

But, surely, that is not what we understand by religion. We would not normally speak of Hitler's genocidal policy or of Amin's expulsions as religious activities. It may well be that one can find mechanisms, such as scapegoating, common to religious and non-religious spheres of human life, but that does not turn the non-religious into the religious. The articles of O'Hear, Soskice and Kerr, among others, thus raise the whole question what we actually count as religion and how far we are ready to expand the limits of the religious. One complaint that McGhee has against the older approach to philosophy of religion which begins with the question of the existence of God is that it tacitly restricts religion to Christianity, or at least to the Abrahamic family of faiths. It thus rules out non-theistic Buddhism from the beginning as an object of study. But it is a genuine question why we should want to call this form of Buddhism a religion at all. Why should we think of Buddhism as a religion and not, say, marxism or fascism? This volume is a worthwhile read, from which one may learn much, but it leaves unanswered questions.

GARETH MOORE OP

'GATHERED UNDER APOSTLES': A STUDY OF THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH by Columba Graham Flegg. *Clarendon Press Oxford, 1992. 524 pp. £50.00.*

Father Flegg, who was honorary Orthodox chaplain at Cambridge University from 1988 to 1991, has elaborated an Open University doctoral thesis into a very well documented and sensitively written analysis of the nineteenth-century Catholic Apostolic Church, whose last apostle died in 1901. One very unusual feature of this body was that, unlike other adventist groups, it refused to try to perpetuate itself. Father Flegg accurately places the movement, whose origins he dates to a period between 1832 and 1835, as a part of the early nineteenth-century upper-middle class 'tory' reaction against social disorder, religious doubt and the French Revolution. The Catholic Apostolic Church was no secular or common 'toryism', however, but incarnated a passionate conviction that Roman Catholic Emancipation, the 1832 Reform Bill, 'democracy' in general and then Chartism in detail were all signs of demonic activity which was bound to end swiftly in the second advent of Christ. The Scottish Presbyterian, Edward Irving, whom Father Flegg does not regard as directly the founder of the new body, could even say (like Newman), 'the one thing which I have laboured at is to resist liberalism by opening the word of God'. The new body was not only anti-liberal, however, but also anti-evangelical, and, in virtue of its ecclesiology, anti-Tractarian as well. Dr Flegg incidentally rejects any suggestion that the Catholic Apostolics had much in common with twentieth-century charismatic movements: late Apostolic survivors compared what they saw as emotional excess unfavourably with the dignity of their own liturgy.

Although Dr Flegg stresses that the group was predominantly well-educated, there was a lack of intellectual sophistication here similar to

what one finds in the first generation of the equally well-to-do Brethren. The most important works which influenced the first generation were the *Dissertation on the Prophecies* (1804) of the Rev. G.S. Faber, a Bampton Lecturer in 1801; *A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras and St John* (1815) by James Hatley Frere, one of Hookham Frere's brothers; and Edward Irving's translation of a book by a Jesuit of the 18th-century dispersion, Manuel Lacunza (1731—1801) called *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty* (1827), published in Spanish between 1812 and 1816. Lacunza's work was on the Index, because he identified Antichrist with an apostatizing Rome of the future.

From this point of view the Catholic Apostolic Church was a late development from the eschatological excitement and political hysteria which the French Revolution had stirred up in the 1790s. The Apostolics differed from other superficially similar groups—the Brethren, the Seventh-Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses—because they were even more absolute in their rejection of the present: they showed no interest in the conditions of this world but concentrated on preparing for the imminent divine intervention. The Church—not the world—had to be changed: there was no time for social reform or even for missionary work. A new and purer ecclesiastical structure had to be put in place because of the failings of all existing churches. England had been chosen for the decisive revelatory event because it was essentially Protestant: and here Dr Flegg perhaps misses the links with that Protestant and imperial British nationalism which had been growing since the final rout of the Jacobites in 1745. Nevertheless, one has also to remember that this was a very small new 'church', whose activities and beliefs should not be taken for major evidence of what was happening in the minds of the comfortable classes in the England of the 1820s and 1830s.

Dr Flegg would like us to agree that the breadth and beauty which he finds in the Catholic Apostolic liturgy, the movement's attempt to reconcile charismatic and established hierarchical ministries, and its emphasis on eschatology are all of especial relevance today. Excellent as his study is in many ways (and not least in its level-headed tone), one is not entirely persuaded. The Catholic Apostolic Church was, as he himself admits to some extent, an example of the kind of badly-founded religious reaction which the French Revolution produced in the major Churches and property-owning classes in Europe. The basic assumptions of the Apostolics were false. As an answer to a political problem eschatology was (and is) irrelevant; the Apostolics themselves soon abandoned charismatic experiments as unreliable; liturgy is a pliant servant but a bad source of doctrine. Neither their theology nor their liturgy gave them any fresh insight into the suffering which prompted Chartism. All that mattered was that the human-divine experiment be stopped. The Catholic Apostolic Church was essentially yet another example of how hard it is to relate Christianity and politics sensibly together.

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