. Dixon's prophecy about our 1945 election was unknown to everybody before she told it 20 years after the event. We are not sure if there is any reference to Mrs. Dixon's premature prophecy of the death of the Beatles in an air crash; and we wonder what she now says about the Vietnam war? Has she "prophesied" its final outcome? Or has she coyly refused to "see" it "spiritually", or what? Here is her big chance—give us now what will inevitably happen if the war goes on, let us say for another three years? Incidentally Mrs. Dixon is a "devout Catholic".

★

WE HAD ON TV recently (for the first time?) two reverend members of the Pentecostal Christians who figure in the Book of Acts. They were especially proud that they could speak in "strange tongues", though they failed to produce any "cloven tongues as of fire". The American member gave us an incomprehensible prayer, which we were assured was due to the "Spirit", and would be thoroughly understood by God Almighty, if by nobody else. The whole was an exhibition of crude superstition and credulity, and a perfect specimen of what the faith as given to the saints must have been.

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THE STORY of the persecution of "witches" by the Christian Church is one of the most ghastly records of cruelty and torture to millions of men and women who had no more to do with the Devil and his imps than a new born babe. The Devil and his hell might be figments of distorted religious imagination, but a book—one of thousands—has just been published about them written by Gillian Tindall. Entitled *A Handbook of Witches*, it ignores, according to one critic "the basic reason of witchcraft" (*Psychic News*, 31/7/65). Perhaps this is because there is no basic reason but a conglomeration of reasons all of which played into the hands of the Christian Church bent, in its religious fury, on destroying all rivals. For that is what witchcraft was—a rival to Christianity.

★

BUT IT IS quite true that when the burnings and the hangings and the physical torture of witches finally ceased, modern Spiritualism emerged with its "familiar spirits", now called "spirit guides"; its "covens", called "circles" and so on; and we now get something like witchcraft under another name. In the past, evil had to be exorcised by priests and the modern expulsion of poltergeists requires similar prayers to God and Jesus. What earthly use witchcraft had in the past we never discovered. And the same applies to Spiritualism today.

Humanists Protest to Council

HAVERING Humanist Society has sent a protest to Havering Council over a £10 grant to a religious body.

The society complained in February, when it discovered that the council was giving the money to the Havering branch of the Christian Education Movement.

"We do not see why ratepayers' money should be used to help a particular group in this way", wrote secretary Don Baker.

On July 7th town clerk John Symons replied. "The council are required by statute to provide for the giving of religious instruction in their schools, and the grant of £10 . . . was regarded by them as likely to increase the understanding of the pupils, or some of them, of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith and the ability of the teachers, or some of them, to give instruction in that faith".

The Humanists hit back on Friday, when Mr. Baker told the town clerk by letter that his members "realise and deplore the fact that indoctrination in Christian principles is required by law in the schools administered by local authorities.

"We further deplore the fact that the Council has gone beyond the legal requirement and has used ratepayers' money for supporting the work of a particular group".

—*Hornchurch and Upminster Echo* (20/7/65)
[Readers who wish to support Mr. Baker's protest should write to the Town Clerk, London Borough of Havering, Town Hall, Romford, Essex]

Visit to Lewes

Nearly 70 members and friends of the National Secular Society and the Thomas Paine Society visited Lewes on Sunday, July 25th. They were met by Councillors Gordon Hoile and David Williams, who later conducted a tour of this historic Sussex town.

Mrs. E. Venton, Vice-President of the National Secular Society presided at a luncheon in the Bull House Restaurant, once the home of Thomas Paine. She introduced Christopher Brunel, Chairman of the Thomas Paine Society, who proposed a toast to the town. Mr. Brunel recalled that Lewes had been the home of two famous men of freedom—Thomas Paine and Thomas "Clio" Rickman. Paine had been a member of the Headstrong Club, a local debating society which met at the White Hart, also still standing, a short way along the street from the Bull House. Like Paine, Rickman was of Quaker origin and openly professed that he belonged to no sect of religion. "It may be some time before these two leading citizens of Lewes are commemorated on British postage stamps", Mr. Brunel said; but he added that the Postmaster-General was considering a suggestion that a stamp be issued next year to mark the 175th anniversary of the publication of Part 1 of Paine's *Rights of Man*. Meanwhile we could honour Lewes and its present leading citizens.

