

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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IN RECENT YEARS a major ecclesiastical controversy has aroused intense interest in France and, indeed, in the continent. It arose over the decision taken in 1953-4 by the Vatican to suppress the French "worker priests," a decision taken by the Pope apparently against the advice of the French cardinals and most of the French bishops, and marked the end, at least for the time being, of an important and daring social experiment — the most important conducted by the R.C. Church in modern times.

To appreciate the full significance of the "worker priest" experiment, the repercussions of which extend far beyond the religious sphere, it is necessary to visualise the current social set-up on the continent, differing radically from anything we are accustomed to here. In Europe there exists an almost complete gulf between the organised Labour movement, and even very largely between the industrial workers, and the representatives of organised religion. In France, the most advanced country among those officially counted as Catholic, the gulf between Rome and the French workers is virtually complete. Further, continental Labour movements are predominantly Atheistic and Marxist by definition. "Christian Socialism" is merely an Anglo-Saxon aberration. In Europe, particularly where large-scale industry has developed, it is broadly true that the working class is pagan and hostile to, or indifferent to, the organised Churches — which in France means the R.C. Church.

## Who Were the Worker Priests?

This state of things constitutes a major problem for the Vatican, and has in fact been one ever since the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 on the Church and the workers. One of the main aims of Catholic Action on the Continent is to bring back the industrial workers to the Church and specialised organisations exist for this purpose. The latest, the most original, and the most daring from the standpoint of the Church, was the Worker Priest movement from the end of the last war to its official suspension by the Pope in 1953-4. They were a group of priests who, while remaining under ecclesiastical discipline, were freed from the normal routine of parochial life and allowed to take industrial occupations. Thus they could not only acquire first-hand knowledge of industrial life and of the more intimate lives of their fellow workers "on the job," but also bring the influence of the Church to bear in an environment from which it had previously been completely excluded and which was virtually closed to the normal ministry of the average parish priest. Such was the intention of the Church authorities who, under the sympathetic patronage of the late Archbishop of Paris, first launched this experiment.

## A Fully Documented Survey

A few years ago there was an English translation of a French novel dealing directly with the Worker Priests, and which in France was something of a "best-seller." (Gilbert

Cesbron, *The Saints descend into Hell*). Personally, the present writer found it prolix and sentimental. However, a much more valuable work on this subject has now appeared which, though probably not a best-seller, is an obligatory source book for the English student. *The Worker Priests*, published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, consists of an elaborate collection of documentary material

bearing on the Worker Priests and their problems from every angle. Here we have the text of the Vatican condemnation, the comments and protests of the Worker Priests themselves, and the reactions of the French ecclesiastical authorities, which were by no means uniform either in

their estimate of the social value of the experiment or in their attitude to the Papal condemnation. Here we have, out of their own mouths, lucidly translated by Mr. J. Petrie, all the essential documents bearing on the complex and dramatic story of the most audacious social experiment ever made by a Christian Church. In view of the controversial problems involved this is an important and timely collection of historical and sociological documents.

## Why were the Worker Priests Suppressed?

The reasons for the dramatic action taken by Pope Pius against the wishes of the French cardinals and against those of the powerful Dominican Order, which was deeply involved in the movement, emerge fairly clearly from the long-winded ecclesiastical phraseology here recorded. While the Worker Priests may have influenced some Communist workers, some of the priests themselves came to display Communist sympathies. Many more, without going as far as Communism, supported more drastic industrial action to remedy the often wretched social conditions of the French manual workers; several, in fact, were actually beaten up by the police in the course of working class demonstrations in the streets of Paris. The socially conservative supporters of the Church in bourgeois circles were alarmed at such actions. There were also personal complications: some of the priests actually left the Church in order to get married! The harsh rule of celibacy introduced obvious complications into an otherwise normal working class existence. Though it does not emerge clearly from the documents here available, the traditional rivalry between the two great Orders, Dominicans and Jesuits, may have played an important part behind the scenes in determining the Pope's final decision, for by one of the paradoxes with which the evolution of the Church of Rome is filled, the Dominicans, formerly the Order which ran the Inquisition, represent nowadays the socially liberal and democratic Order in the Church! As such they were solidly behind the Worker Priests, to whom several of their Order belonged. This was probably enough to induce the Jesuits, the great Fascist Order at Rome, to oppose the experiment, and the Jesuits have a habit of getting the last word at the Vatican. They do not forget Hermann Muller's inspired

VIEWS and OPINIONS

## The Worker Priests

By F. A. RIDLEY

dictum: "The Jesuits do not desire any Jesuit to become Pope, because they assume that every Pope will be a Jesuit." The intervention of the great pro-Fascist Order would probably be decisive with the always pro-Fascist Pius!

### Have we seen the Last of the Worker Priests?

I should myself guess, probably not, for the alienation of

the workers from Rome and from Christianity continues in Europe and, unless arrested, ultimately presages the end of the Church. Desperate situations require desperate remedies. Perhaps some future Pope will reverse the decision of his reactionary pro-Fascist predecessor? Meanwhile, we have an opportunity of learning about them at first hand. in *The Worker Priests* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 25s.)

## The Very Devil

By C. G. L. DU CANN

SELDOM does one read a novel with an entirely novel flavour. (Nothing, indeed, has less of novelty than most novels.) But *Memoirs and Private Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, a forgotten novel by James Hogg, "the Ettrick Shepherd," rediscovered of late years by no less a writer than the late André Gide of France, is such a book.

