

The Freethinker

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IN *The Scarlet and the Black*, Stendhal contrasted typical representatives of the two rival ideologies then struggling for the mastery of post-Napoleonic Europe, the Black International and the Red: the Church of Rome, then closely allied with the restored European monarchies, and the radical and anti-clerical movements that stemmed from the French Revolution. He wrote not only—or perhaps even chiefly—as a master of fiction, but also as a social historian.

Today, a century and a half after the era of Napoleon and the Holy Alliance, the current controversy between the Scarlet and the Black, between anti-clerical social revolution and conservative Christianity, dominates the European stage as decisively as it did in the days of Stendhal and his anti-clerical “hero”, Julien Sorel; albeit its manifestations have changed considerably.

For the most powerful radical social movements of today date ostensibly from the Russian and Chinese revolutions, and no longer from the French. And they describe themselves as communist not liberal. On the clerical side also, there have been changes; most notably that the Vatican, which reached perhaps its lowest ebb in influence and in current reputation during the generation after Napoleon (1814-48), is undergoing a new counter-reformation and appears today as by far the most powerful of the Christian Churches.

This counter-reformation inaugurated by that remarkable papal strategist, Pope John XXIII (1958-63), seems destined like its sixteenth-century Jesuit predecessor, to inaugurate far reaching changes in the sociological as well as the theological sphere.

In thus trimming its ecclesiastical sails to meet the impact of the prevailing winds of change, the Vatican is merely continuing its policy of bygone ages. Rome is, after all, the Eternal City, and the Vatican has a collective memory which the proverbial elephant might well envy.

The Evolution of Catholic Sociology

It is rather unfortunate that rationalist criticisms of Rome have, as a rule, concerned themselves with the Vatican as a theological institution, for its sociological evolution has been every whit as remarkable as its religious. In due historical succession, Rome has co-existed with chattel slavery (viz. the Pauline injunction: “Slaves obey your masters”); with feudalism (during the Middle Ages the Church owned at least a third of the land in Europe, and in modern times an equivalent proportion in Latin America); and with capitalism (an article in the March 27th issue of the *Economist* showed Rome to be a financial power in the contemporary world, hardly inferior to Wall Street).

Successively, Rome has owned slaves (in both the Old and New Worlds), feudal real property (i.e. land), and today, capital. And yet we are still told by Protestant Fundamentalists that Rome never changes!

However, even the above list is not quite complete. It omits what is perhaps, from the point of view of modern

sociology, the most original and remarkable (though actually one of the least known) of all clerical experiments, the Jesuit “republic” in what is now Paraguay, which lasted for a century and a half until its suppression by Iberian imperialism in 1768. It evolved a type of economic collectivism without money, without property or individual ownership of any kind, actually a far more thorough-going economic communism than anything in present-day day professing Communist lands. This example, necessarily confined to a primitive social terrain and to a pre-industrial economy, the ruins of which still are to be found scattered throughout the primeval American forest (where they deeply impressed non-Roman travellers such as Cunninghame-Graham and Julian Duguid) surely affords a convincing precedent, should the Vatican ever come to require one, that Catholicism is not necessarily incompatible with even the most extreme forms of collectivist society.

A Dialogue with Marxism

It would appear that Rome may soon need such precedents; this time in relation with modern Marxist industrial Communism in the collectivist societies which have developed east of the Iron Curtain since 1917. For, according to a recent—August 20th—issue of the *Universe*, “In spite of all the dangers there is a growing feeling in Europe that the Christian-Marxist dialogue has become an historical necessity”.

The writer, Hugh Kay, goes on to give numerous reasons why the Vatican should now abandon the attitude of relentless hostility towards Communism, which has uniformly characterised it ever since the intransigent profascist Pope Pius XI (1922-39), took over from the liberal Benedict XV (1914-22), who had been by no means hostile to the Russian regime in the years immediately following the Russian Revolution. For from the special point of view of Rome, the Orthodox Tsars had always been anti-popes, if not indeed, anti-Christ.

St. Marx?

It would appear that today we are actually upon the eve of a new reorientation of papal policy, not only via the ecumenical movement towards “our separated (Christian) brethren”, but towards the Marxist anti-Christ itself. But what would such a dialogue imply? I do not share the view that the Vatican is ever really likely to go communist, or that the mortal remains of St. Marx are ever likely to be re-interred under the high altar of St. Peter’s along with the (supposed) remains of his Jewish fellow proletarian, St. Peter. On the whole I think it more probable that (plain) Karl Marx will remain undisturbed in High-gate Cemetery. And it is unlikely that Rome will ever endorse 100 per cent communism whether of the Marxist or earlier Jesuit type. The Church is too involved in capitalist high finance ever to make such an abrupt economic transition.

What seems much more likely to happen, is that Rome will increasingly adopt a mixed economy like that of the

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Red and Black

By F. A. RIDLEY

present English Labour Party or the German Social Democracy: a moderate collectivism. The Fabian Society which boasts that it has converted the Labour Party to Socialism, may soon be able to claim an even more exalted convert in the Vatican.

At any rate there does not now appear to be any doubt that the war-to-the-knife era of the pro-fascist papacy of the Piuses is now over, and that in the years ahead we

shall hear a great deal about Christian Socialism, and in which communism will cease to be an ecclesiastical swear word. It will not be a very difficult change for the Vatican to make, particularly since one often tends to forget that Rome is essentially a collectivist body. Historically it was not Rome but the Protestant Reformers (Calvin in particular) who were the ideological forerunners of the capitalist era in modern secular history.