Replying, the Mayor of Lewes, Councillor A. C. Barber, JP, said he always considered that it was at Lewes where Paine learned his politics before going to America and contributing to the Declaration of Independence. Councillor Barber added that, later in the afternoon he would welcome the visitors at the Town Hall, where they could see the signatures of Paine in the town book, indicating that he had been on the body that then represented the town in the same way as the Council did today.

Councillor Hoile spoke of the tradition of democracy and protest that had existed for so long in Lewes, and Councillor Williams added further points about Lewes's pride in its history.

The remainder of the day was spent visiting buildings of historical interest.

W.McI.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

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Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead)—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY. Every Friday, 8 p.m.: L. EBURY and J. A. MILLAR.

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

Notes and News

THE June/July issue of the *New Zealand Rationalist and Humanist* contained a well-meaning but regrettable compliment to James Hervey Johnson, successor to the late Charles Smith as editor of the *American Truth Seeker*. Mr. Johnson may be "vigorous" and "well-known as a pamphleteer, publisher and writer", the fact remains that he is, like his predecessor, a fanatical racist. So the *Truth Seeker*, claiming to be the oldest freethought paper in the world, continues its Nazi-like anti-Semitic and anti-Negro policy. The *New Zealand Rationalist* wished Mr. Johnson "every success in his new position". We can only assume that that position is not plainly understood in New Zealand.

WE TURN from a misguided tribute to a deserved one—to a real Freethinker this time. The *American Rationalist* (July-August) printed excerpts from Chapman Cohen's *Almost an Autobiography*. Cohen, a former editor of this paper, saw freethought not as something to be accomplished once for all "as one elects a government". It is, he said, "the existence of a body of men and women who will decline to be ordered what to think, how they are to vote, or what they are to read, who will give their allegiance freely, but will insist on a retention of their intellectual independence". Assume that all religious beliefs are dead and forgotten, "this critical function of freethought, this assertion of the rights of the individual against the coercion of majorities, whatever form it may take, will always remain of incalculable value. The freethought fight may express itself on many levels but from the point of view of a genuine sociology it will always go on. It is something that lies more in achieving than in mere achievement. Against the drag of the past there should constantly be set the vision of the future".

LAST week at the London Mosque, the Ahmadiyya movement in Islam held its first European convention. By converting Christians to Islam, and converting Muslims to stricter adherence to the Koran, the movement hopes to

bring nations round to the true faith. And, while deeply disappointed by Pakistan, which it regards as a secular state, the movement claims to be making satisfactory progress in Europe. "Once we have our own society", Mr. Abdus Salam Madsen (a Danish schoolmaster convert) told the *Guardian*, (2/8/65), "we shall put our teachings into practice. I should think our first society, our first successful revolution might be in Scandinavia or Germany". The Imam of the Mosque, B. A. Rafiq agreed. The hopes for Scandinavia were based on "the growing membership of the movement there". The first meeting in Denmark was held in 1958. "Now there are 70 Danish members". But the leaders do not consider members to be the only standard. Their movement is growing while Christianity is declining.

THE historian Geoffrey Barraclough reviewed books by two "disciples of Luther" in the *New Statesman* (30/7/65): *In the Service of the Lord* by Otto Dibelius and *No Rusty Swords* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Politically far apart—Dibelius conservative and Bonhoeffer a Social Democrat—they were disciples of Luther in their attitude to the relations of church and state. Dibelius "had no qualms when the Nazis organised the Reich Church in 1933 (it 'presaged the dawning of a new era'); his objection was to Reich Bishop Müller". And it would be a mistake, Professor Barraclough said, to regard Bonhoeffer as "a root-and-branch opponent of the Nazi". As his English editor, Edwin Robertson, points out, for Bonhoeffer "the German Church struggle was not a political but a theological one". This is a fact, Professor Barraclough added, "of which historians of the German Resistance have commonly taken too little account".

