

ICONOCLAST

FOR RATIONALISM, SECULARISM, FREETHOUGHT & SOCIAL PROGRESS

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World News:

PAPAL FINANCIAL OLIGARCHY

The Vatican has just announced that the Ecumenical Council which ended last December, cost £2,600,000. Most of this sum was spent on travelling expenses, hotels and accommodation, food, wine and entertainment. The announced cost probably only covers a part of the total cost of this most expensive of all church councils, which was attended by some 2,860 princes of the church, including 98 cardinals, 344 patriarchs and residential archbishops, 168 titular archbishops, 1,287 residential bishops, 750 titular bishops, 28 prelates and abbots nullius, 60 apostolic prefects and 125 superiors-general of various orders.

No other church could afford to run such a show, for none are so rich as the Roman Catholic Church. It is an indication of the importance attached to the need to refurbish the soiled image of the church and make it more acceptable to an increasingly sceptical world.

An investment of some £2,600,000 in bringing the Ecumenical Council together is, however, considered to be well worth the high cost, according to higher church councils. Although many doctrinal problems still remain to be solved, the "general staff" meeting of the hierarchy has enabled the one and only church, under its sovereign head - the Pope, to plan out an ideological programme for some period ahead and to survey the vast organisation of the church and re-shape it to meet the challenge of the modern world. A modern world with a rapidly increasing scientific and technological advance; a world in which all the old social formations are in process of being challenged and broken up. The church, as the main ideological repository of the past, has to tack carefully into the "wind of change". Too rapid a turn could do great harm to the spiritual and material heritage of the church. On the other hand, the church must adapt its dogma and forms of organisation to meet the challenge of materialism and the demand of millions for a better life here and now on "this" earth and an end to wars which threaten to engulf whole territories and peoples. Time is not on the side of a church which cannot adapt itself to the new world conditions.

Bound up as the church is with its defence of privilege both in the sphere of "spiritual" and material resources, the closest attention is being paid to husbanding its financial resources, not only its vast assets in land and property but in its share capital ownership manipulated in the money markets of the world. No wonder that perceptive observers of the Papacy's investments are probing for really hard information as to total resources, estimated to be at least not less than £2,500 million.

Interest has been sparked off, as John Millar pointed out in his article, "The Rock on Which the Popes Build Power" in last month's Iconoclast, by the Italian government's wrangle with the Vatican over the payment of taxation. The Vatican wants complete exemption from all taxes, in all countries, including Britain and America. In Italy alone, the writer pointed out that the Vatican's unpaid bill for taxation amounts to some estimated £23 million.

The English Hierarchy must therefore have been acutely embarrassed by a very tender probe made by Charles Foley, writing in the mass-circulation Sunday Express, on the 27th February. He asked the awkward question: "How rich is the Pope?" He reports that he has been following the trail of fiscal agents who are probing the hidden assets of the Vatican and it would appear that he met with a giant smoke-screen of evasion.

However, enough was dug out to give a slight indication of how big and extensive the Vatican's investments really are, even though the Vatican is the only sovereign state today which never publishes a balance sheet. He comments: "My inquiries showed that the choice papal portfolio contains a good fifth - £200 million worth - of Italy's total stocks." But this is only the tip of the glittering iceberg. It appears that the bulk of Vatican investment is now hidden overseas, much of it in the U.S., Canada and Britain. Vatican resources in the U.S., for example, are over and above that of investments of U.S. Catholic organisations. One prelate told Foley that the church is already "a lot bigger than Ford Motors, Shell Oil and Bethlehem Steel put together."

And to swell the resources already invested or available for investment, the faithful contribute from all over the world millions more in "Peter's Pence", every year. Poor People!

by J. Thomas.

ICONOCLAST

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EDITORIAL:

On page 8 of this issue is a very important notice from the newly founded Secular League. It is a notice of its first annual conference which is taking place on Monday, 11th April, 66, (Easter Monday) at the "White Hart" Hotel, Hampton Wick, (Opposite Kingston Bridge).

