

ICONOCLAST

FOR MILITANT ATHEISM & RATIONALISM

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NO POPERY IN BELFAST ?

The city of Belfast, now experiencing the upsurge of discontent against Popery led by the Rev. Ian Paisley, is one of the few cities where the Protestant faith makes a mass appeal. One has only to imagine excited crowds rallying on the streets of Chicago or Manchester, Stockholm or Durban, in defence of the 39 Articles or any other aspect of the Protestant faith, to realise how isolated Northern Ireland has become from modern secular opinion. The poor old Protestant faith, so kicked around by modern opinion, and even taking a hammering from its own bishops, has its militant devotees yet, and when a few of the old slogans are called out and a few old banners are unrolled, any demagogue may have his day in the once militantly revolutionary city of Belfast.

The latest in the line of Williams of Orange is the Rev. Ian Paisley, who has so upset the solidly Unionist government by protests against its concessions to Popery, that he has gone to prison. The "liberals" have all and every one thrown their little pile of dirt at the reverend gentleman. He is rousing old passions, he is upsetting a nice ecumenical applecart, he is another Hitler. Everyone with whom one disagrees who can get an enthusiastic crowd where one cannot is, of course, to be compared with Hitler. It is however doubtful if Hitler could ever have got an enthusiastic meeting in, say, Hamburg before his rise to power (and then, only with the presence of armed might). Why are the Belfast "Proddies" rallying to Paisley, and to anyone who can wave the old banners, and particularly if they can attack the Establishment for cowardice as well?

It can only be because the Roman Church does present a menace; and if the words "No Popery" seem a trifle musty of the history-books, that is not to say that "Popery", especially in its up-to-date form of Catholic Action, is any different. It is, indeed, a menace so far as the living standards of Northern Ireland are concerned. Britain and the U.S.A. have the "Catholic Action" infiltration into trade unions which is there for one purpose: to strengthen the status quo and help keep down living standards. This is too great a luxury for Northern Ireland, never far off unemployment. It must also reckon on the low living standards of Southern

Ireland, where masses of the dispossessed will normally stream over the border. As to whether Church rule has kept Eire poor or Eire's poverty has permitted Church rule to continue is an academic point to them: they see Roman infiltration into Church matters on a par with immigration into Northern Ireland.

Unionist dictatorship. Playing upon the fears that are economic as much as religious, the Unionist Party has kept in power for years, the one corner of the United Kingdom where Conservatism rules supreme in an industrial city. It no longer does so without opposition and its power is maintained by gerrymandering of votes and boundaries, no less than open police state methods. All in the name of religion, of course!

A little anecdote illustrates the nature of Belfast's religion. An Arab went for a job in the shipyards (this is alleged to be true). He was asked his religion and replied, "Moslem". "Oh," queried his prospective workmates. "But are you a Catholic Moslem or a Protestant Moslem?" He looked bewildered. "We do not have these distinctions in Islam" he said. They in turn were bewildered. "Well," asked one. "Do you have a King or a President in your country?" "A President," he replied. "Out you go, you bloody Papist!" they shouted.

The future of Belfast. There is always one great fear in the mind of loyal Belfast industrialists, and that is that one day the "Catholic" and "Protestant" working people will get together. They will never do it whilst they accept divisive labels, and only the outright rejection of religious tags will bring them together. The day that the city dwellers are indifferent as to the divisive religious labels tagged on them, they will also have forgotten their "origins" from either side of an imaginary line, and stand together as they did in the heroic days of Wolfe Tone and others. When that happens, the Rev. Ian Paisley will gladly share a pulpit with the Papal Nuncio to denounce them. A.M.

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EDITORIAL:

Understanding the Conflict

A recent article by "Father" D. Lyons, Society of Jesus, printed in the Roman Catholic Journal "The Faith" (July/August 1966 issue) in Malta, was headed "Understanding the Conflict". Bearing in mind the controversy now fairly raging in the ranks of the Secular League, we have considered it not inappropriate to allow this follower of the meek, lowly, humble etc. etc. carpenter-god from an under-privileged part of the globe, to give us his views on "understanding the conflict". We are certain that readers will find it most illuminating.

Of course the conflict referred to by Mr. Lyons, S.J., is that currently being waged between the United States Armed Forces and the Vietnamese unarmed peoples; whereas we refer to the age-old conflict between secularism and religion. That is, the understanding of Catholic Action in Vietnam is a reason for militant atheism.

Roman Catholics and the Secular League have at least one thing in common. We are both non-political bodies! (The Church will only pronounce on matters political "when they affect the faith", and similarly we only do so when they affect human beings!) Therefore, in strict accord with the Vatican's policy of political neutrality we find the following theological abstraction of "Father" Lyons of interest to our non-political group:-

"The policy of deterrents is the only justifiable policy in a world where we (the Roman Church) are the sole obstacle to the communist goal of world domination".