"WITHOUT doubt", said Bonhoeffer, when he preached on the Jewish question in April 1933, "the Church has to recognise the state's ordinances good or bad", "We have learned from Dr. Martin Luther", said Dibelius preaching before Hindenburg at Potsdam a few weeks earlier, "that the church must not oppose the lawful public authority . . . not even when it governs sternly and ruthlessly". Dibelius claimed to have known nothing about Hitler's Jewish extermination policy until 1942, and "could do no more than transmit the news" to the Swedish Embassy in Berlin. He lived on to become first bishop (self-appointed) in the German Evangelical Church and a figure in the World Council of Churches. Bonhoeffer, who said in 1933 that "the Jewish question is one of the historical problems" about which "the state is justified in adopting new methods", was hanged in 1945. Two disciples of the anti-Semitic Luther.

LANJE GARDYEN reports from Montreal that religious communities in Quebec province will now have to pay corporation tax on any enterprises they own of a "commercial and competitive character". Revenue Minister Eric Kierans told the Legislative Assembly on July 13th, that an Order-in-Council had been approved, and would be applied from January 1st of this year. A clause releasing religious institutions from paying tax for previous years was described by Quebec Premier Lesage as "an act of mercy". But those religious institutions which operated competitive and commercial enterprises would, Mr. Kierans said, have to adopt "an adequate and distinct accounting system which will allow them to meet the requirements of the Treasury". Mr. Lesage indicated that the move was directed mainly at the Fides Publishing House in Montreal, a large and profitable concern which publishes books of all kinds and is run by the Dominican order.

A Meditation on the Crucifix

(Continued from page 259)

baric ages of primitive human emergence, now became a universal obsession. "The Precious Blood" dyed the thought—and too often the deeds—of the Church with a colour all too familiar and evocative to the bloodthirsty instincts of a savage race. If one side of the Christian coin was grey with gloom, the reverse was incarnadine with blood. And so indeed it has been down the centuries until this present day.

In the mind of our nun, who has led a sheltered life and had few opportunities for violence, the grey side naturally predominates. The reverse merely signifies "salvation through the Blood of the Lamb", the wine of sacrament the blood of martyrs. Red to her is roseate, the appeal of myth, poetry, sentiment, the "Romaunt de la Rose" of a soul sweetly "inebriated with the Blood of the Saviour". (She is, of course, the contemplative type of nun, chosen for the purpose of our Meditation; unlike her sisters of the hospitals and mission-fields she is not involved in the muck, blood and riot of the down-to-earth human arena). The grey side is the stuff of her life, the realities of her inhibited existence. It has educated her in the belief that earthly joys must be sacrificed to obtain the joys of Heaven; that natural instincts are always suspect and almost always evil, necessitating strict control and where possible complete suppression. Even the most innocent enjoyment ought not to be enjoyed for its own sake, but referred to the glory of the "Giver"; which in practical terms means not entering into the pleasure of a good dinner or an interesting book or a beautiful piece of music, but distracting one's inner attention from it to the contemplation of God and holy things. Even the sheer necessities of the body, such as hunger and thirst, should provide material for this perpetual discipline, so that one should not be too eager to satisfy them, but refrain as long as one reasonably can from drinking when one is thirsty, or put such brakes on one's greed as eating sugar with meat or boiled eggs without salt; in short, invent a thousand and one ways of ensuring that life is not worth living.

This lunatic behaviour is, of course, the extreme inner kernel of the spiritual nut; but the nuttiness has left an uncomfortable residue everywhere in the Christian—and the post-Christian—"conscience". Pure pleasure is as hard come by as pure gold; how few there are who attain it, or even suspect that it exists. Always, it seems, it must be tainted with a sense of secret guilt, half spoiled by an imagined duty of withdrawal, of dissociating oneself from the full enjoyment that could harm one's "purity", or "detachment", or "spiritual values", or whatever one calls the fetish. And from this zany anti-philosophy, sedulously nurtured by the zealots of the Church (though not always practised in perfection by some in high places) has arisen and developed a worship of the dark things of existence: pain, suffering, poverty, deprivation, grief: a worship of them as intrinsically good, acceptance of them as means of "salvation", "sanctification", "self-purification", "accomplishing the will of God"; "uniting oneself with the sufferings of the Cross", etc, etc. Obviously this has all been very handy for those in power who wished to remain so, and who could thus count (generally speaking) on the submission and patience of the powerless under whatever abominable conditions were presented to them as instruments of a benign Providence. In this modern world of ours such reliance on the safeguard of the Divine Grace idea as supreme mob-moulder and mob-controller cannot,

it is clear, be placed with such light-hearted confidence. But there are still vast areas of human passivity where it is a good risk, even a fair proposition. The gloom of the shadow of the cross has unaccustomed man to the sunlight. There are herds of human crosslings who, like animals released from a lifetime in captivity, simply wouldn't know what to do or how to live with freedom.