It is a novel of very great merit and originality. But great qualities are seldom enough to keep book or man alive through the generations, though it is so fabled and believed. There must in addition be other more favouring circumstances. Hogg's masterpiece, in spite of its quality and the great French modern writer's praise, is virtually unknown even amongst those who care for English literature.

What a picture of man's soul it paints! It tells the twice-told tale of a Scottish youth who is an "antinomian"; and and no more scorching satire of the terrible vice of Calvinistic predestination has ever been done. The youth has a friend and mentor whom he half-believes for a long time to be the disguised Czar Peter the Great and a co-religionist of his own. In reality, it is the very Devil himself.

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman, and a young gentleman at that. No stranger — or better — portrait of the very Devil himself can be imagined. It is convincing, which is more than can be said of any other portrait of the Devil, either in Holy Writ or outside it.

And what a strange desperate doctrine is this antinomian doctrine of predestined salvation for the elect alone, saved not by deeds or prayers or goodness, but by capricious grace and favour of Omnipotence alone; salvation so certain that one cannot lose it by the blackest crimes. "I am saved — though I break every commandment and wallow in sin and defilement all my life. Thou art damned — though thou fast and pray and sacrifice all, to, and for, God, and do every duty to God and man all thy life long."

Such is the Creed.

Certainly it seems the doctrine of devils. Certainly it seems the doctrine of madmen and egocentrics.

Never has it been put more attractively — or, I suppose, more accurately — than by the poet Robert Browning in his picture of its founder in *Johannes Agricola in Meditation*.

"He bade ME grow  
Guiltless for ever . . .  
I have God's warrant. Could I blend  
All hideous sins as in a cup  
To drink the mingled venoms up  
Secure, my nature will convert  
The draught to blossoming gladness, fast."

How I wish we all had that sort of nature and "God's warrant," we good folk, predestined to "swarm in ghastly wretchedness" on "Hell's fierce bed" in spite of our virtues, while Johannes Agricola and his elect brood, saved in spite of their sins by the caprice of the Almighty "ere he fashioned star or sun"! We, the damned multitude, whose good words and works avail as nothing, may well envy the few elect whose heinous sins are powerless to prevent their

eternal bliss (including their enjoyment of our horrid plight).

It may sound diabolic and insane. But is this doctrine of the very Devil worse than what we see in Nature? Or is it, indeed, the very same? The virtues of the harmless worm avail it nothing against the hell of a bird's beak; the virtues of the bird, nothing against the cat's claws. And one can continue the unalterable catalogue in the same strain. Which, indeed, rules the realm of life? A loving omnipotent God? Or a malignant, powerful, though not all-powerful, Devil?

On the actual evidence as distinct from the hearsay of tradition and books, one would unhesitatingly say "The Devil." We can truthfully and literally say: "Life, all life, not merely our own, is the very devil." For so it is.

In modern Christianity, less emphasis is placed on the Devil than he deserves. But he is absolutely necessary to the Christian scheme of things. For it is from him and his hell that we need to be saved. Besides, he is vouched for by Holy Writ — though Holy Writ is less esteemed for accuracy by its votaries than it used to be. Again, life as it exists, screams of the existence of the "lesser god" — the Devil.

In my earliest days on earth, when I was rather less than a month old, I, in my baptism, "renounced the Devil and all his works" — indeed, I went further and gave up "the pomps and vanities of this wicked world and all the sinful lusts of the flesh." I do not recall these renunciatory activities of mine (by proxy) which strike me today as an unnecessary gesture, if I am to be damned in spite of renouncing them! Fair is fair after all; and it is surely unfair to cheat a poor babe by giving him damnation in return for his renunciation of the Devil and all his works.

Nor need I have renounced the pomp and vanities, for few of them (relatively speaking) have come my way. I was premature over the sinful fleshly lusts, for one has only to live to be 80, 90, a hundred or more (as I am in process of doing) for those lusts to give one up.

Certainly I see little use in my infantile renunciation of the Devil, as I see he continues in spite of my giving him up. (I should prefer that he should have renounced me.)

If the Devil did not exist (we may say, parodying Voltaire) it would be necessary to invent him. But if we did invent him, neither we, nor even Poe nor Baudelaire could do it more credibly than James Hogg (*The Ettrick Shepherd*) has done. I will neither renounce, nor denounce, James Hogg's devil; rather will I praise him as true to life and as being the Very Devil Himself.

A 46-year-old man at Glasgow was sentenced to two months' imprisonment for slashing women's skirts with a knife. Appearing in court to speak on his behalf, a minister said that he had the highest opinion of him "as a worthy member of our church and the active secretary of the men's group." So he seems a pretty decent sort of chap, after all! This worthy Christian said that he was prepared to undergo psychiatric treatment. We are not quite sure if he is volunteering for the psychiatrist because of the offences or because of his religious beliefs. Either way he certainly needs treatment!

# The Atom Through History

By G. H. TAYLOR

IF ANYONE WERE TO WRITE the life story of the almighty atom he would discover its first conception born in the mind of one Democritus 2,500 years ago. He would find the idea accepted by some of the contemporaries of that now remote Greek thinker, and then fall into almost complete oblivion till the 17th century A.D.