This conference will provide the first opportunity for all members of the Secular League to meet together to discuss the aims and objects of the organisation, to elect officers, adopt a constitution and plan future activities. A copy of the agenda will be sent to all members who have already enrolled and the secretary will be pleased to supply information as to membership to any interested persons who are not yet members.

Provisional aims and objects will be found on the "application for membership" form. Motions for the agenda are welcomed from members and should be sent in by Friday, 18th March, 66. Information on travel facilities, routes, catering, etc. can also be obtained on request from the secretary.

We strongly urge all readers of Iconoclast to support the foundation of the new organisation and to make it known widely among their friends. At the same time, a necessary and important part of the activities of the Secular League - such as the regular holding of open air meetings and group meetings - will be the publication of the Iconoclast, and building its circulation to the point where it can be printed. Inevitably, as with most new organisations, we have had to make a very modest start but as funds and serious support become more available, development can and must take place. In addition to this regular publication - only monthly at the moment - it is generally agreed that the production of a wide range of pamphlets, reprints and leaflets from time to time is absolutely essential. Any proposals you may have in this connection will be welcomed as will financial support in making production possible.

It will be appreciated that the editorial and technical production of Iconoclast is entirely voluntary and its development depends entirely upon the enthusiasm and support of all members and friends. As to when this development can be made depends entirely upon the support given and activity undertaken for the journal. It can advance in no other way. We have neither large legacies available, nor "sugar daddies" in the background. The finance we need we must raise ourselves - there is no other way. We welcome your concrete help and assistance in all the various activities which the Secular League is planning.

LONDON SECULAR PRESS

Announce the following publications:

THE CRIMES OF CHRISTIANITY
by G.M. Foote and J.M. Wheeler.

Now being re-published in separate chapters. At present available:

Crimes of the Popes.....6d.
Frauds, Forgeries & Relics.....1/-d.
Ignorance & Vice in the Early
Christian Church.....9d.
Monkery.....9d.

(Complete set to date.....3/-d)

Just Published:

Robert G. Ingersoll. Facsimile of his most famous lecture with comic illustrations:

Mistakes of Moses (30 pages)....9d.

Also available from the London Secular Press, 139, Elm Road, New Malden, Surrey, the following:

Mrs Grundy by Peter Fryer. Studies in English Prudery.....8/6d.

The History of the Popes by Joseph McCabe. In two vols. Paper covers. A set.....6/-d.

Bible Myths by T.W. Doane, (Hard covers) 35/-d. inc. postage and packing.

Sixteen Crucified Saviours, by Kerscy Graves, (Paperback) 12/6 inc. postage and packing.

Camden Group Secularists living or working in the Borough of Camden, are urged to send for details of group meetings and activities.

Viewpoint:

by Albert Meltzer

TOLERATING THE MAJORITY

The grudging recognition of the right to disbelief has not been fully won. The fact that scholars with academic distinction can, without losing their positions, "admit" to being atheists nowadays has not altered the fact that the profession of atheism can be disadvantageous in many respects, notwithstanding the fact that Christianity has now been reduced to a minority cult.

Religious Prejudices The working class as a whole can afford to scoff at Christianity; so long as labour power is scarce, the employers will not insist on "Baptist wanted for general delivery work" (as the grocers' ads used to read). When, however, an element of favour enters into a job, Christian prejudice is still to be reckoned with. Teachers are still expected to "take Scripture". The Civil Service still enquires into religion, and one is expected to "be something". (It may however be noted that it pays to be a Roman Catholic in the Foreign Office; an Anglican in the police; and the Ministry of Labour has an odd affection for Nonconformists). The nationalised industries on the whole have a prejudice against atheists, or at least declared atheists.