The Psycho-Analysis of Catholicism

By GILLIAN HAWTIN

FRANK ROBERTS'S contribution to *Objections to Roman Catholicism* (Constable 16s.) has not excited so much uproar as that of his ecclesiastical namesake, but it is perhaps not less worthy of attention, though it does not deal with a subject, such as Archbishop Roberts's "Contraception and War", which seems to be in everybody's mind. Frank Roberts's essay "Authoritarianism, Conformity and Guilt" deserves consideration precisely because it can be regarded as a serious—and to that extent, praiseworthy—attempt to examine problems which the serious Catholic is confronted with daily, but too often shelves.

It is in the last page of his essay that Roberts gives his aim, as an attempt "to indicate one or two of the psychological factors that may well have been at work to induce the indifferentist, conformist piety which many Catholics appear to show, and which in the contemporary world seems to be contributing so little to human enlightenment and the Christian redemption of Society".

The Church's insistence on orthodoxy, with authoritarian discipline to enforce it, is strange to the Protestant non-Catholic because his rule of faith is private judgment, and strange to the Freethinkers whose only orthodoxy is fidelity to truth as he discovers it. Granted the Catholic's orthodoxy comes from God, there would be nothing illogical or incongruous in its being maintained by a God-derived authority.

But even granted this were so, it is easier for men to cling to concrete directions, than to give an assent which is the assent of the full adult personality. We are probably all familiar with the Catholic whose education appears to have left him unconcerned for social justice, yet scrupulous not to be five minutes late for mass; capable of making money by practices sharp though short of illegal, yet concerned to donate portions of the same money to the foreign missions. It is unrealistic to deny there are many Catholics seriously concerned with the evils in the body politic which, in the light of their religious faith, they see as a derogation from the Brotherhood of Man which should exist under the Fatherhood of God in whom they believe. Perhaps they might urge, when confronted by the fact that much 19th and 20th century ameliorating came certainly from Protestant, and frequently from secularist quarters that the greater part of men "care for none of these things". But then, Catholics by profession, and Catholicism by its claims, assert themselves as the supreme guides of mankind. It is a sorry outlook to have been limping behind, when they could have been (what Cardinal Newman once said) "a beacon set on a hill for all mankind".

At about six years of age children go through a period of "moral realism". But this is considered as the "age of reason", when they are introduced to the sacraments,

and "prepared in terms of the rules which characterise the pattern of adult religious observance". These numerous rules, mainly external, enter the child's life at the very time when children "tend to see the rules of conduct as having an external validity in their own right".

Roberts suggests that confession, communion and confirmation should be postponed till *after* the eleventh birthday. He does not mention that this has been long standing Protestant practice. It would have been even more interesting if he had considered it in relation to the past twenty years' experience of this age as a turning point in the educational world—the eleven plus. After eleven, Roberts says, reasoning powers develop, and are brought to bear more sharply on all aspects of life around them.

Roberts discusses further: John Smith commits mortal sin, is then afraid to go to confession at first, but at length self-censure leads him to it. Theological guilt is knowledge that one has transgressed the law of God. In his state there will also be feeling. It can be argued that feeling is unnecessary to theological guilt. Yet a psychopath may *know* that it is wrong to beat up an old woman, yet not feel any remorse. Feeling gives meaning to the act of self-judgment of which theological guilt consists.

The child copies its parents, with admiration for their qualities and powers which it does not possess. The pattern of the admired good in the parents provides the pattern of integration into society at large. Its parents' its teachers', its priests' evaluations become internalised so that they become part of the process by which the child learns to control its own behaviour in terms of the injunctions and taboos which society has imposed. Roberts goes on to discuss a religious vocation adopted in terms of the Super-ego, or of the Self-ideal.

Having passed these matters under review, he concludes that "a wider place may be found in society for the active Catholic layman". And "if such men and women are going to succeed in carrying conviction in the face of objections to Roman Catholicism, which have some claim to be well-founded psychologically, they must show a spirituality that is not based on a naïve and unthinking orthodoxy nor upon an uncritical acclamation of doctrinal uniformity, nor especially upon a fixation at an infantile level of timid docility, in other words self-preoccupied with apprehension about guilt, rules and conformity, but rather upon an apostolicity which is active, informed and responsible".

These are some astonishing admissions. Those of us who remember years of apologetic and thousands of words written to disprove criticism to these effects directed at the Catholic Church can only remain astonished. Once again, it would appear that even when torn to shreds, Catholicism is to be salvaged at all costs. We prefer to abandon it.

Christianity Did Not Arise in Palestine

By OTTO WOLFGANG

WHEN at the bidding of the late Pope John XXIII the Ecumenical Council omitted from the Good Friday prayer the defamatory phrase *perfidis judaeis* wishful thinking had it that this theological nicety would do away with anti-Semitism. This is nonsense: group hatred is emotional and, therefore, irrational. As there is no remedy for it, it must be legally suppressed—at least in its more virulent forms. There will always be cranks considering such legislation a violation of their freedom of expression, but in civilised lands nobody is free to stigmatise minorities: incitement to violence is an abuse of liberty. Anti-Semitism will survive even if it were proved—and it can, as will be seen—that there never was a man called Jesus and that consequently all the gospel accusations against Jewry fall to the ground as baseless.