Another two hundred years later saw the atom as the great bone of contention between religion and its materialistic opponents. Hitherto an irreducible mystery, the doors of the atom were finally opened and its furniture explored, culminating in two big bangs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 A.D. The plaything of the philosophers had become the terror of mankind.

Handicapped by lack of instruments, lack of information and lack of scientific method, the atom theory of Democritus represents the first genuine attempt by the mind of man to explain things without recourse to supernatural or otherwise fortuitous agency. He may truly be described as the earliest of the great philosophers. He does not escape the charge which can be made against philosophers in general, that of making gratuitous assumptions, but he made the minimum possible having regard to the time at which he lived.

Born in the middle of the fifth century B.C., he is said to have lived to the age of 104, and this is credited by so reliable an authority as A. B. D. Alexander in his strangely titled *Short History of Philosophy*, which nevertheless runs to some 700 pages; fascinating ones, fortunately! Some authorities more sceptically kill him off at 90.

"Nothing comes from nothing," said Democritus, "and nothing is ever annihilated." The only things that exist are atoms separated by space, and their behaviour strictly follows deterministic causation; everything occurs from causality.

If, then, only atoms exist, how do all the varied things happen which we see around us? Where is colour, where is thought, where is music, in this apparently senseless dance of atoms? According to Democritus, every atom was like every other atom, except in size and shape. The differences between them were merely quantitative, never qualitative. How, then, does quality emerge? It comes about, says Democritus, through the movements of these atoms surging through space. They collide and pursue their separate ways. Or they impinge and stick together. Or they coalesce and exist in a kind of overlapping harmony. Or, perhaps more importantly, they combine.

But if they are all falling in the same direction how do they ever contact one another? His answer (yet another fortuitous assumption) is that they deviate.

Throughout this stern scheme there is never any conditioning coming from within the atoms themselves. What they do, they do because they meet. The eventual result is soul-atoms, mobile and life-producing.

The atoms in their collections yield what can only, I think, be called "emanations" of some kind, and by these emanations, according to our philosopher, images are thrown off which create impressions on the soul-atoms which constitute the perceiving mind, and in this way the secondary qualities gain their franchise. (Here he anticipates the 17th century philosopher Locke with his primary and secondary qualities. cf. *Essay on the Human Understanding*, 1690.)

Boyle in the 17th century, and then Dalton at the turn of the 19th, introduced the atomic theory again, and it was adopted by chemists in western Europe. Physicists then

began to speculate on the possibility of the atom being composed of particles, and in 1815 Prout significantly suggested that atoms of hydrogen were the basis of all others. In his *Handwörterbuch der Philosophie* (1910) Dr. Eisler names 20 physicists, from 1840 onwards, who held the dynamic or energist theory of the atom, including Faraday, Oersted, Ampère, Cauchy and Carnot; and Lange, in his *History of Materialism*, adds others. Prof. Lester Ward, too, refers to the "dynamists"<sup>1</sup>, who resolved matter into centres of force. There was also Sir Wm. Crookes' "prothyle," of whose particles he supposed matter to be constituted, while in 1891 Dr. Stoney invented the word "electron" for the particle of electricity, and two other investigators, Larmor and Lorentz, independently suggested that these electrons were the long-sought constituents of the atom. The term electron was applied to the "corpuscles" which Sir J. J. Thomson in 1897 found to be ejected from the atom.

Haeckel and Buchner both regarded atoms as composite, the latter advising that they were somehow compacted of ether, and "consisting of units of a higher grade."<sup>2</sup> Haeckel's disciple, Ostwald, who in 1910 became leader of the *Monistenbund*, championed energism, with energy as the ultimate principle in the universe, so as to allow for the inherent dynamism of the stuff dealt with in physics.

It may, we think, further be claimed that every old materialistic writer recognised matter as active and not inert, force and matter being inseparable. If we go back to the 18th century we find La Mettrie contending in his *L'Homme Machine* that mobility is added to matter, von Holbach maintaining in his *Système de la Nature* that matter carries its own principle of motion, and Diderot, author of the famous *Encyclopædia*, holding that through the activity of matter "the great musical instrument we call the universe plays itself." As Russell observes, "Every scientist with even a tincture of philosophy was ready to admit that the hard little lumps were no more than a technical device. In that sense materialism is dead, but in another and more important sense it is more alive than ever it was."<sup>3</sup>

To proceed from the fact of the porosity of matter in analysis to the inference that matter has lost its solidity is surely unwarranted. Canon Streeter<sup>4</sup> argues rather obscurely that since matter is not solid it may not be any more real than our thoughts. He would doubtless be one of the first to maintain that our thoughts are real.

But if matter is not solid, what is? What does "solid" describe? Has it suddenly become unscientific to find in the aggregate a different behaviour (solidity) than in the bits (giving a kind of dotted emptiness)? We can still retain our notion of matter as solid while fully recognising that the individual atoms can be treated only by probing instruments which discover porosity at this lower level.

(To be concluded)

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|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) <i>Dynamic Sociology,</i> | (3) <i>The Scientific Outlook</i> |
| <i>Living Matter</i>          | (4) <i>Reality</i>                |
| (2) <i>Force and Matter</i>   |                                   |

—NEXT WEEK—

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN

A REVIEW

By F. A. RIDLEY

## This Believing World

**We knew it would come one day.** At one of the ITV religious talks recently in which two parsons gaily gave their experiences in spreading the Light to a thirsty world, one of them told the story of a very earnest woman evangelist trying to bring some young soldiers to Christ Jesus. When one of these told her he was an engineer and built bridges, she asked him if he knew who was the greatest builder of bridges the world had ever known. As he admitted he didn't know, she triumphantly declared—"Jesus Christ, for he bridged Heaven and Earth"! This even caps Jesus as the greatest boxer the world has ever known—for did he not knock out a bunch of moneylenders all by himself in the Temple?