"The only way out is to win..But America lacks the will to win, if the present policy (i.e. bombing women and children, use of napalm, bacteriological warfare techniques, presumably) is any indication... But the Communists know America's Achilles Heel; they know she has no policy of winning. Nor has she had such a policy since World War II." (i.e. presumably since it last resorted to atomic weapons, and will not have a winning policy until she does use them).

But how does this affect Catholic teaching on matters of faith and morals? Our Jesuitical advocate of "turning the other cheek" goes on to explain:

"Some senators are reportedly pleased with the unreasonable demands of the Buddhists (like wanting to live in peace, direct their own affairs, etc.) because a new coup there 'may leave an opening for an American withdrawal'. Excuses can be found for pulling out. But if America does, it will be surrender. If she pulls out she will be causing other wars of so-called liberation. Thailand will be next. Whether Malaysia, Formosa or the Philippines would follow is almost too terrible to contemplate."

So much for theology. Now for the Christian solution to a human problem. Based, of course, on the reasoning above: "to win the war, the harbour at Haiphong must be put out of commission, the industry around Maupit must be destroyed, the dykes in the Red River Delta must be smashed. To win the war the enemy must be defeated.

"Ho Chi Minh will not give up any easier than Hitler did. The only way out is by winning, and to do so, sanctuary cannot be contemplated. In order to win, the other side has to lose."

Certainly "Father" Lyons' advocacy of the old Nazi principle of total war makes one wonder whether this disciple of the "gentle Jesus" is boasting in stating "Ho Chi Minh will not give up any easier than Hitler".

We see no reason to doubt the sincerity of "Father Lyons, of the Society of Jesus". Presumably he believes in doing unto others what he would like others to do unto him. But then he thinks bombed children go to heaven.

LONDON SECULAR PRESS

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Review:

by F.A. Ridley.

CONTEMPORARY PAPACY 1878/1950

Recently, I happened to come across a small work on the modern history of the Papacy, written by a French author, M. Marc-Bonnet.* This small work of 135 pages does not, of course, attempt to cover the entire nineteen hundred year long history of the Papacy inside this modest compass. More circumspectly, the author wisely limits himself to its most recent period, 1878-1950, from the accession of Pope Leo XIII to the death of Pope Pius XII. M. Bonnet's book was published in 1959, and consequently before the Second Vatican Council and the "Papal Revolution" inaugurated by Pope John XXIII - (1958-63). It must be said at the start that this is an excellent little book, completely objective in character, even when, as so often, it deals with a highly controversial issue; for the author nowhere intrudes his personal bias and his book is, consequently, more comprehensive and more informative than many much larger and more pretentious volumes on the modern evolution of the Papacy. In the ensuing paragraphs, I shall deal successively, as far as my limited space allows, with some of the more important aspects of the modern Papacy alluded to in the course of this work.

Six Modern Popes An important point, one also made a few years back by the Protestant author Leo H. Lehmann, emerges very clearly from this instructive survey. For whilst an essentially traditional organisation, the Vatican is by no means an entirely monolithic one. This basic distinction emerges quite unmistakably from even a cursory survey of the six successive incumbents of the Papacy throughout the eighty years so concisely surveyed in this lucid narrative.

For as both Lehmann and our present author demonstrate, there are always two, as we might term them, rival parties contending for effective supremacy within the Vatican precincts, particularly at Papal elections; the "diehard" fundamentalist tendency, hostile to all and any fundamental change, and a relatively liberal one, prepared to move with the times, sometimes in a very drastic and surprising way as was proved by, say, Pope Leo XIII's remarkable Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" (May 15th 1891) when, as I once termed it, the Middle Ages at long last ended in Rome. And after the end of the period covered in this book, by the then quite unexpected changes inaugurated by Pope John and his Vatican Council. Of the six Popes here in presence, Leo XIII himself (1878/1903) who as the first Pope elected since 1870, was also the first Pope who did not rule over a secular Italian state, and his former Minister Dalla Chiesa (Benedict XV 1914/22) can be qualified as rather cautious liberals. Whilst Pope X (1903/1914) can equally be qualified as a "diehard" of the narrowest type, that is, in the religious sphere, for in questions of purely ecclesiastical administration, he was a radical reformer, "the second founder of the Curia", as our author terms him. Pius XI (1922/39) and Pius XII (1939/58) can perhaps most accurately be termed as "mixed grills"; ultra-reactionary in some ways, particularly in political and social matters, whilst comparatively liberal in the administration of the church itself; for example, Pius XI created the

first coloured Bishop, whilst Pius XII, for the first time since the Reformation, created a non-Italian majority of Cardinals in the Electoral College for the Papacy.