Despite the fact that in Christian lands unfettered research along such lines is hampered (mainly through social taboos and the difficulty to spread in word or print ideas that do not conform to Mrs. Grundy's standards), modern scholarship has given a great impetus to the mythologist school—particularly after the publications of the great French Theologian, Alfred Loisy¹—and the adherents of a historical Jesus have to find all sorts of subterfuges (e.g. that the gospel figure is a composite person). They even quote Talmud passages in their desperate search for a persuasive witness to the historical existence of a founder of Christianity.

Now the collection of the material for the Babylonian Talmud did not begin before the composition of the Gospels; that of the Palestinian Talmud even two centuries later; and the process of codification was not begun before the fifth century of our era. There is only one complete copy extant of the Palestinian Talmud, printed in Venice in 1523/4 and kept in Leyden (Holland), and one of the Babylonian Talmud (the Munich Codex) from the 14th century, most copies having been destroyed by Christian fanatics in the Middle Ages. These autos-da-fé in turn gave rise to many textual corruptions in order to ward off the accusation of its being a blasphemous book.

There does not, up to now, exist any Talmud edition free from frequent blunders of copyists or from interpolations, Bowdlerisations and misunderstandings. If the Talmud makes mention of Jesus, this is (a) not a contemporary evidence and at best (b) one given under utter duress.

The matter could of course long have been cleared up if the Vatican would agree to let independent scientists see the most carefully guarded copies of ancient manuscripts deposited in its vaults. Soviet scientists have found ways of examining existing sources free of clerical intervention, but language barriers have helped the powers-that-be to keep the results of these studies dark.

In 1958, S. Kovalew published in the *Annual of the Museum of Religious History* an article "Essential Questions regarding the Origin of Christianity" in which he pointed out that the problem of Christ's historical reality is of secondary importance to the Marxist; what matters is (a) what were the social, material and economical conditions that gave rise to the religious ideas expressed in the Christian Church and (b) what are their actual effects today.

In pursuance of this line of research, various monographs were published, e.g. on the Eastern provinces of the

Roman Empire in the first-to-third centuries; the ideology of the working population of Rome; the class contradictions in the cult of Hercules during the second and third; history of the ideologies predominant during the first three centuries of our era; and in particular: *Contributions to the History of Christian Traces in Egypt* (Y. Frantseff) and *Ethical Culture in Ancient Rome and Primitive Christianity* by B. Lapitski (1958). Three years later Yakow Abramovitch Lenzman published his comprehensive analysis of the origin of Christianity.

All these studies show that Christianity was not founded by one person, expounding new ideas, but that these ideas had been engendered by the social conditions of that era, first in little rivulets in various parts of the Mediterranean basin and eventually coalescing—not without clashing against each other—in an Oriental and a European mainstream. In the end the Western ideology—represented by Catholicism—in the wake of European civilisation emerged victorious.

Around zero of our era, the society of chattel slavery had already reached an impasse with no solution in sight. Rebellion against the well organised monolithic structure of the Roman Empire proved futile. The Roman *proles* depended on welfare, but in the colonies the dispossessed masses could only dream of a saviour Lord, even more powerful than the Roman Emperor, lord of the world. Reflecting his image, more and more deities—such as Isis, Mithra and Aesculapius²—took on a near-monotheistic aspect, promising eternal bliss in "another life". The Sect of the Qumran scrolls started with a sort of trinity: a saviour from Aaron, one from Israel, and the Master of Righteousness. This *troika* was reduced to two (still existent in several apocryphal texts such as the Book of Jubilees), and eventually only the Master of Righteousness survived. Primitive Christianity was merely one among several eschatological systems of that era. The point of departure is the Book of Revelation, the oldest part of the canon.

A century ago already the Tübingen circle of F. C. Baur had established that the principal parts of Revelation were written in 68 of our era and that the sequence of the New Testament is an inversion of its chronological origin, with the Gospels as a late second century accretion. Revelation was composed after the destruction of the Temple, and it is remarkable that the New Testament makes no mention of the Jewish War. In Revelation Jesus—partly identified with the mystical Lamb—is a purely cosmic hero existing like Melchisedec (King of Righteousness, Gen. 14, 18) since the beginning of the world. This feverish phantasmagory is sizzling with hatred against the Roman victor who had drowned the national revolution of Bar Kochba (132-136) in blood and imposed on the Jews a special tax for the pagan god Iupiter Capitolinum (to whom the Jewish Temple had been dedicated).

The first pre-Christian nuclei arose in Asia Minor (the "Seven Churches", Rev. 1, 11) and they now went to great length to prove to the Romans that they had nothing to do with the rebellious Jews, but not without violent opposition could Revelation be incorporated into the canon.

There are many passages in the New Testament (e.g. the Gadarene Swine) which show that the writers lived abroad and did not know Palestine from personal experience.

(Continued on page 302)

This Believing World

THERE must be something like ten times more Protestants than Roman Catholics in Britain, and it certainly would prove interesting to hear what they had to say on the ITV programme entitled "Journey with a Purpose" which was all about pilgrimages to "shrines", and certainly one of the finest advertisements for Roman Catholicism ever produced on TV. We were told by enthusiasts that many pilgrimages were being organised on behalf of the "faith". And how fervently religious were the pilgrims, for example, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham!