State Services The Army barely recognises that they exist (the forces and prisons preserving the fiction that there exists only "C of E, R.C's and Four by Twos", as both sergeants and warders call the roll). The prison service does not recognise atheism. ("Freethinker? You're free to think what you like but if you come in here you're C of E, understand?"). The courts have been obliged to recognise that atheists may affirm but they do not like it. Most magistrates and some judges preserve a belief in the oath as magic and feel that if somebody does not take the oath "It is because they do not dare to" (in a civil case, if one does not take the oath, one's testimony is disbelieved - this goes without saying; it applies to some extent in criminal cases. Only in political cases do judges begin to understand). One can say generally that the State service requires some profession of belief. Until very recently it was impossible for an atheist to adopt a child.

American Way Of Life We have not reached the stage of America where, in the most materialistic country in the world, it is almost obligatory to "attend a church of your choice", or be reckoned as an utter outcast, and potential traitor. The business use of religion in America is bound up with regarding some sort of religion as part of the American ethos. Religion has flourished in the U.S.A. because it is a safety-line with a community, especially a racial community - e.g. the Irish can cling together in R.C. churches; the Jews can preserve their minority limits within the synagogue; the Greek Orthodox church prevents Greeks from becoming absorb-

ed; the high-class Episcopalian service is a mark of thorough Americanisation. To declare oneself independent of all religions in such circumstances is to do more than merely profess disbelief; few believe. It is to declare oneself independent of the social ties that the community is seeking to impose.

Harmless Cranks It is a fact, however, that while in Britain it is not only possible to be an atheist, but the majority think of one as a harmless crank if one is not - i.e. if one believes in God - it is not entirely possible to declare oneself as an atheist. Little provision is made for it in law - where it is granted, one is at a disability (as with the oath); little provision is made for it in education where it is assumed that parents are Christian unless proved otherwise; none at all in many institutions. While this is the case it is not possible to say that secularisation is complete, or that religion is harmless because it is moribund. The clergy have kept their influence, if they have lost their congregations. The need for a Secular League is not merely to combat the influence of religion upon the religious; indeed, when one sees the average congregation, one rather hopes they will keep their illusions, for what else have they? It is indeed a boast of some of the clergy that it is religion that cures the mentally afflicted - not, indeed, by making them mentally whole, but by substituting a comparatively harmless religious phobia for a more harmful one. The man one sees loudly and stridently shouting that sinners will burn in hell might, but for that illusion, be setting fire to houses himself. The danger comes not from the Sunday congregant in his Sunday best, but from the codification of our laws from the Christian standpoint and from the political organisation of clerics.

The aim of a secularist organisation must be to assert the right of the views of the majority to be tolerated; and to make it possible for disbelief in the supernatural no longer to be treated as a disreputable and hidden thought, but admitted to be the norm.

Readers Letter Page: We look forward to receiving correspondence from readers.

NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER

Last month, Russia's Luna-9 space station landed on the moon. Jodrell Bank was receiving pictures even before the Russians. What next? A manned spaceship will encircle the moon. A dog will become the first living thing - so far as we know - to land on the moon. In terms of the past, "Columbus has sighted land!"

Science Fact The possibility of landings on the moon are not the end of achievement: it means that space travel moves out of the realm of science fiction and becomes science "fact". It means that we can go beyond our solar system and explore the great universe, and raises the great problem already discussed even by children - is there intelligent life elsewhere? And by any standards of intelligence, how will it regard us?

Science Versus Superstition Technically man forges ahead; socially he is still enslaved to past superstitions and traditions. What if we met life from other planets tomorrow? How would we confront them? Would our bishops tell them about Jesus dying to remit our sins - but even in the gospels he expressly did not die for them but for the children of this earth. They are not children of Adam! How does the ecumenical church propose to preach the gospel to them? Are they going to send out missionaries as they did to the Americas and to Africa, importing a framework of lies that they themselves no longer believed in? Will they take the trouble to transport the idiocies of how man fell, how Jesus saved him, how the "tribe accursed" slew him, and how the Great White God will return? They did it to the Red Indians. There is every indication that they will still do it unless the Russians get in first and explain how history marches forward relentlessly with a view to the ultimate triumph of Marxism-Leninism!

