

where the above description is given but no illustration.) It may be said with confidence that this is a quite unknown relic and that it is unique.

(c) In glass, SS Dominic and Peter Martyr are again represented in the fifteenth-century east window of the fine church at Long Melford, Suffolk. (Cfr. Camby, *Suffolk Churches*.)

(d) A screen-panel at Horsham Church (St Faith's), Norfolk, shows a painted figure of St Catherine of Siena; the church dates from 1528.

(e) A fresco said to represent St Thomas Aquinas occurs on the nave pillar of South Berstead Church, Sussex, near Bognor.

(f) Lastly there is the stone crucifix, 4 to 5ft. high, with what appears to be a dragon curled around the base, that was found a few years since, on the site of the Dominican Priory at King's Lynn, Norfolk. This has been placed under the archway of the ruins of Greyfriars within the township, and certainly once belonged to the order.

There may be other similar pre-Reformation treasures to be found in out of the way places; there is for instance one church dedicated to St Dominic and one of the original churches remains (the only one) at Norwich, built about 1460. The nave is 124ft. by 32ft. and the north and south aisles 124ft. by 16ft. It is now known as St Andrew's Hall. Here then is ample material to show that Dominican devotion must have been widespread in England before the Reformation.



GAMALIEL

(Questions should be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs.)

Q. Is it ever permissible for a Catholic to take his own life? I mean of course when the motive is a noble one, not escapism. I am thinking of Bl. Nicholas Owen, who is alleged to have committed suicide in the Tower for fear of giving away Fr

Garnett and other Catholics on the rack. Many members of the Resistance during the last war must have been in a similar position, and were no doubt furnished with the means.

R.W.

A. No, it is never permissible, under any circumstances, or for any motive, for a person to kill himself, because his life is not his own to dispose of, but is at the disposal of God, and in certain circumstances of those with authority deriving duly from God. It has been suggested to me that if a man were lawfully condemned to death, and appointed by due authority his own executioner, he could lawfully carry out the execution. But I would say that a person could no more rightly execute sentence of death upon himself than he could condemn himself to death, and no man can be a judge in his own cause.

But to return to more likely and realistic cases. We must distinguish between killing oneself and allowing oneself to die. It is this latter action of which deeds of heroism are made. I am thinking of that member of Scott's Antarctic expedition—was it Oates?—who deliberately got lost in order to give his companions a chance of getting back. I would not call that suicide, even though the inevitable consequence of his walking away into the blizzard was his own death.

We must also, of course, distinguish between what is permissible and what is pardonable. Suicide, of itself, is a mortal sin, but the state of mind of the person who commits it may well be such as to make it only venial, or even no sin at all, 'if the balance of his mind is disturbed'. I would hesitate to say that members of the Resistance who took poison to prevent themselves being taken alive by the Gestapo were guilty of mortal sin.

As for Bl. Nicholas Owen, I have consulted Fr Walter Gumbley, O.P., and he writes:

Bl. Nicholas was so severely racked and so frequently hanged by his hands with weights on his feet for periods of six hours at a time, that his ruptured body broke and caused a frightful wound in his side. It was given out that this wound was caused by a blunt knife which the martyr used to kill himself with, but the story obtained little credence. It was evidently meant for royal consumption. James I believed it and told the story to the Venetian ambassador, who wrote to his government that the public would not believe it, and attributed the martyr's

death to the tortures he suffered. He adds that the story had been invented to hoodwink the king and stir up his animosity against the Catholics.

Had it been true, Nicholas could of course not have been beatified.

Fr Gumbley also mentions the case of St Apollonia, who anticipated death by throwing herself into the fire which had been prepared against her refusing to sacrifice to idols. A son of St Philip Neri praised her action in a sermon, but St Pius V told him to re-preach it and explain carefully that such a thing could only be done by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost.



REVIEWS

FROM KARL MARX TO JESUS CHRIST. By Ignace Lepp. (Sheed and Ward; 15s.)

It is hard to overpraise this book. Yet I am afraid many will tend summarily to dismiss it as being yet another book by an ex-Communist. Fr Lepp explains with scholarship, with lucidity, with humour and with humility his pilgrimage from marxism to the priesthood. In this account there is a freshness of style and a depth of feeling which are to be found only in the best autobiographies; I was constantly wishing that the author would tell me more about himself, for he must be a very remarkable person.

Four out of six chapters of *From Karl Marx to Jesus Christ* describe his life in the communist party. As a boy he left his unpleasant *bourgeois* family, never to see them again, to become a full-time member of the young communists; later he graduated into an agent for the Comintern, spending nearly a decade wandering round Europe working for this organization; amongst his adventures, he was condemned to death by the Nazis, but, at the very last minute, was reprieved and sent to Moscow; it is typical of Fr Lepp that he devotes only a page and a half to this episode, and even then does not explain how or why he was set free. He finished his communist career as a lecturer in philosophy at Tiflis University; he appears to be able to speak at least five languages, for he remarks: 'I can say from my own experience that anyone who has really mastered three or four languages can learn others almost as a game.'

The chapter dealing with the dogmas of the marxist faith cannot be