★

**One of the first questions** most expectant mothers ask at the clinic now is "Is my doctor a Catholic?" They know perfectly well that all Catholic doctors are bound by the declaration of the Pope that, if a choice has to be made between the life of the mother or the child, all Catholic doctors must allow the mother to die—and this against the wishes of the husband or of the mother. This is a nice state of things, is it not? Fortunately, every woman can decide for herself, and tell a Catholic doctor to take his services elsewhere where his infamous creed and the Pope are welcome. But it would be most interesting to learn what Catholic women think about it?

★

**Naturally, our journals have been** bombarded by Catholic doctors trying to justify themselves. They have to act according to their conscience, which is, of course, in absolute harmony with the Pope. If a choice has to be made, they would all most cheerfully allow the mother to die. That is the plain policy of their Church, and it acts according to Divine Orders. So they put the blame on to God. It reminds one of the way Peter is described in Acts as murdering Ananias and his wife and then blandly telling everybody that God did it.

★

**The Rev. A. C. Bowell thinks that by the time** boys and girls leave school they should have "a faith strong enough to withstand the temptation of materialism and the exploitation of sex-appeal." Well, why have he and his like so drastically failed to implant this wonderful faith in our boys and girls? Goodness knows, they have every opportunity. The BBC, TV and ITV never cease their strident appeals to everybody to come to Jesus; and all the Churches move heaven and earth to keep Freethought not only off the air, but do their best to keep Freethought literature out of booksellers' shops, as well as out of all public libraries.

★

**The truth is that only by boycott and misrepresentation** can religion flourish—and even then, people have to be almost whipped into action to defend their faith. How does Mr. Bowell—who is the Vicar of St. Andrew's, Sudbury, Middlesex—propose to deal with materialism, that is, scientific materialism? And as for "sex-appeal"—does he really think he can suppress it by "faith"? What a lot these parsons have to learn!

★

**For example, another of them** is the Rev. J. C. S. Chamberlain of Christ Church, Shooters Hill, who offers two explanations for our bad summer weather. He claims that it might be a well-deserved punishment for H bomb tests; or it may be due to a physical explanation in which so many radio-active particles are let loose at every explosion.

He obviously prefers to think that "it would be only natural that the world should receive punishment for using life-force of the universe for torture, death, and destruction." The punishment comes from God—but it would be useless to point out to Mr. Chamberlain that his "explanation" is only a variation of the way people used to talk of thunder and lightning as the visible and aural expressions of God's anger, whatever the cause. It will take centuries to expunge some kind of animism from a parson's make-up.

★

**Now that more and more people are secularising Sunday,** more and more people are discovering that after all Sunday is *not* the Sabbath Day. The latest is a Scoutmaster, a Mr. J. R. Capon, who tells the readers of a parish magazine that "the Christians of the New Testament would never have made that mistake." Better late than never, of course, but will Mr. Capon convert his fellow Christians? Never! They will never, if they can help it, relinquish any Sabbatarian law, any more than they will abolish the out-of-date Blasphemy Laws. But Mr. Capon was not really attacking any violation of the Sabbath Day. All he was concerned with was defending Royalty for making the most of a good time on *Sunday*. Perhaps, if the Queen patronised a switchback railway on a Sunday morning—that would really make Sabbatarians squirm.

## The Rising Generation

### XIII—ISRAEL IN EGYPT

THE STORY of the unfortunate Israelites enslaved by the beastly Egyptians makes racy reading in Exodus, and all Jews and Christians are taught in its historical truth. But like so many things in the Bible, there is not a scrap of evidence for it. No archæologist or expert in Egyptian history has ever discovered a trace of the Israelites in the land of the Nile *as described in the Bible*.

As fiction, the story of Joseph and his brethren is a little masterpiece, but there is no evidence whatever that it is anything but fiction. No trace whatever has been found about him or his brothers or his father Jacob in Egyptian records.

It is claimed in God's Infallible Word that when Jacob went to Egypt he had with him 70 people altogether, and that in 430 years they had grown to number about three millions. This enormous increase has generally staggered our statisticians but, as most of them never question the Bible, they swallow it as a genuine miracle.

But one problem does worry them. Exactly how long were the Israelites in Egypt? Exodus says it was 430 years. That is the plain meaning of "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." Josephus, however, cuts this in half, and says that it was 215 years. And no one knows which is right except those of us who see in the whole story the usual Hebrew myth.

When the Israelites were ready to leave Egypt after the Ten Plagues had broken Pharaoh's heart, they had "600,000 fighting men" and they all ran away. One would have thought this huge army could have put up a fight, but perhaps they were unarmed and had no stores. Still, it is interesting to learn that they and their wives and families all managed to get out of Egypt in *one night*.

In a land of reality it would have taken them six months. But where myth and miracle rule the events anything can happen. And the story of Israel's sojourn in Egypt is unadulterated myth.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World", or to our spoken propaganda.