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WE WERE given also pictures of the dignitaries of church and state following Franco in Spain, and told how the pilgrims there numbered millions a year compared with the 20,000 who got to Glastonbury. At Santiago, thousands actually *queue up* to "kiss the Sacred Door of Pardon"; and the writer of the article in *TV Times* (26/8/65) rather pathetically exclaims "Fancy anyone kissing a statue at Glastonbury!" This kissing of objects, or grovelling on one's knees before a cardinal is typical of what used to be called "Popery", and the writer seems to lament that such visible expressions of piety are seen only at pilgrimages to "our Lady".

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BUT we cannot help remembering Cardinal Heenan's admission that there was a current crisis in the Church. There are not enough priests or, as the *Daily Express* said at that time (June 13th), "The Roman Catholic Church in Britain faces one of the most critical shortages of priests in its history". The estimate now is that there is only "one priest for every 750 Roman Catholics in England and Wales". Dreadful, when one thinks of the many Catholic immigrants to Britain each year.

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THE Rev. P. Barnes, vicar of Maghull, Lancashire, in trying to woo back some of his parishioners to church, points out that clothes don't make anybody a Christian. He wants them to come, even if they come in their shirt sleeves. The old idea of wearing only one's best "for Christ's sake" appears to have vanished. In the Army everybody not only had to wear his best uniform on church parade, but the severest punishments were meted out to any man who came on unshaven, or even had a button unbuttoned. "Come any old how" is the pathetic cry of most vicars these unbelieving days, "so long as you do come".

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MRS. Mary Whitehouse of the "Clean-up TV" campaign must either have an extremely efficient public relations officer or some very influential friends—or both. Scarcely a month goes by without a report of her activities appearing in the press. Her latest move is to suggest that the Home Office, and not the BBC should decide whether there should be a public showing of *The War Game* the BBC Television film (*The Guardian*, 7/9/65). Letters to this effect have been sent to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and to the leaders of the Labour and Conservative parties in the House of Lords. We trust that the Home Office will decline to give the "official approval" or disapproval that Mrs. Whitehouse seeks. The BBC—with all its faults—is a responsible body: we don't want to see it controlled by the Government—or Mrs. Whitehouse and her MRA friends.

Women in Church

By KIT MOUAT

I HAD the curious experience last year of "doing" the flowers for the wedding of a Christian Scientist in our local Anglican Church. During the hours I spent on the job, I was reminded of the opportunities such an institution provides for lonely and relatively unoccupied women. Not the sort of women who spend their lives on nothing more demanding than coffee or bridge parties, but those who have a job of some sort, give much of their free time to really useful causes, and yet still have time to spare and a lack of companionship to appease.

One by one, as if regulated by a trades union, they came and turned over the kneeling-pads, polished the brass, tidied up the children's corner, and so on, all amiable and harbouring no animosity towards the atheist in their midst. All small jobs, but duties they performed with satisfaction, knowing that they contributed to the whole effect of the ancient, shining, lovingly-preserved edifice of faith founded on fiction. Single women without men in their lives or with only fathers who would die too late to give their daughters freedom, even in this twentieth century. I had heard one of the not-so-old fathers of one of them bragging in the pub, "Women have to be kept in their place or we'll get the sort of chaos they have in America. I have a charming wife and daughter, but I stand no nonsense . . .". Goodness, I thought, it sounds like Victorian England; do families really still exist where there is only one pair of trousers symbolic of authority, and those worn by the god made in the image of the stockbroker? Evidently. And I imagined the wife and the daughter at home smiling to one another as some women do who know that they, in fact, run the family and who believe that men are children and must be allowed to play King of the Castle.

How silly it all is, and yet what good material for the churches to encourage and to play on. Men make up the prayers and women kneel at their feet saying them, not understanding very much or caring. The men are proud that they have authority to lay down the divine laws, and the women, mumbling in response, believe that all the necessary thinking has been done by those who (they have been told so often) do it best. "As it is now and ever shall be . . .". Polish the brass, bow the head and prepare for the do-it-yourself brainwashing of prayer to the Father-God who lives on and from whom few women believe they can escape.

If the fight for the Rights of Women had been as energetic as that for the Rights of Man, women might not still be turning to the churches for relief from the sort of men who "stand no nonsense". At least in church they don't have to clean the whole place every day. Just half-a-dozen vases once a week, and no one messes up the aisle as they mess up the kitchen floor every few minutes. And in church even their sexual frustration will be glorified. They will not be so conscious of experience they will now never have, or long for but dare not admit. Sex, like thought and doubt and investigation, has been tidied up with a duster and shaken hard out of the heavy, impenetrable door that will close on the congregation and silence all the noise and temptations of the world.

Men who point accusingly at the women who go to church should look first at their own responsibility for the situation. It is men who have made the Christian

(Concluded on page 304)

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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.

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

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, September 19th, 6.45 p.m.: Dr. K. JONES, "Witchcraft".

Notes and News

PERHAPS the most telling comment on the tragic conflict between India and Pakistan was that of the cartoonist Papis in the *Guardian* (7/9/65). An undernourished mother and child representing "India and Pakistan's starving millions" were watching the aircraft overhead and remarking: "Suddenly we're rich enough to go to war".

