

of legal churches. The authorities cannot be pleased with the results of persecution, since religion shows no sign of dying out and, indeed, is now quite strong where it used to be weakest, namely among the intelligentsia. But nowhere does the fact that a policy is unlikely to work ensure that it will not be tried.

Underground religion takes various forms, some of them extreme. There are, or have been, those who never speak; it may be doubted, however, whether this can properly be called an underground movement; such a strange custom could hardly escape notice; moreover, some of the 'silent' have families and it is hard to believe that anyone could try to bring up children without speaking to them; the evidence about this movement comes mainly from Soviet attacks on them, and it seems clear that the information we have is incomplete. Indeed, my only major disagreement with Dr Fletcher's interpretation of the evidence is that he accepts too easily Soviet accusations that various sects cut themselves off from the life of society. No doubt some do, but it is one of the aims of Soviet propaganda to pin violent and anti-social views upon those who may only be protesting against a particular manifestation of the State's power in the affairs of the Church.

The Communist Party's hostility to religion was clear from the start, but it took some time to organize Stalinist power. So the believers

had time to work out secret ways of expressing their belief, before the full rigour of the régime was manifested. In the 1930s we hear of 'a secret village led by a Bishop M., which had links with other underground groups all over the U.S.S.R.' And Dr Fletcher has not assembled all the evidence that could be found for this sort of thing.

It is clear, however, that the distinction between the legal Church and the underground Church is not absolute. When so many actions are forbidden, it is impossible to live without breaking the law. We know from Svetlana Alliluyeva that priests of the legal Church conduct secret baptisms, and Dr Fletcher gives much evidence of a similar kind. Moreover, when believers of the legal Church and of the underground find themselves together in prison or in concentration camps, all distinctions vanish. Personally I suspect that the differences are even more blurred than Dr Fletcher shows them to be.

How widespread is the underground Church? Dr Fletcher is inclined to think that at present the various movements 'consist of a scattered few adherents here and there throughout the Soviet Union'. But no one knows; and how do you count? Are the congregation of a church an illegal group, if they meet secretly simply because their repeated requests to have their old parish church opened remain unanswered?

JOHN LAWRENCE

THE CONCEPT OF MIRACLE, by Richard Swinburne. *Macmillan*, London, 1970. 76 pp. 65p.

This book is one of the new *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* edited by W. D. Hudson. It is brief, clear, and sensible. It concerns itself principally with two problems set by Hume. Can there be such a thing as a miracle, defined as a violation of a law of nature by a god? If so, can we ever have good reason to believe that one has ever occurred?

Swinburne shows convincingly, against the arguments of some modern Humeans, that there is nothing self-contradictory in the notion of a miracle as a non-repeatable, counter-example to a law of nature. He deals effectively with the objection that any alleged violation of a law of nature would at best be evidence that the law had been mis-stated. Though he has a number of interesting observations to

make about the weighing up of historical evidence, he is less persuasive in his attempt to deal with Hume's objection that a miracle-story should only be accepted if its falsehood would itself be something miraculous. In conclusion, Swinburne rightly points out that the question of the creditability of a particular miracle-story cannot be altogether separated off from the evidence from sources other than miracle-stories for or against the existence of gods. It is a pity, however, that he was not able to develop this point at greater length since there is a disappointing vagueness about his final conclusion, that the acceptance or rejection of a miracle must depend on one's *Weltanschauung*.

A. J. P. KENNY