SENDERS of Manchester Evening News article. Thanks. Will deal with it.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON and SHEPPARD.  
Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.  
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.  
Platt Fields, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and others.  
Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.  
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.  
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE. Tuesday, October 2nd, 1 p.m.: Debate, "Materialism." For: T. M. MOSLEY. Against: The Rev. K. L. WAIGHTS (Methodist Mission).  
Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bristol Downs).—Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: DAVE SHIPPER.  
West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, September 30th, 11 a.m.: Mrs. MARY STOCKS, B.Sc., "Radio, Press and Public."  
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 2nd, 7.15 p.m.: Panel Discussion, "On Finding a Personal Philosophy." VIRGINIA FLEMING, R. H. CORRICK, WINIFRED L. GEORGE, G. E. O'DELL. Special occasion.

## Notes and News

We hope that all Freethinkers in the London area will make a special effort to attend the "Freedom on the Air" meeting in the Caxton Hall on Wednesday next, October 3rd, at 7.30 p.m. It will be held under the auspices of the Humanist Council and the speakers will be Mr. E. M. Forster, Mrs. Margaret Knight, Miss Kathleen Nott and Mr. Reginald Sorensen. Mr. Joseph Reeves will be in the chair. Written support for the meeting has been received from Dr. J. Bronowski, Lord Chorley, Miss Jacquetta Hawkes, Dr. Gilbert Murray, Mr. J. B. Priestley, Lord (Bertrand) Russell, Mr. Francis Williams and the World Union of Freethinkers. The following motion will be put at the close: "This meeting regrets that the Governors of the BBC have failed to provide adequately for the needs of a large body of secular opinion which would welcome the expression of fundamental humanist convictions. It calls the attention of the Governors to the recommendations of the Beveridge Committee in this respect, and asks that they shall be implemented."

ONE of our overseas readers, Mr. M. G. Clarke, of Northern Rhodesia, wishes to obtain works by J. M. Robertson, particularly *Pagan Christs* and *Christianity and Mythology*, and T. W. Doane's *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*. Will anybody who can help please write to this office? \*

THOSE who have correspondents in the United States will be familiar with the purple 3 cents postage stamp from that great secular republic showing the Statue of Liberty marred by a halo of the words, "In God we trust." More recently, insult has been added to injury in the franking process. The latest letters we have seen bear the request "Pray for peace." Both of them, ironically enough, came from the American Rationalist Association. But the Association denies all responsibility. \*

WE have just heard of the death, on August 27th, of Professor Y. Ruutu, Chairman of the Finnish Freethought Union and Chief Editor of its paper, *Vapaa Ajattelijä*. Professor Ruutu was a regular reader of THE FREETHINKER and had written a personal letter to Mr. D. Shipper only a few days before his death. He will be greatly missed by his family and colleagues, to whom we send our sympathy. \*

THE Archbishop of Milan recently used a hoist to lift him to the ceiling of Milan Cathedral. A little supernatural levitation would surely have been more in keeping with the occasion, his object being to procure the Holy Nail from Christ's cross. He took the nail—or should we write it Nail?—from a reliquary kept under the arch of the central nave of the cathedral, for the traditional Procession of the Nail through the vast church. The story is that a Roman smith used the nail to shoe the horse of St. Ambrose, patron saint of Milan, who recognised this Nail as one from the Cross. During the ceremony the Nail is placed reverently on the High Altar, where solemn Mass is said, and afterwards shown at the entrance to the faithful, who are then permitted to feast their eyes on this wondrous object for three days. Lucky people! \*

SOME months ago Mr. Aneurin Bevan raised a minor storm by suggesting that near-empty churches should be used for cultural and recreational purposes. On a small scale, however, this is already being done. A church at Hastings recently became a fishermen's museum and we now hear that at Blackwood (Mon.) a former Primitive Methodist chapel now houses a "Little Theatre."

## SHAKESPEAREAN QUIZ

1. Who said: (a) "If to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned"; (b) "I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not so patient"; (c) "For my voice, I have lost it with hollaing, and singing of anthems"; (a) "Nay, that's past praying for"?
2. Who said of his daughter: "Would any of the stock of Barabbas had been her husband, rather than a Christian!"?
3. What is the missing name: "... lay on, —; And damn'd be he that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'"?
4. Who died saying: (a) "O true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die." (b) "Now my spirit is going; I can no more." (c) "The rest is silence"?

C.McC.

(Answers on page 315.)

# Highland Devil Worship

By REV. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A.

AT REGULAR INTERVALS there issues from the most northerly outpost of Great Britain a howl of outraged disapproval against some expression of free thought and action in the remainder of the country. The howler is the *Monthly Record*, the official organ of the Free Church of Scotland, whose adherents are derisively known as the "Wee Frees." Who are these "peculiar people" with their barbarian beliefs and immoral 15th century B.C. standards of conduct?