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THE latest Humanist to panygerise Teilhard de Chardin, is Dr. John Lewis, in a lecture to South Place Ethical Society, summarised in the September issue of the *Ethical Record*. Teilhard—Dr. Lewis informed his listeners—stood in the front rank of contemporary French scientists. "Unfortunately, his views on the evolution of man and his philosophy of progress seemed to his ecclesiastical superiors to be inconsistent with Catholic theology". But, Dr. Lewis continued, it is not quite fair to denounce the Church for forbidding Teilhard to teach or to publish his views: these went "far beyond the ordinary evolutionary conceptions of modern biologists, which are no longer condemned by the Church . . .". Certainly Teilhard's mystical flights carried him beyond normal biological bounds—though Sir Julian Huxley has also made a few sorties into the "noosphere"—but they represent no intellectual advance. And, while the Church may no longer loudly condemn "ordinary evolutionary conceptions", this doesn't mean that it accepts them.

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THE Church of Rome has never, for instance, accepted the evolutionary view of man in its entirety. Catholics may believe that man's body has evolved, but not his soul.

A place must be found somewhere for God. Teilhard, too, had to imbue evolution with a divine purpose. And even Dr. Lewis finds some of the Jesuit's speculations too unscientific to be justified. "But in the rest of what he has to tell us of the higher development of man I am", Dr. Lewis said, "in entire agreement". And he saw, in Teilhard's belief in progress, "a veritable philosophy for modern man. And indeed he needs one". Teilhard's "new philosophy of man", Dr. Lewis concluded, "makes an important contribution to a new synthesis and a revival of humanist faith".

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WHY Humanists should be so anxious to express agreement with a Roman Catholic priest—albeit an unorthodox one—we don't know. Teilhard de Chardin was, by all accounts a likable and sincere man. No one doubts that he had considerable ability, but this did not prevent him from writing a great deal of rubbish. There is no "covering" of the earth, no "envelope of living organisms" that he called the "biosphere", there is no "noosphere" above it. These are unscientific hypostatizations, yet Dr. Lewis accepts them without demur.

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IN BRITAIN, as *New Society* remarked (5/8/65) apropos the merger of Stonyhurst and Beaumont, the teaching strain on the Jesuits has been considerable. They run colleges at Glasgow, Liverpool, Leeds, London, Preston, Stonyhurst, Spinkhill and Wimbledon—some of which have preparatory schools attached to them. At Osterley there is an order for late vocations; in Pimlico a college training Africans, and in Oxford there is Campion Hall. Heythrop Hall has been steadily expanding, and the Society also has missions in Rhodesia and British Guiana. It also runs at least 15 parishes in this country.

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IN a reminiscent article in the *New Statesman* (3/9/65), Desmond MacNamara mourned the passing of what he called the ragged trousered philosophers, "those self-taught artisans and mechanics who bloomed exotically when Labour was a sturdy sapling, 60 years ago". He knew half a dozen of such men in Dublin when he was a boy, and he was an affectionate disciple, "though sometimes irreverent after the manner of youth". The heroes of their youth were men like Darwin, Carlyle, Bradlaugh, Morris, Kropotkin, Marx and Engels, and they sang libertarian songs. Literary tastes included Maria Edgeworth, Carleton, Dickens, Disraeli, Pater, Ruskin, Anatole France, Balzac, Morris and Wilde, and there was always a neat row of Thinker's Library volumes on the top shelf. And *Twelve Years in a Monastery* (Mr. MacNamara mistakenly writes "Twenty") "was necessary reading in a Catholic country".

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THE ragged trousered philosophers seem as remote now to Mr. MacNamara as the Winstanleyites or the Albigensians. And, while mourning their passing, he dutifully applauded the reasons. "Their day is finished now", he concluded, "although I am sure that societies without streamed popular education still produce them . . . But the ragged trousered philosopher is dead. The narrow precisions of modern philosophy would not suit him anyway, since he was very much an idealistic system-builder".

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MENTION of Charles Bradlaugh reminds us that Professor Walter L. Arnstein's study of *The Bradlaugh Case* has now been published by the Oxford University Press at 50s. And without wishing to prejudice F. A. Ridley's forthcoming review, we wholeheartedly recommend the work to our readers.

Christianity Did Not Arise in Palestine

(Continued from page 299)

Their claim to Palestinian origin is just as unfounded as Virgil's who made his Romans descendants of Trojan fugitives.

Lenzman (a French edition of his book has recently been published in Moscow) expressly affirms:

No religious system was primarily invented by a "founder", nor has it been the result of divine revelation; all religions are the traceable results of certain historical conditions existing at that particular period in a particular territory from which particular preconditions facilitated their spread. In competition against rival systems they adopt from them what boosts their proselytising efficacy. Christianity is no exception: its similarity with other creeds, its plagiarism from older current cults tend to underline its natural origin. All Christian dogmas can easily be derived from the socio-historical background of the time of their inception; and from then onwards these ideologies and dogmas have developed together and in conformity with the trends of material conditions in Western society.

When in the Archaemenian period (sixth to fourth century before our era) the captive Jews were allowed to return, only a core of patriotic stalwarts did so; the others settled where they were or emigrated and formed colonies of traders, such as in Elephantine, a Nilotic island in Egypt and in the Hellenic era, in Alexandria. All over Asia Minor freed prisoners settled in the great trading centres as artisans and tradesmen. In the first century of our era the number of Jews living abroad surpassed that of the Jews in Palestine by far. Says our author:

... Ptolemy I exiled to Alexandria a great number of Palestinian Jews following his conquest. Another 100,000 he may have sent to Cyrenaika, and other conquerors most probably did likewise. Considerable masses of Jewish prisoners were anyway forced to emigrate as a result of the Roman conquest, some went to Rome but most remained in the central basin of the Mediterranean . . . All this created a Diaspora, the existence of Jewish communities outside Judaea . . . Historians have calculated that in the first century of our era, when the Roman Empire had a population of 4 to 4½ million Jews, there were only up to 700 left in Palestine.