Nationalist Expansion? Will the Russians and Americans appreciate that there is no need for nationalistic fighting in another world! We cannot be so optimistic. Those who feel this world is too small without the nations treading on each other's toes will not be satisfied with the space of another, or of several. They will want to hoist their stupid flags and their boundaries and transport their demarcation disputes. Science marches on - social progress stands relatively still. We may regret that we have not the ability nor the opportunity to become space scientists; nor the courage nor chance to become space aviators. There is room for us all however in the moon race - but the problem is how to restrain the politicians, how to remove the priests; how to make this world, and any others we happen to move into, free from old hatreds and warfare.

Peace Pause Short It did not take very long after the honey "peace pause" over Christmas, in which the Papacy played its part, to escalate the war by the resumption of bombing. As we pointed out in last month's Iconoclast, the peace pause was "but one more manifestation of the world's rulers pulling wool over the people's eyes."

The War Game The film "The War Game", directed by Peter Watkins, has been declared by the Governors of the BBC as unsuitable to be shown on TV. With tongue in cheek, Mr Kenneth Adam, Director of TV, said the board's decision was taken "carefully, reluctantly, I hope responsibly, I know independently."

In its usual pompous style, a Daily Telegraph editorial (9th Feb.) naturally justifies the decision of the board - in the interests of small children and elderly people living alone!

The editorial went on to state: "The film is said to be a 'documentary,' and can reasonably be thus called in its depiction of the inevitable killing, suffering and disintegration. But it has its slant. The tell-tale evidence begins with the appearance on the screen, at peak moments of horror, of selected quotations, taken out of context, from statements by Roman Catholic leaders justifying the retention of the nuclear deterrent." The implication we are supposed to draw from this is that the position of the Roman Catholic Church is against the retention of the nuclear deterrent. Yet the Roman Catholic Church has stated over and over again that the policy of the church is the retention of the deterrent. One cannot but suspect that someone at the Daily Telegraph was alarmed at the bad image the R.C. church would get if the film had been shown. Let the film be shown so that we can make our own free judgment as to its worth; the church, the press, like the board of governors of the BBC, has a system of censorship which must be fought at all times. These "indexes" of forbidden topics are all designed to keep us in ignorance of what is really happening in the world and is all part of the "silent" conspiracy to prevent us from making our own cool, calm judgment on matters which concern all of us. Peter Watkins has our support in his demand that the film be shown publicly and not confined to military correspondents.

News Comment, cont from pg.4:

Papal Book Censors Sophisticated Roman Catholics pretend, when they want to read some forbidden book, that Papal book censorship does not exist - for them. But we are reminded that the section of the Vatican Holy Office which has the power to condemn books has not been abolished, even though its name and a new procedure has been announced. According to the "Pontifical Annual", it appears that the name of the office itself has been changed from the "Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office" to "The Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith." This is the new name which Pope Paul has given it following a so-called reform decree of Dec 6, 1965, which limits its powers. It is still allowed to put books on the Index of forbidden works but now only after an author has been given an opportunity of defending his views! Perhaps Mr Frank Ridley will avail himself of the new, more "liberal" facilities when his new book, "The Crisis of Christianity" is published. He will, no doubt, have the pleasure of appearing before Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani who will be the pro-prefect of the new "Sacred Congregation." At least Mr Ridley will be able to argue his case in Latin!

Parish Magazines The standard of parish magazines and church news letters was shameful, stated Mr Ian Gregory, an editor of a mass-circulation Christian newspaper inset, told a weekend conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire. A statement of the obvious - but what will the national press sub-editors do without these funnies - always good for a filler when news is short.