Assuming that our nun has some intelligence, it is more than possible that certain awkward questions may occur to her from time to time, particularly when times are not so good and temporal limitations clip her flights to the eternal. Even drastic doubts as to the sanity of the whole set-up to which her life is self-condemned may assault her reason and rack her emotions. But, unless she is one of those exceptional individuals destined to repeat the role of Judas, she will treat all such overtures of freedom as sins against faith, dissociate herself from them with a fury of rejection, and dig herself into her cage with all the more heartfelt zeal. As we have insisted, her behaviour-pattern, though extreme in form, is characteristic of the "crucifix-mentality" and the normal reaction-ground of cross-idolatry.

But beneath these ordinary levels there are depths she will never know, regions she will never be called upon or forced to enter—unless some unforeseen cataclysm disrupts her ordered universe and disintegrates her world. These depths are the habitat of the darker and the darkest forces operating in the bowels of that mystery we know as the religion of the Cross. Here are conceived those monstrous aberrations, those incomprehensible urges, those violent lusts that pale mere human passion, which have their explosive birth in crimes and cruelties beyond the realm of unredeemed man.

For, faith-inspired, they are, presumably, "born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And from our knowledge of Jehovah we can almost believe it. Yet surely even that irascible and slaughterous old tyrant would have stopped short of a double millenium of Jew-baiting, seeing he had a soft spot for those incorrigible but elect *enfants-terribles*? Deserving as they seemed to him of punishment, would even he have thrown them by the million into concentration camps to starve, rot and perish; dragged them naked to the gas-chambers and incinerated them dead, dying or horribly alive, in crematorium ovens; flogged, strangled, shot and buried them in still breathing piles among the garbage of blackening corpses; subjected them to the last extremities of indignity and degradation; wiped out their children and their infants with meticulous care in case they should live to take revenge? Accustomed as he was to ordering the wholesale slaughter of men, women, children and cattle. I am inclined to believe that his tough old heart would have relented at the excess of the misery and shown them mercy.

But one cannot postulate as much for his successor, the "God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ", to whom belongs the unique distinction and the unenviable patent of the invention of eternal damnation. By harsh evidence he specialises in torture, and, having a deistic advantage over Hitler and Co. in torture of eternal duration. The spectacle of a few million Jews—or for that matter of a few million Orthodox Christians and others—being done to death in circumstances that reduce the drama of the Crucifixion to the status of a soap-opera, must surely appear to his satiated sadism like the squashing of a few flies on a window-sill. Small wonder, then, that from the

children of his Son's "redemption" there was no mercy. That from the "Vicar of Christ on earth" there was not one cry of protest or a single gesture of pity. To the illustrious sons of the Twisted Cross, lay and clerical, prelatric and military, who organised this last and ultimate demonstration of the crucifix-mentality, "the quality of

mercy", "strained" or otherwise, was entirely unknown.

Thus had the Christian horror-story, hardening in the minds of men through twenty centuries of guilt, fear, gloom and blood, worked itself out to its monstrous but logical dénouement.

(To be Continued)

Where Stands Josephus?

By H. CUTNER

IN THE COURSE of my "Jesus a myth" propaganda, which began very early in my work as a Freethought writer, the one name I have had hurled at me by Jews, Christians, Rationalists, and Ethicists alike, is Josephus, who, they declared, stood firm as a rock against the myth theory. How could Jesus possibly be a myth when he is mentioned by Josephus as having been put to death by Pontius Pilate?

In the course of a controversy which, for me has lasted for over 40 years, I have read dozens of books on Josephus and his celebrated history, read dozens of articles for and against him and his account of Jesus, and I can honestly say that very few of the "pro-Josephus" supporters ever touched upon the essential argument at all.