Western scholars have reached similar results. The *Encyclopedia Biblica* estimates that three or four million Jews were living in the diaspora. (See also Ch.-Guignebert; *Le monde Juif vers le temps de Jesus*, Paris, 1950). In Alexandria the Jews represented about 40 per cent of the population, with more than a million in the whole of Egypt and some ten thousand in Rome. Life in the midst of the antique civilisation brought about new aspects, and it is just amongst these Romanised and Hellenised Jews that reformatory trends arose which in the course of time developed into the new religion.

The Dead Sea scrolls appear to represent the "missing link". In No. 858 of *Bulletin du Cercle Ernest Renan* (Paris, December 1961) André Ragot analyses the many close affinities between terms and passages in Essenic and Christian writings.³

Philon declares that they inhabited not only towns but even small hamlets, and Josephus mentions their "colonies in every old township from whence they spread into the countryside". In particular, M. Ragot writes:

There was a settlement of Essenes in Alexandria; Acts (14, 1) mentions a "Synagogue of the Jews" in Iconium, and this pleonasm gives cause to suspect that abroad (as possibly even at home) there were already Jews who no longer adhered to the strict law. However much Acts and the Gospels have been revised, they no doubt represent a state of far advanced Christianisation as existed in the second half of the 2nd century.

The antique writers of the second century still regarded Christianity as a Jewish sect. Why and how did the seces-

sion take place? To quote Lenzman again:

The Jewish and Christian theologians declare it was because the Jews were monotheists, worshipping one god only, that they played such an important role in the shaping of Christianity; this in their opinion decided the eventual diffusion and victory of Christianity over all other religions of Heathendom. However, this is not true and indeed far from reality. If Judaism engendered Christianity, it was not because of Jewish monotheism (which existed only spasmodically) but because of the political situation and social conditions in general that prevailed in the Oriental parts of the Roman Empire during the first century.

It must be stressed that at this period all other religions manifested similar trends. The religio-philosophical system of, say, Seneca, is no less monotheistic than Judaism. The extended functions of Isis, the Egyptian goddess—of Mithra, the Mazdean god, and even ancient Roman deities such as Tellus show that in the religious reflection of the time one Emperor has his monotheistic counterpart in heaven.

The affinities between the ideas of Seneca and those attributed to St. Paul are so manifest that the first Christian writers claimed him one of theirs, besides Heraclitus and Socrates; and although Seneca had no knowledge of a person called Jesus, St. Jerome (4-5th century) has it that Seneca and Paul exchanged their ideas in a lively correspondence.

The Epistles—messages sent to the community nuclei in order to keep the messianic hopes alive and combat growing currents of doubt and heresy—mark the development of a novel dogma, a change in the social structure of the communities with increasing opposition to Judaism (which had fallen foul of the Roman authorities). Revelation had preached hatred against Rome and asserted that only the members of the twelve tribes of Israel were eligible for salvation. After the suppression of Bar Kochba's insurrection in Judaea the early Christians wanted to demonstrate their loyalty as Roman citizens and enemies of the Jews (Rom. 13, 1-5). They had become "respectable", when they decreed that "every person must submit to the supreme authorities. There is no authority but by the act of God and the existing authorities are instituted by him: consequently, anyone who rebels against authority is resisting a divine institution . . ."

After this volte-face Christianity was eligible to become the state religion. Not Mithraism (one emperor converted to Mithra lost his life in Asia Minor in battle), not Judaism or Essenism which demanded too much (e.g. meticulous observation of the Law, the rite of circumcision) or the pantheistic mystery religions. The Epistles do away with all this cumbersome ritual (Cf. Rom. 2, 13, 26; I. Cor. 7, 19; 5, 1-2, 16) and contradict the restriction of the elect in Rev. 9, 6 (Rom. 9, 6 and 10, 12). Circumcision becomes a figure of speech and he who believes in Christ is already eligible for salvation. In this connection, says Lenzman:

the most important aspect is the evolution of the Jesus image in the first epistles. In Revelation Jesus the Lamb is merely the Son of God, a chief of "celestial" armies, devoid of any human traits. The first epistles endow him already with some human qualities, yet they stress his basically divine nature, and the portrayal is still far from the gospel narrative of the pretended founder of Christianity. In these oldest epistles, there is no mention of his birth in Palestine, or the content of his sermons and parables; apart from saying he was "born of a woman, under the Law" (Gal. 4, 4), he "died for our sins . . . and was resurrected on the third day" (I. Cor. 15, 3-7), there is not much about his terrestrial existence. This silence cannot be fortuitous since the epistles begin and end with wishing everybody Grace and Peace in his name, and they are devoted to teaching Christ. This seems to show that they preceded the composition of the gospels.⁴

In the second half of the second century, seeing that the messianic hopes remained unfulfilled, it became necessary to compose the gospels of which there existed several

hundreds of versions. Every locality had its own literature. Says our author:

... the canonic gospels constitute a mere fraction of the numerous narrations pretending to tell the life story of Jesus; such biographical novels had been very popular among the first Christian communities. More numerous were the gospel stories which were barred from inclusion in the canon, each telling in a special way the wanderings and teachings of the alleged founder of Christianity. Not one was a witness report, all and sundry being composed a century after the events they purport to describe. . . Besides, their aim had not been to give posterity a true report of real happenings: these were religious writings, devotional compositions to be listened to by the faithful. He who wants to collect historical facts from canonical books with a view to reconstructing the history of primitive Christianity, must first of all establish the date of his sources. First among the Christian apologists comes Justin (c. 150); all he knew was the nomination of apostles, and some very short and concise aphorisms ascribed to Jesus. But he already mentions Revelation and sees the Messiah in the light of the Old Testament. His pupil, Tatian, considers the Old Testament far superior to all Greek writings, even Plato included. He condemned marriage, the eating of flesh and drinking of wine like the "Nazarites". Jesus was like Samson a *Nazarite ex utero*: "for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb" (Judges 13, 5). From this arose the mistake: Jesus of Nazareth—a locality unknown before the fourth century of our era.⁵

Athanagoras, another pupil of Justin's flourishing around 180, wrote treatises to prove that the Christians were loyal subjects of the Roman Emperor, defending them against the libel incest, atheism and ritual slaughter of the newborn. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons and the most important author of second-century Christianity, compiled the first history of the Church; he is the first to mention the gospels.

It is common knowledge that the gospels contradict each other; moreover, they betray in places an appalling ignorance of the country they purport to describe. These howlers and fantasies (e.g. the mustard tree Mat. 13, 32) were already ridiculed in antiquity (e.g. by Porphyrius). Their description of Palestine's topography sometimes recalls Shakespeare's seashore in Bohemia. But most revealing is the complete lack of any hint of what the Christians did during the Bar Kochba rebellion and the fall of Jerusalem which, if they were there, must in some way or other have affected them too.

Already a century ago Albert Kalthoff, a German pastor of the Lutheran Church (*The Rise of Christianity*, English translation by Joseph McCabe) evolved the theory that the new doctrine could only have originated in Rome, where the preconditions for this religious syncretism existed. Philon, the Hellenised Jew—"the Father of Christianity"—who gave the scriptures an allegorical interpretation already introduced the "Logos" of the fourth gospel. Religious intolerance of an all-powerful theocracy would never have allowed a heresy to develop inside Palestine, let alone a new religion.

NB:—With, so far, no English translations available, all quotations in the text are in the present writer's own rendering.

1. In 1908 he was excommunicated. F. Heiler, his biographer, wrote: ". . . Research to find the real truth has not only been blocked by the Roman Church but by all the Christian sects with hardly any exception"

2. Or Greek Asklepios. It cannot be stressed too much that in life nothing is static, not even the character of gods. The achievements of different civilisations (ideas, methods, inventions) were continuously exchanged, not always in a peaceful way; consequently mythologies too were in flux and imported deities were equated with indigenous ones whose names bore an accidental similarity.

Osiris, the Old Egyptian saviour, was originally a god of agriculture. A more sophisticated period found that the seed had to

"die" and only then was resurrected; in consequence, Osiris became the God of the Netherworld and (after the 12th dynasty) the saviour who by means of his key-shaped cross (an X) resurrects the dead. Set, his adversary, entered Egypt as a rain god, but since there was not much rain, he took over the "ministry" of the cruel desert sun.

Old Persian gods were not always "dualistic": in the ancient Gathas they were material agencies; only in the time of the Pahlavi Bundahish did they become spiritual principles of good and evil. Gods change together with the social conditions which they have to mirror. The Medieval Church, with its strongly defined guild of Saints, Angels, Archangels etc, reflected a certain type of society at a certain stage and changed as soon as this stage was superseded.

The long-standing competition between Christianity and Mithraism was not merely decided by foul play and political intrigue. Mithraism was an old-established oriental cult when the Christ creed was still fluid and in fermentation; the latter was therefore in a better position not only to plagiarise but also to temporise. This opportunistic stage ended only in 325 when the Council of Nicaea gave Christianity its first rigid structure. Later on, Catholicism developed as a mainly European creed.

3. For instance "ecclesia"—assembly, which existed amongst the Essenes but makes no sense for the followers of an itinerant preacher. They also had an Inspector of all camps, Hebr. *mebaqqer*, which is Greek *episcopos*.

As to the class divisions existing amongst the Jews at that time, Lenzman gives the following analysis: the Sadducees (*zaddiqim*), the upper stratum of the priestly caste, observed the law but representing, at the same time, the intellectual elite, they discouraged a too literal interpretation of the texts; they were ready to come to some understanding with Hellenic culture and Roman law. Their counterparts were the Pharisees (*Perushim*), observing the letter of the law, intransigent and self-righteous as rigid bigots, stigmatising any tendency of compromising, with particular influence upon women. They were the rich whose wealth was threatened by the occupying foreign power. Less influential were the Zealots and the Essenes.

The Zealots could be regarded as the extreme left wing. According to Flavii Josephus (*Ant.* 18, 1, 6) they recognised only one master, Jahve; they considered the Pharisees too inactive and, relying on divine assistance, incited to insurrection against the Romans, preaching that the rich and powerful are always hand in glove. Quite frequently they murdered rich people, hence their epithet: Sikkeres, from latin *sica*=dagger.