The Rev. Derek Palmer was of the opinion that "we must start to think in terms of groups of churches." Boldly, he stated: "The form of our publicity must be contemporary, and for most people that means a tabloid newspaper." Then a Mr Philip Barron, a public relations consultant retained by the British Council of Churches to organise the conference, said that individual parish magazines were a luxury in which no church could now indulge on its own.

What was needed, readers of Iconoclast should take note, is a move in the direction of such papers as the National Christian News (100,000) a monthly, Coventry Shire and Spire (20,000) and Bristol Contact (34,000). We too, in the secular movement have our "parish" magazines. We too, need to move with the times, in order to combat this growing mass circulation of religious propaganda, buttressed as it is by the mass circulation media of the "establishment". We are not yet in a position to do this but at least we can lay the foundations and chart a course for the future.

To Tattoo, Or Not To Tattoo Dr Ernest Hamburger, a U.S. public health service doctor and psychiatrist has investigated 100 inmates of correctional institutions and 50 hospital patients, who were being treated for drug addiction. In a report just published, he found many of the patients had tattoos establishing their identity as narcotic addicts. He found also there were five types of tattoo: group identification, such as names and insignia of the armed forces, serial numbers, religious symbols. Identification with a single person: mother, Mary, Christ, the Black Panther, a girl friend's name. Pseudo-heroic Boasting: "Death before Dishonour" and fierce animal tattoos. Pornographic: many of these boasted of sexual prowess. Self-Deprecating: "Born to Lose," "Born To Die". "All Screwed up." etc.

He goes on to comment on the fact that a person with a deficient family background was attracted to groups in which he could wear an emblem of belonging and says: "They actually permanently emblazon the group symbol on the skin so that it will be an integral part of them, the tattoo. Examples of this are the high number of tattoos found in convicts, gang members, drug addicts and Nazi S.S. members."

Just Like Ike That relapsed Amish Christian who became a soldier as a psycho-reaction against his bible-punching pacifist parents, Dwight Eisenhower, formerly America's No.1. golf professional and amateur President, has written a book on his life in the White House called "Waging Peace". In it he repeats his claim that the cold war was, among many good things for which the U.S.A. stood, against many bad things for which the USSR stood, for "our religious way of life against atheism". The book is, appropriately enough, due to appear on April 1st.

Balls Blessed Ten-pin bowling alleys have been blessed during a 30 minute service at the Granada Bowl, Northampton. A choir led the singing of three hymns. Short sermons were given by representatives of various denominations, including the Methodists, the Congregationalists and the Church of England.

Mr Roger Brenthall, manager of the Granada Bowl said: "It is a good example of the modern outlook of churches, which are prepared to take the gospel to the people, rather than to sit back and wait for people to come to church."

International News:

by John A. Millar.

ECONOMIC POWER OF THE VATICAN

Whatever some naive freethinkers believe of the morass of half-truths that the church attempts to foist upon us as "history", one can discern, if not facts, then trends, which form the nearest we are ever likely to get to truth, regarding the history of the rise of ecclesiastical power.

Age of Unreason Any attempt to understand the machinations of early Christian movements (using the word in two senses), based upon the evolution of ideas, and the development of theological reasoning, is doomed to failure. Not only does Christianity represent a regression in the annals of even metaphysics, but ideologically speaking, it heralded the rise of a great "age of unreason", when logic was at its greatest discount, and nothing was deemed credible unless it was first demonstrated to be impossible.

Brake on Progress All the ideas that have ever born the label of "Christian" had, after all, existed for thousands of years, at the time of the inception of the church at Rome, and it could not be argued by the most sanguine that from a philosophical point of view, any rhyme or reason could be discovered in the selection of those which became crystallised into Christian dogma. Indeed, the only manner in which any progress from an intellectual point of view could be credited to early Christian thinkers, was in their very reaction to advancing world thought, which from a modern viewpoint could in retrospect be seen to be largely retrogressive.