Now, either the passage in Josephus about Jesus is genuine *as it stands*, or it is not. I have not read one supporter of it who insists that as we have it, it is completely genuine. Most of them claim that it has probably superseded something uncomplimentary to Jesus, and therefore had to be re-written, possibly with additional clauses. But this does not make it a forgery: it is at worst an "interpolation". There always was a passage about Jesus, but the Christian gentleman who was responsible for the copy translated by Whiston, deleted what he did not like, and added his own clauses. And that should end all discussion.

The passage in Josephus has, of course, become more and more necessary for Christians, because without it and the passage in the *Annals* of Tacitus, there is no evidence anywhere that there ever was a Jesus; no proof that the Son of God ever existed! Actually, there are no contemporary references whatever to a God going about Palestine "doing good"—not even in that Jewish repository of myth and legend, the Talmud.

Thus, when Dupuis in his monumental work, *The Origin of all Worship*, bluntly said that no Son of God had ever existed, that the story of Jesus in the Gospels was based in the main on sun-worship, Christian scholars all over the world had to find some near-contemporary reference to their saviour, and found it in Josephus. Or they believed they had. For it was obvious to anybody who thought the matter out that Josephus could not have written the passage if he was, as he claimed, a good Jew. As John E. Remsburg says in his book, *The Christ*:

Its language is Christian. Every line proclaims it the work of a Christian writer. "If it be lawful to call him a man". "He was the Christ". "He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him". These are the words of a Christian, a believer in the divinity of Christ . . . Its brevity disproves its authenticity. Josephus's work is voluminous and exhaustive. It comprises twenty books. Whole pages are devoted to petty robbers . . . Yet this remarkable being, the greatest member of his race, . . . a being greater than any earthly king is dismissed with a dozen lines.

Even Christian scholars had to admit that *logically* the paragraph preceding the disputed passage and the one following could not be separated. The fraud was evident at a glance. So it was argued that Josephus had originally

written something else not complimentary to Jesus, and some Christian writer had changed it.

Nearly all the Christian authorities and biographers of Jesus—Dr. Lardner, the Rev. Dr. Giles, the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, Bishop Warburton, Theodore Keim, etc.—concur with Canon Farrar. There *may* have been a different paragraph, there *must* have been one in which Jesus is at least mentioned; otherwise we Christians are sunk. And a number of Rationalists such as A. D. Howell-Smith, Dr. F. C. Conybeare and Archibald Robertson have adopted a similar position.

Exactly how much of the text of Josephus can be trusted no one knows. Who were his authorities, no one knows. Even what he saw himself during the war waged by Vespasian and Titus. How much could he have known outside his immediate surroundings? Personally, I mistrust most of his figures. But by concentrating on the interpolation, if it really was one, some other points come to mind. How is it that Josephus *never* refers to that famous dozen or so of Apostles, the devoted followers of Jesus? And why is there not a hint in his writings about Peter and Paul, whose adventures form so detailed a part of the early Christian story? Did he never meet the numerous Jewish converts who accepted Jesus not only as a God and the Son of God, but also as their own particular Messiah, the Christ? If any part of this were true, Josephus would surely have noted it. Yet this extraordinary omission is hardly ever touched upon by defenders of the celebrated passage.

Though Gibbon, our greatest historian, believed in the actual existence of a man Jesus—his two famous chapters in his *Rise and Decline* annihilate any pretension to Christianity being "divine"—he had no illusions at all about the Josephus passage. He bluntly declared it to be "an example of no vulgar forgery", and said it was probably inserted into the text "between the time of Origen and Eusebius". Christians do not like the word "forgery", which explains their use of "interpolation", though this has the same meaning. You can see this in Dean Milman's comment on Gibbon—"It is interpolated with many additional clauses".

The letter in THE FREETHINKER (July 23rd) by the Rev. C. Strother FAES is typical of the careless way in which so many Christians like to quote books they don't even bother to read. He says that on page 3 of my book, *Jesus—God, Man or Myth*, I "all but admit that behind the Gospels there is an historic figure". If that is so why did I write another 290 pages to show that Jesus was not historical? Actually, I quoted Dupuis's opinion, and Mr. Strother quietly transferred that to me. I have never wavered in my opinion that there is no historical figure whatever in Jesus, who is as much a myth as Jupiter.