The origin of the Free Church of Scotland dates, strictly speaking, from the year 1843, when there occurred the famous rift in the history of the Scottish Protestant Church known as the "Disruption." For many years previously the Church had been unofficially divided into two main parties, the Evangelicals (dubbed by their opponents the "High Flyers") and the Moderates. The Evangelicals were fanatical Calvinistic killjoys, fulminating against every kind of secular amusement, and desirous of reviving the "repentance stool" for fornicators on which the full-blooded Robert Burns and Jean Armour had once confessed their irregular intercourse. The Moderates included men of such culture and tolerance as the celebrated Rev. Alexander ("Jupiter") Carlyle, who in late 18th century Edinburgh had the reputation of being the best dancer in the city, and who could drink most of his tavern cronies under the table. Such behaviour, of course, drove the Evangelicals frantic with holy wrath and, in 1843 at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland the majority of the ministers left the hall and formed the "Free" Church. The ostensible cause of the secession was the abuse of the system of "patronage" by which, it was alleged, many ministers were appointed to parishes against the wishes of the congregations. But the leader of the rebels, the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, though a sincere man according to his lights (which, however, were not over-bright) was bitterly opposed to what he called "the substitution of morality for religion" by the Moderates, and patronage was clearly only the surface excuse for this far-reaching action.

The disruption continued until the end of last century, the Free Church rarely failing to uphold the narrowest orthodoxy. To illustrate this it is only necessary to recall the famous heresy "trial" of the Rev. Robertson Smith, Professor of Hebrew at the Free Church College, Aberdeen, and one of the most brilliant scholars of his day. In 1875 there appeared the 9th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and Smith, who was entrusted with the article on the Bible, had no difficulty in showing that the books of the Pentateuch were completed many hundreds of years after the death of their alleged author Moses, that the Psalms were mostly anonymous, having no connection with King David, that Isaiah did not prophesy the birth of Christ, and that the Synoptic Gospels were non-apostolic digests of spoken and written apostolic tradition. The horrified consternation among many pious Free Kirkers at these shocking heresies, promulgated by one of their own professors, can readily be imagined, and after a prolonged "trial," Smith was expelled from his chair. The decision, however, was by no means unanimous, and when, in 1890, two further clergymen were "acquitted" on a similar charge, a few ministers and a considerable number of communicants and elders, shocked at the liberal tendencies which appeared to be developing, seceded to form the Free Presbyterian Church.

Ten years later, the great majority of the Free Church members amalgamated with the Church of Scotland, but a

fanatical minority almost exclusively confined to congregations in the north-west of the country held out and retained the title of the Free Church (the "Wee Frees" from henceforth to their adversaries). The Free Presbyterians, however, refused to rejoin the now "reformed" Free Church, arguing with some justice that they were the true "faithful remnant" since they had detected the abominable heresies of the parent body a decade sooner. To this day the Free Presbyterians and the Wee Frees (with churches often cheek by jowl in Highland villages) are deadly enemies, whose ministers and members refuse to recognise each other's existence, thus providing outsiders with much ironic enjoyment over such a wonderful display of Christian charity in action. The doctrine and manner of service of both churches is identical, the only discernible difference being that while the "Wee Free" minister wears a normal clerical collar, his Free Presbyterian counterpart sports a white tie. It is therefore necessary only to discuss the modern "Wee Frees," who are certainly the more numerous and vocal of the two fanaticisms.

Their churches are generally of an appalling ugliness and spartan simplicity. Organs are regarded as an invention of Satan (on what grounds is not quite clear), so doleful metrical psalms led by the precentor in place of hymns are chanted, the congregation sitting for these and standing for the interminable prayers. It is quite normal for a service to last three hours, the fire and brimstone sermon occupying about a third of that time. The Christmas and Easter festivals are abhorred as Papist manufactures with no foundation in Scripture, their place being taken by twice-yearly Communion, when the normal Sunday gloom is extended for five days. No secular activities of any kind are permitted to Wee Free members on Sundays (miscalled the Sabbath) and these include recreational walking, the cooking of meals, and, of course, the reading of literature other than the Bible (which, of course, includes the *Song of Songs*, much more sexually stimulating than the *News of the World!*) and the *Monthly Record*. The Church is quick to condemn the flouting of "God's law" by any person no matter how exalted. Thus, the minister of the Free Church at Stornoway recently declined an invitation to meet the Queen on her visit to Lewis because "she entertained on the Lord's Day those avowed atheists Kruschev and Bulganin" and because "since then she has persistently violated the Fourth Commandment by attending polo matches on various Sabbath afternoons." Nor do those fanatics confine their outbursts to the field of religion. The August issue of the *Monthly Record* contained a violent attack on the "irresponsible" strikers in the motor industry, and rejoiced that the House of Lords rejected Mr. Silverman's "sentimental and ill-advised" anti-hanging bill.

How much influence do these dangerous reactionaries wield? Over their own congregations their sway is almost absolute. A Highland shopkeeper, for instance, who was rash enough to express openly any criticism of Wee Free doctrines or who persistently failed to attend church, would soon find himself out of business. Nevertheless, from private conversations, I have gathered that many nominal "Wee Frees" regard their Church's teachings, so curiously at variance with the average Highlander's kind and tolerant nature, with the abhorrence they merit. But lack of education, combined with a superstitious ingrained fear of "the man in the manse," unfortunately prevent the development of any overt "revolt." Last year, British Railways were forced to withdraw the ferry service connecting Skye

with the mainland on Sundays solely because of ecclesiastical outcry, though a few brave Skymen did protest against this gross infringement of human liberty in the columns of *The Scotsman*.

The late James Bridie, in his brilliant satire on Highland religion, *Mr. Bolfry*, aptly pointed out that the "Wee Frees" are essentially devil worshippers. Their god is the ferocious tribal idol of the early Old Testament returning evil for evil (hence their support of the death penalty) and consecrating the seventh day. Their morality is sub-Christian in the sense that the spokesman of the Sermon on the Mount and the Jesus who broke the Sabbath would have been abusively denounced by the *Monthly Record* had it existed in the first century A.D. in Palestine. A freethought "mission" to the wilds of northern Scotland is urgently required to liberate the inhabitants from the stranglehold of this modern manifestation of ancient savagery.

