

Alan Hasson— kirk, lodge, and jail

ALAN HASSON, who was found guilty in the High Court in Glasgow yesterday of embezzlement and fraud and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, has been described by a friend "as a man of many parts who possessed great intellectual capabilities."

Hasson, formerly minister of Bonhill South and Alexandria North churches, Dunbartonshire, was born in the Tiger Bay area of Cardiff in 1926. His father and mother parted when he was still a young boy and he was brought up by relatives in Inverness-shire.

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Because of his academic brilliance Hasson quickly won scholastic qualifications and graduated from Inverness High School after taking the Higher education certificate at the age of 17.

Before he was 21 he joined the Army, was posted to the Far East, and left military service with the rank of captain. Later he enrolled as a student at Glasgow University where he took an M.A. degree with honours. He then enrolled at Trinity College, Glasgow, and graduated Bachelor of Divinity.

Hasson at that time was a strong supporter of Scottish Nationalism. While at college he wore the kilt and played the bagpipes. He also taught himself to play the piano, organ, violin, and flute.

In 1952, his final year as a student, he won an exchange scholarship to the New York Theological Seminary where he graduated as a Master of Systematic Theology and was regarded as a brilliant student.

When he returned to Scotland he joined the Orange Order, and was soon appointed Grand Chaplain, then Junior Deputy Grand Master, and then in 1958 Grand Master.

At this time Hasson was minister of Bonhill South Church and four years later, in spite of his strenuous activities in the Bonhill Church and the Orange Order, he took over Alexandria North Church. He was popular with most of his parishioners for his energy, his good works to old people, and his zeal for church work.

Hasson memorised the entire works of Robert Burns and was also an excellent swimmer and shinty player.

During these activities and as a result possibly of his military service Hasson, whose seaman father was an Egyptian, became

a self-taught authority on Middle East affairs and politics and claimed on the first day of his trial that he was a counter-intelligence agent of the Palestine Liberation Army.

He regarded himself as an authority on Middle East military strategy.

When he was appointed Grand Master of the Loyal Orange Lodge of Scotland he took to leading Orange parades on horseback. He was regarded as a person who thought of himself as a reincarnation of King William of Orange, riding at the head of a great Protestant revivalist army and described himself during his trial as having been classed as "the equivalent of a Protestant Pope."

During his term as Grand Master he made enemies in the Orange Order because of his strict discipline, insistence on the letter of the constitution, and his love of personal publicity.

During 1959, after he had committed the lodge to building projects and alterations which proved more expensive than he had thought, Hasson said that he evolved a "complex mathematical permutation" so that he could win money for lodge funds from the football pools.

Entries in his bank account showed that he won £3000 in two months, but witnesses in the trial spoke of stakes of £200 and £250 in a week and in one week Hasson was said to have staked £900 on football pools.

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In 1960 Hasson entered the Crichton Royal Hospital in Dumfries when his health broke down. When he was released the Order took court proceedings to prevent Hasson from soliciting loans in their name and he was expelled from the Order.

At the beginning of 1961 Glasgow C.I.D. fraud squad began investigating the financial affairs of the Orange Order and in February that year Hasson, who was then 34, left Glasgow for Canada. His wife and son joined him there the following month and at that time Hasson resigned from his charges in Bonhill and Alexandria for "personal and financial reasons."

Later he became minister of a church in Norwood, Winnipeg, but was banned from the pulpit for upsetting the harmony and unity of the church and padlocked out of the building. He won a court action for the removal of the padlock and resumed his preaching, but in March, 1963, was dismissed for allegedly causing unrest among the congregation.

James Murphy