Finally, Dr. A. Larson, who is mentioned by Mr. Strother as saying that the Josephus passage was genuine, knows very little about the myth theory. Incidentally, does Mr. Strother really accept the New Testament literally?

CORRESPONDENCE

HISTORICITY OF JESUS

In his letter dealing with the problem of the historicity of Jesus, the Rev. C. Strother sees fit to quote a book which I wrote some thirty years ago in defence of a modernistic Catholic view of sacramental religion. I quite fail to see how his citation is to the point. I there contended, as I should still, that the doctrine of the Incarnation lies at the heart of historic Christianity. Belief could evolve in the incarnation of a mythical God who lacked historicity just as an historic figure could become a mythical "hero" of religious legend. Perhaps I might point out that my own views have changed and ripened with the years and that, for many years, I should repudiate what I there wrote and would maintain a secularistic viewpoint. Perhaps I might also contend, *pace* Mr. Strother, that some such intellectual development is natural if one continues to apply canons of historical criticism to the origins of religion.

If Mr. Strother cares to continue his researches, he will find various things by myself written from a religious standpoint at past stages of my own mental evolution. But perhaps he will help me with a little research concerning present standpoints. I notice that he signs himself "the Rev." although I cannot find his name in the ministerial list of any accredited denomination. Is this due to an oversight on my part which he can correct or are his attachments to some group which publishes no such list? If so, what is the origin of his ministerial qualification, episcopal or otherwise? Can he tell me the significance of "FAES", a designation which I fail to identify and cannot trace? What is the St. Osmund's Society? What is its membership and who are its officers? Are any of its members of recognised academic standing or qualification? I am far from asserting that there is any curious mystery about these matters but, as Mr. Strother chooses to quote myself of some thirty years ago in aid of his present propositions, I should be glad to have some answer to them as I should also be interested to know in what place of worship he exercises his ministry.

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT.

GERMAN HUMANIST UNION

I find among your Notes and News a few sentences on the German Humanist Union. This is no "organisation of intellectual atheists", as the *Catholic Herald* reported. True it has wide support among intellectuals, students and professors. However, practising Catholics are there to be found as well as Protestants of all denomina-

tions. What unites these opposing forces is anti-clericalism in a predominantly Catholic country, erected and governed by a clique of fierce and almost neurotic anti-communists. The Humanist Union, because of its strict anti-communist tendency—humanism ends at the Iron Curtain—has the possibility of some activity under the constitution (*Grundgesetz*). Members of the *Freigeistige Bewegung* rationalist movement—may be found among those of the *Humanistische Union*. *Szczesny* himself lives at Munich, a one million-inhabitant town with one-third Protestant population due to immigrants from the north after the last war. While the *Freigeistige Bewegung* is a small group (60-80 members) of no effect under the leadership of a lyrical interested man by the name of Mr. Alexander, and the *Freethinker* group is as poor—approximately 100 members, with some militant communists and up to 80 per cent old people. The Humanist Union is active among students—thousands of them—and artists, a considerable group at Munich.

I for my part have connection with groups of the HU both at Nürnberg as well as Munich. There are a lot of people in this country who no longer belong to the Churches, or if still members hate their militant intruding into politics everywhere. Besides, the publishing house connected with the movement publishes books otherwise unprinted in this country. The intellectual club established is called *Club Voltaire*, and offers forum discussions.

GERDA GUTTENBERG, (Nürnberg).

ORDINATION

I read in the North London newspaper, the *Hornsey Journal* of July 23rd, 1965 that: "During Pontifical Mass at the Old Roman Catholic Church, Highbury, the Rev. R. W. Morrell, of Nottingham, was ordained to the sub-diaconate".

Can this possibly be the same R. W. Morrell who is secretary of the Thomas Paine Society? I can hardly believe that it is, but the initials are the same and I know Mr. Morrell lives in Nottingham.

D. P. HARRIS.

[We regret to say that Mr. Harris is right. Mr. Morrell has, we understand, joined the Old Roman Catholic Church—Ed].

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