## Facts for Freethinkers — 14

**Forbidden and Secret Societies**, by Rev. Lawrence L. McReavey, J.C.D., M.A. Catholic Truth Society. 16 pages. 4d.

THE SPECTACULAR COVER of this pamphlet shows a white-headed head in melodramatic Ku Klux Klan style. Coming, as it were, straight from the horse's mouth, the pamphlet exposes Catholic mentality.

As to the right of the Church to make final and irrefutable judgments on other bodies, the Holy Father maintains that it is fully entitled to act as a sort of Divine Guide because it was

"instituted by Christ as the one complete, self-sufficient, and necessary society in the spiritual order (dis-order? D.S.) with a divine commission to bind and to loose, to teach and to guide; in a word, to organise and direct the social and personal life of her members in the manner best calculated to bring them to their eternal salvation. For that is the final end to which everything in life was designed by God to serve as a means, and to which, in consequence, everything, human freedom included, must be subordinated."

Even the State, "though independent in its own sphere," must shape its policy ultimately in the same way as the Church, because "man's temporal good is subordinate to his eternal good."

To prevent men using their "free-will" imprudently it "is the duty of the Church" and "within its own sphere" the State also, "to restrain them by warnings" and, if necessary, "by prohibitions and penalties." Of course, each of us still has his "free-will." We are not "forced to go to Heaven." We are free "to take the road that leads to Hell." However, "God wants the road signposted by the public authority and even to be declared officially closed."

Two Canons of the Code of Canon Law summarise the position regarding "lesser societies" quite clearly. Canon 684 tells us that

"The faithful are deserving of praise, if they join associations erected, or at least commended by the Church; but they must beware of associations which are secret, condemned, seditious, or suspect, or which seek to evade the legitimate vigilance of the Church."

Secondly, Canon 2335 states:

"Those who give their names to the Masonic sect, or to other associations of the same kind, which plot against the Church or legitimate civil powers, incur by that very fact an excommunication which is reserved, in the simple manner, to the Holy See."

The Freemasons have been long branded by the Roman Catholic Church and were banned as long ago as 1738, by Pope Clement XII in an Apostolic Letter. A renewal of this condemnation came from Pope Benedict XIV in 1761, Leo XII in 1821, Gregory XVI in 1832; and by Pius IX (who never spared himself) on four occasions. Finally, Leo XIII gave us a lengthy denunciation in the encyclical *Humanum Genus* in 1884.

The principal objection, it would appear, is to the

"secrecy which prevents her (the Church) from exercising her legitimate function of vigilance" and although some Masonic Lodges may seem to engage in cultural and philanthropic activities, "culture and philanthropy are not the final objects of human existence, and their pursuit cannot compensate for a radically false view of life." Although English Freemasonry recognises "the Great Architect of the Universe," a "vague Deism" is not a substitute for "the one true religion of Christ."

Other societies which have incurred similar condemnation are the Italian *Carbonari* (by decree of the Holy Office, 1821) and the Irish or American *Fenians* (by decree of Holy Office, 1870).

If a society is secret, but does not scheme against the legitimate civil authority or the Catholic Church, it may still be condemned, but its members will not incur excommunication. Nevertheless

"by a recent decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, anyone who plots against legitimate ecclesiastical authorities (or) strives in any way to overthrow their power (or) participates directly or indirectly in such an attempt, incurs excommunication, reserved in the special manner to the Holy See."

By a decree of the Holy Office, July 1st, 1949, membership of the Communist Party is forbidden "under pain of grave sin" and those who "go so far as to profess its materialist and anti-Christian doctrines incur excommunication by reason of their apostasy from the Faith."

Societies which promote "the union of Christendom" were denounced in a Holy Office letter of 1864, which "required the English Bishops to instruct the faithful not to join an interdenominational society, founded in London, 1857." This society had "a completely false conception of the Church, as consisting of three branches, the Roman, the Greek and the Anglican," all with "an equal right" to call themselves "the true Church of Christ."

This was bound to "foster religious indifferentism." The R.C. Church is, naturally, "anxious for Christian unity." But she "cannot approve a movement based on the denial of her claim to be the one true Church." "Unity can only come by the return of the dissident bodies" to "the one fold," under "the one shepherd."

Societies banned "Under Pain of Sin" include the Odd-fellows, Sons of Temperance and Knights of Pythias, and these condemnations "apply equally to the Rebekahs and Pythian Sisters," which are "affiliated female versions." Spiritualist societies were condemned in 1917, Theosophic societies in 1919, and the Friends of Israel Society "was abolished and prohibited by decree of the Holy Office, 1928."

Another classification is that of "societies declared suspect or deserving caution." The two "most publicised examples" are the Y.M.C.A., named as the principal villain among "modern non-Catholic organisations" in a Holy Office circular letter of 1920, and the Rotary Clubs, forbidden to clerics by a Holy Office decree of 1950. Some Freethinkers may conclude that the practising Catholic is forced to lose some of his elementary freedom. But, remember, many of these associations represent a "real danger to faith or morals" and Catholics "cannot hermetically seal themselves off from contact with non-Catholics." They must be "alert to the many dangers inevitable to life in the largely pagan world of today" and must not "expose themselves to such hazards rashly or unnecessarily."