Perverse Doctrines But all this is if we make the classic mistake of trying to meet the Christian on his own ground. If one accepts the churches' account of history, then we are dealing with, if not the evolution of ideas, at least the consummation of a school of idealism, which can be understood by the simple expedient of accepting an age of credulity, when unreason became the "miraculous", and triumphed by reason of its very perversity. It would even be possible to attempt to reconstruct an intelligible, if complex, materialistic analysis of the entire process.

Economic Explanation Fortunately, so theoretically complicated an exercise is quite unnecessary, for a purely economic explanation is both simple and complete. This article is obviously no place for a full outline of the existing economic structure, and it must suffice to say that the rise of Christianity and all its dogma and doctrines can easily and only be understood in terms of a struggle for economic survival and power. The only reason that Jesus was born a god in the form of a man instead of a man who became a god, was that Arius did not have the support of as powerful a faction as his rival;

the reason he did not have such powerful military support was that he was a more sincerely philosophising person less concerned with power than his opposite number, who was ideologically weaker and physically stronger. That is, logically speaking, unreason almost invariably had to triumph over reason, because the battle was for real economic power. As such, it concerned for the most part, those sincere Christian scholars (abysmal intellectually though they were), who held the reins of power prior to the emergence of the churches as a significant economic group, and those soldiers of fortune and power mad despots, who would wrest it from them. That the latter should triumph over the former is obvious, and if, in order to achieve their ends, they had perforce to institute the absurd doctrinal innovation that was supposed to be the "real" reason for their struggle, then so it had to be. It was only in rare and isolated instances that a "church" or religious group had sufficient local following to muster support round a savant on the basis of reason. This was because the churches did not achieve importance until they achieved power, and they did not acquire power until they replaced metaphysicians with megalomaniacs. It would be even more accurate to state that Christianity did not exist until it was invented.

Frankenstein Monster Consequently no such thing existed until economic power was achieved by unscrupulous butchers, who then proceeded from the spoils of their pillaging of primitive religious sects, to create that monster which by comparison, made the concept of Dr. Frankenstein appear but a fairy-tale.

Donations: The Secular League will pay postage or other carriage charges on donations of freethought, rationalist or other books for either our library or literature fund. We will also accept money for the above purpose. All monetary donations should be accompanied by instructions for purpose donated and all contributions will be acknowledged in these columns. Sned to: Mr J.A. Millar, Secretary, Secular League, 139, Elm Road, New Malden Surrey.

Press Cuttings: Press cuttings of all kinds welcomed, particularly those relating to church finances.

by J. Humphrey.

VALENTINES DAY

Maidens Blush, Lovers Sigh,
Time for Valentines is Nigh.

The ancient Roman festival of the Lupercalia, in Greece it is called "lycaea", in Germany it is called "Fasching", in Britain and elsewhere in Europe and America it is known as "St. Valentines Day", and occurs on February 14, the day, according to ancient tradition, the birds choose their mates for a year.

Idiotisms Chaucer refers to this (Parliament of Foules) as also does Shakespeare: "Good morrow, friends! St. Valentine is past, Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?" - Midsummer Nights Dream.

For a period well in advance of this date a considerable array of amatory, satirical, sentimental, vulgar, and what has been described as, "a multitude of pictorial absurdities" are displayed in print shop windows. According to one disgruntled swain, remarking on what he called the ugliness and imbecilities of these symbolic love tokens, said, "The consideration of these 'idiotisms' suggests the thought, that the fourteenth of February and not the first of April is the real All Fools Day."

Upon enquiry, it was found that the demand for billetsdoux was much greater this year than for gifts, such as ornaments, trinkets, wish-bone charms, heart-shaped lockets, and the like. The pictorial card being mostly favoured.