4. With the progress of science, the process of humanising gods is quite natural. It can be shown that, to mention scriptural figures, David and Jacob had been worshipped as gods: their names can be traced back as theophorous components long before the first appearance of Israel. Abram (later extended to Abraham) had been the epithet of the Mesopotamian Moon-god. Isaac was a fertility god of old (Gen. 26, 12 pp), whose past in the form of a nature spirit like Pan is hinted at in Gen. 31, 53.

5. In Hebrew-Aramaic characters, Nazareth is always spelt with *tsade*. A prophecy in Is. 11, 1 runs: There shall come forth a rod (*nētsar*) out of the stem of Jesse and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Cf. Gen. 49, 22). The *word* that has to be fulfilled is the prophecy that the Messiah will be a *nētsar* (shoot, sprout, scion, descendant) out of the stem of David, son of Jesse (Mat. 1, 6). At the same time, his is a branch from the root of Joseph, duplicated in the New Testament genealogy as the "husband" of Mary (Mat. 1, 16). There also was a pre-Christian sect of Nazarenes classed by Epiphanius (*Penarion* 28, 7, and *Haer.* 24) heretic because of their Judaising activities. (In Arabic "Nazarenes" means Christians, as already recorded in Acts 24, 5). F. C. Burkitt "Syriac Forms of New Testament Names" in *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 1911/3, p. 382) makes the point that *zeta*, the Greek letter in NaZareth, is rarely the equivalent of *tsade*; therefore *Nazōraios* could not mean a native of Nazareth, but must be used for *Nazir*, a "devotee" having taken the Nazarite vow.

THE PRIEST IN GREECE

He has no audit on his fear
and sews his priestly gear
with passion's pockets
to astonish Athens
Although his prickling fingers warn him
something wicked this way comes—
to start perhaps a rascal's rising—
each night he lights a daybreak lantern
within the hollow of his skull
and gives to any unemployed
the tools for the job.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

WOMEN IN CHURCH

(Continued from page 300)

religion, and there have, I am proud to say, been few women theologians. Men constantly manage to think up some new excuse for propping up a crumbling faith from Luther to Dr. Robinson, and until men themselves become mature and treat women as human beings, they will find women turing to the churches or smiling at them behind their backs. It is a mixture of immaturity and misery. Sexual cold-war instead of co-existence. If men had spent as much energy on trying to understand humanity as they have on theology, women would perhaps be able to turn to them instead of to the curate or the vicar for love that is at the same time disappointingly theoretical and comfortable and irresponsibly safe. But of course it really isn't only women who are keeping the Churches going. Men looking for authority they have lost in the home from being unable to share it, turn to the Church Councils and are busy with the less menial tasks of finance. The loneliness of human beings is just too great and perhaps it is this that must concern Secularists even more than the faith, for both may well disappear together if considered as inter-dependent. As it is, the foggy and fuddled faith serves to hide the wounds of relationships, but cannot deal with the causes, nor do more than dull the pain. Inasmuch as the Churches are dealing only with the symptoms and hiding and neglecting the diagnosis and prevention, they are doing terrible harm; but Secularists will not themselves do better merely by removing the only poultice that is available for many people.

Isn't this where much of the misunderstanding between Humanist and Secularist lies? The Freethinker-Secularist knows that we cannot afford to stop attacking the Churches; we must continually challenge the old stories that are still being told and believed, and he accuses the Humanist of trying to rebuild before he has removed the rotten wood. The Humanist knows that the Churches, for all their obstruction, destruction, and dishonesty, serve many people well, and believes that first there must be a substitute for that service. And when the Humanist actually wants to co-operate with Christians who cannot even recognise that the rot exists—then the fat is in the fire. This fire is probably the most difficult to deal with, but otherwise, surely, there is no real conflict? We need and must have both the "Secularist" and the "Humanist" attitude, and people prepared to get on with both jobs.

In the meantime there are women now putting on their hats to go down to the church to turn the kneeling pads over or from end to end. If there has to be a father-figure then at least God doesn't need feeding; there is a welcome contrast in the aisle from the kitchen sink.

As for me, I was satisfied with what I had done and I had cleared up the rubbish and puddles and put away the watering cans. The scent of the crysanthemums was sour and exhilarating and the flowers shone in the evening sunlight, white and green against the ancient stonework, but I had had enough. The stifling peace of it all, the exchange of pleasantries in the house of a god for whom I had no respect and the sterility of perfection, had become unbearable and clung to my throat like the pelt of a murdered animal . . . I was glad to get back to ordinary family disagreements, the dirt that hadn't been pushed under the mat and a couple of men who know how to share.

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 August 18th, 1965. Present: Mrs. E. Venton who was in the Chair, Messrs. Barker, Collins, Condon, Ebury, Kuebart, Leslie, Millar, Miller, Shannon, Sproule, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. McIlroy, Mr. Griffiths (Treasurer), and Mr. McIlroy (Secretary). Apologies were received from Messrs. Amphlett Micklewright and Warner.

It was agreed that the Committee of the Thomas Paine Society should be allowed the use of the library for a meeting on October 5th. A protest has been sent to the Minister of Health regarding the rejection of a prospective student nurse because she had no religious beliefs. Congratulations were expressed to Mr. G. A. Woodcock whose activities in Manchester were the subject of a recent article in the *Guardian*.

The meeting was informed that the protest against a grant by the London Borough of Havering Council to the Christian Education Movement had been widely reported. Letters had been sent to the Ministers concerned and to the Town Clerk of Havering. The next meeting was arranged for Wednesday, September 29th.

W. J. McI.

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