D. SHIPPER.

## ANSWERS TO SHAKESPEAREAN QUIZ

1. They are all sayings of Falstaff.
2. Shylock.
3. Macduff.
4. (a) Romeo; (b) Anthony; (c) Hamlet.

## Keir Hardie

THE CENTENARY of the birth of Keir Hardie has resulted in a plethora of cant in the local press. Biographies of most people are not to be relied upon, and the writers generally write of a man and woman as they would have liked them to be. Of course, all the writers did their utmost to point out that Hardie was a very religious man.

I knew Keir Hardie well, and he was a good man, but he was certainly not religious in the supernatural sense. Like most politicians, he recognised that the power of the Non-conformist conscience was strong in the Merthyr Borough, and his opportunism was forced upon him, for he well knew that without that aid he would never have won his seat. Not since Charles Bradlaugh has any radical or socialist shown contempt for religious politics and utilised genius and oratory to such an extent that although the religious leaders fought hard at Northampton to keep him out, he succeeded in convincing even the most religious voters that he was the man for them, and in politics we shall never again see a man of the character of Bradlaugh, who treated opportunism with contempt and won. Most politicians fight for principles, but few live up to them, and with Bradlaugh, although his pockets carried no weight, his opinions did, and with his work still lives.

Far from being a Christian, Hardie was a Freethinker. He was reared as a Freethinker in a Freethinker's home. His father and mother were members of the National Secular Society, and both were buried under its auspices. His grand old parents saw to it that he had a good moral education without the cant and the hypocrisy of religion. None of the writers mentioned the humiliating end of Keir Hardie, which took place during the first World War. A meeting was being held at the Market Hall at Aberdare. Hardie was the speaker. His subject was "War Against War." So war-mad was that audience that Hardie had no chance to speak. The mob broke open boxes of cake flour, the property of a market man, and pelted Hardie and his few supporters to such an extent that they were covered in flour from head to foot, and had it not been for the presence of some Freethinkers, bodily violence to Hardie would have been certain. Poor Hardie! I saw tears in his eyes that night, as we escorted him to his lodgings. He never spoke again in public, and shortly afterwards he died.

The ways of the mob are mysterious. They cheer today, but tomorrow they crucify. The socialism that the mob had voted for had vanished under the power of the illusion of patriotism and glory, and the mob that night was led by a socialist and miners' leader named C. B. Stanton, whom the coal miners returned to Parliament at the war election with a huge majority, and supporting Stanton at that hooligan meeting was a young, full-blooded and lustful priest, who was acting in combination with the swindler Bottomley.

Soon after the war, this full-blooded priest was charged at the assizes with raping two little girls aged 12, but owing to his great work during the war on behalf of God and the Empire, he was forgiven upon volunteering to go into a monastery for five years. The press knows that for the mob, fiction about Hardie is of more value than truth, and of course it is, from the money standpoint.

PAUL VARNEY.

### OBITUARY

We regret to announce the death, at the age of 75, of Janet Maloney, of 35 Queensville Road, Balham. Mrs. Maloney, who had been ill for a long time, was a keen Freethinker and—like her husband—a regular reader of this paper. She was buried at Streat-ham Cemetery on September 22nd, when the Secretary of the N.S.S. read a secular service. We extend our condolences to Mr. Maloney and his daughter.

### SUPPORT THE HUMANIST COUNCIL'S CALL FOR "FREEDOM ON THE AIR"

at the Caxton Hall (York Hall), London, S.W.1  
on Wednesday, October 3rd, 1956, at 7.30 p.m.

(Doors open 7 o'clock)

Speakers will include

MARGARET KNIGHT                      KATHLEEN NOTT  
E. M. FORSTER, C.H.                  R. W. SORENSEN, M.P.  
CHAIRMAN: JOSEPH REEVES, M.P.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

### THE CHURCH AND MAMMON

The article by Seamus, the *Church and Mammon*, seems to me to call attention to the task of the criticism of religion in our day. A great deal of the climate has changed and interest has certainly evaporated in such matters as the details of Biblical criticism or the niceties of theological dogma. These matters, which formed so much of the historic controversy in mid-Victorian days, are now the specialised occupation of the few. In our day, various subjects have moved over in their study into their context within social relationships and religious issues are among them. The approach to freethought which needs vivifying both in theory and practice in my opinion is that which deals with the social and economic background of religion; the type of work which Professor Tawney has put in on the Reformation period needs extending over the whole field. The article in question, for example, seems to show that the Church of England, on its organisational side, is little more than an economic-political racket which will perform any of the tricks or contortions of big business when it suits its purpose. But how far is this true of its parallel in every age? Church history needs to be read dialectically. Once this has been done, it falls into its proper place and we are able to understand and withstand in practice the type of bishop or dog-collared ex-stockbroker mentioned in the article, busy with the methods of mammon, and using them to prop up a failing business in the world of today.

ANDREW PEARSE.

### MORMON COLOUR BAR?

I believe it is a fact which has escaped general notice that the Mormons have what appears, on the face of it, to be in effect a colour bar. Apparently *anyone*—in theory—may become an Elder if he gets "the call of God," but it is strange that none of the 16 million negroes in U.S.A. has yet heard this special call.

A. T. GRAHAM.

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