Phallic Rites The custom of choosing valentines on this day had its origination in the phallic rites associated with the worship of Lupercus, an ancient pastoral god, identified with the Arcadian Pan, chief rural deity of the Greeks, and with the pagan goddess, Hera, goddess of marriage and pregnancy, identical with the Roman goddess Juno. The Lupercalia was celebrated at the Lupercal, a "grotto" on the Palatine Hill, (at the spot where Romulus and Remus were suckled by a she-wolf-Lupus) in honour of Lupercus, so called because he protected the flocks from the wolves. At this ceremony goats were sacrificed, and youths dressed up in the skins. These youths were paraded in the streets with thongs in their hands, striking everyone they met, especially women, who imagined that this whipping prevented sterility. Barrenness in women, and male impotence, were both looked upon with great disfavour, equal to sinfulness and wickedness.

Love Feast On page 19 of that rare book, "Phallic Worship," by George Ryley Scott, it is stated, "At the Lupercalia of Rome...the girls and women in a state of nudity were whipped by the men as they marched in procession". At the love feast on the eve of the festival people of both sexes met, and drew the name of one of

the opposite sex in a lottery. Thus, each male and female obtained a partner or valentine, i.e. a binding. The couple were bound to each other for one year. It was the only form of marriage then known, and severe penalties were inflicted on those who violated this official binding. Elopement was punished with death. Religious rites, even amongst the ancient Jews, did not exist in connection with marriage, but were gradually added to give sanction, as the early Church regarded marriage simply as a concession to human weakness. "If I stood affected that way, (i.e., marriage) I would choose my wife as men do valentines - blindfold or draw cuts for them; for so I shall not be deceived in the choosing". (Chapman: Monsieur d'Olive. 1605).

Love's Lottery It was an old custom in England to draw lots for lovers on this day; the person drawn being the drawers valentine for a year, and given a present....The custom is said to have its origin in a pagan practice connected with the worship of Juno on or about this day." (Brewers Dictionary Of Phrase and Fable).

A similar custom of temporary mating took place in Scotland. One place in particular, in the parish of Kiltiva, on a hill between the towns of Campbelltown and Machrihanish, there stood a church, the ruins of which are still there. At this church once a year, a "new spouses for old" service was held. The priest, Kivan, bade the people to the church where they were blindfolded. (Happily mated couples did not go to this service). When the priest shouted, "Cabagh!" ("seize quickly"), the big blind grab took place. The first woman a man seized was his new wife, and vice-versa. At worst, if the "lucky dip" did not turn out too well, the couples had to suffer each other for one year only, and only until the next such service. Teenagers were not allowed to attend, they had their own district "grotto", ("young peoples bothy") where they were permitted to make love experimentally in couples, and in groups.

The Old Taken Over "I'll be your sweet-heart, if you will be mine. All my life I'll be your valentine." - Old Song. Many of these ancient pagan anniversaries have been given names suggesting a Christian origin, but it must
(cont.pg.8.col.1.)

Valentines Day, cont:

be borne in mind, that it is a well-known trick, to graft on to the old faith, the new one, and to substitute the name of a Christian saint for the pagan deity. The early Christian Church found it impossible to eradicate all pagan festivals and so had to come to a compromise. It gave these festivities the odour of sanctity by allowing them to continue and so, St. Valentine was invented, and, made to coincide with the Lupercalia. Assuming that there actually was a saint of that name, it is difficult to imagine what possible connection there could be between this holy man, and a phallic festival; unless, of course, it is an admission by the church, that Christianity is another name for phallicism, which it is!

St. Valentine Christian "historians" naturally claim that there was a St. Valentine. They differ however, as to the date, and the manner in which he died. He was a blameless character and suffered martyrdom in the second century. He was renowned for his affection and benevolence, and was beheaded by the Romans in 269 A.D. He was a Christian martyr of the reign of the Emperor Claudius (circa 270). He was thrown into prison in Rome for professing Christianity in A.D. 271., where he died. He was a priest of Rome who was imprisoned for succouring persecuted Christians. He became converted himself, and although he restored the sight of his gaoler's blind daughter he was martyred by being clubbed to death (Feb 14th, 290). Other dates mentioned include - in the third century - in the year 306 A.D. It is most remarkable that although they are not sure of the year, or even the century, yet the Christian "historians" are quite positive that he was put to death on Feb 14. (Probably at 3.30 on a wet Tuesday afternoon). Also we are not told which brand of Christianity he preached. Was it that of the Pauline Gentiles who made Sunday their rest-day, or that of their opponents, the Jewish Christian Church, who stuck to Saturday as their Shabbas?

"Blameless Character" Archbishop Whately, (1787-1863) another famous "historian" who achieved a high reputation as a writer, had this to say, "St. Valentine was a man of most admirable parts, and so famous for his love and charity, that the custom of choosing valentines upon his festival, took its rise from thence." Unlike most of the other "authorities" on this matter, he was crafty enough not to mention the year, or give any hint as to the manner in which the "saint" had been nex-door neighbours. It was old Josh Billings who once said, "The trouble with most folks is that it is not so much their ignorance, as their knowing so many things which aint so." Names such as Valentine, Valentia, Valentino and Valentinus, either as a fore or surname were quite common in

Italy, but there is no evidence of any of them having been martyred. The Valentinians, for instance, were a second century sect, adherents of a priest, who deserted his faith, and proclaimed a doctrine in which gods and goddesses were substituted for the Trinity. Then there was Valentinus, the Gnostic, whose disciples were also called Valentinians.

Hallowed Inflection From all the information that can be gathered, it is quite evident that the Christian missionaries, ever keen to transform pagan rites to their own sorry system, looked at the young folks reciprocal love-making and gave the rites a hallowed inflection, and, with a sentimental halo hooked the whole joyous occasion on a mythical martyr.

But, the well-laid plans of both mice and Christians "Gang aft agley", for instead of the festival being recognised as a holy day, if one is to judge by the large number of "unsaintly" valentines that are exchanged, the stigma of vulgarity has not been removed from "St. Valentine's Day."

NOTICE:ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SECULAR LEAGUEImportant Notice for all Members

The Annual Conference of the Secular League will take place starting at 10.0 am. on Monday, 11th April, 1966 (Easter Monday) at the "White Hart" Hotel, Hampton Wick, (Opposite Kingston Bridge), on the Surrey-Midldx border. Members should bring their current card of membership. Items for inclusion on the conference agenda may be submitted by individuals or local groups up to and including Friday, 18th March, 66. Emergency motions may be submitted in writing on the morning of the conference.

Full details are available from: Mr J.A. Millar, Secretary, Secular League, 139, Elm Road, New Malden, Surrey, to whom all queries should be addressed.

Information regarding travel facilities, routes, catering, etc., is available on request.

Meetings: Outdoor Meetings sponsored by Kingston, North London and Camden groups: Marble Arch, every Sunday from 4.0 pm. Speakers: J.W. Barker, L. Ebury, C.E. Wood, J.A. Millar, H. Timmins and others.

Tower Hill every Thursday, 12.0 - 2.0 - L. Ebury. Whitestone Pond, Hampstead, every Sunday 12.0-2.0. - L. Ebury.

Indoor Meetings: Kingston and Surbiton group meetings every Friday, 8.0 pm. The White Hart, Hampton Wick, Midldx.

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There was a split in the National
Secular Society. David Tribe & the
new lot expelled Eva & Len Ekburg
and they linked with their old friend Joe
Thomas to form a new group.

They brought in F.A. Ridley, James Humphrey
and J.M. Alexander. He and Joe
brought in Kitty Lamb and me. It lasted a
while but finally collapsed due to the lot

waiting to make it proletarian and the other lot to
copy the NSS. Finally Tribe left & they returned to the NSS