The Papacy & Society It seems to be rather unfortunate that most historians of the Papacy tend to concentrate upon the theological aspect of the Vatican, whilst they tend to ignore its also chequered and intriguing sociological evolution. In this respect, our French author constitutes a happy exception, for he deals equally objectively with other non-religious aspects of recent Papal evolution. From the purely theological angle, there was not actually much to report between Vatican Council I. (1869/70) and Vatican Council II (1859/65), neither of which fall within our author's limited field. Though it is true, Pius XII created a new dogma, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (1950), whilst at the same time rather paradoxically permitting the acceptance of biological evolution as a "permissible hypothesis"! During this period, the only real highlight of a theological character was the rise of the "modernist" movement within the Catholic Church itself at the turn of the century, despite a drastic repression by Pius X., when the Pope roundly denounced "this compendium of all heresies" (1908). The level of this Pope's own biblical scholarship can perhaps be gathered from his surely "inspired" comments that "the Hebrew Patriarchs were comforted in their afflictions by the promise of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin"! But from the angles provided by contemporary politics and sociology during the period covered by these pages, the evolution of the Papacy (1870/1958) was both stormy, varied, and marked with drastic changes. The first, and perhaps most far-reaching of these changes, was provided by Leo XIII's encyclical letter "Rerum Novarum", which provoked much hostility amongst conservative circles in the Church, for it is even reported

(Continued on p.4)

(Continued from overleaf)

that certain conservative bishops ordered prayers to be said for the "happy death" of the Pope!

Papacy & Fascism Since 1878, the Vatican has varied considerably in its current relationship with the contemporary social order and state. Perhaps again, the highlights of its chequered evolution were provided by the successively varying relationships with Communism and Fascism. For while the Church began by supporting the Russian Revolution (1917), as I demonstrated in my book "Pope John and the Cold War", under Pius XI it turned violently against "godless bolshevism" which remained for the rest of the era covered in this book Public Enemy No. 1 of the Vatican (N.B. - in the present era of "ecumenical dialogues" between the Church and its critics, a new chapter in Catholic-Communist relations has perhaps re-opened?) As our author shows in what is perhaps the most interesting part of this book, the mutual relationship between the Papacy and the Fascist Empire (in particular, with Hitler's "Third Reich") represented an uneasy compromise between the Vatican's support for Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, as its political and military saviours from international communism, and its hate and fear, in particular of Hitler's "Third Reich" as a kind of political anti-Pope, or perhaps even anti-Christ?

However, the ultimately decisive factor in this relationship lay in the field of power politics, since Hitler alone possessed an army, which (at least before 1941) appeared to be strong enough to smash Russia, then still Public Enemy No. 1. of the Vatican. It was primarily with this fundamental aim in view that Cardinal Pacelli, the former Papal Nuncio at Munich and Berlin, and the German expoert at the Vatican, was elected Pope in 1939, on the eve of war, and it was again to this end that the German hierarchy eventually supported the invasion of Russia under the banner of the Swastika, even though Pius XI had previously denounced this as "a cross which is not that of Christ" and "the symbol of a new pagan empire that raises a mere mortal (viz, Hitler) to the level of Christ". As our author does not fail to note, after the collapse of the fascist empires in 1945, the Vatican continued to display equal enthusiasm for "democracy", again for the same reason, for since 1945, America succeeded Germany as the contemporary bulwark of the Vatican against Communism after

its vast expansion since 1949 in both Europe and China.

Towards the universal Church.

Perhaps the most important change,

at least of long term importance, during the period we have covered (1878/1958) lies in the steady internationalisation of the Roman Catholic Church itself. For prior to 1878, no members of the Catholic hierarchy were created, either from non-European races or even from the American. But since 1882, when Pope Leo XIII created the first Cardinal from the U.S.A. (McCabe of New York) the Church has been steadily widening her racial boundaries, a process that incidentally has gone on much further since this book was published.

For our author informs us that between 1878 and 1958, only eighteen cardinals out of about 300 were from races outside Europe. The first "coloured" cardinal, a Chinaman, was created by Pope Pius XII. in 1946, and under the same Pope this process was followed on several more occasions.

Now that Rome is no longer a temporal power, the author concludes with the reflection that the Church will in future concentrate its rate of expansion outside Europe, now obviously a declining force in world affairs. He also adds that recent changes in the conclave would appear to make the eventual election of a non-Italian Pope an ultimate certainty.

It only remains to congratulate the author upon his outstanding summary of this recent and remarkable period in the long evolution of the Papacy.

* La papauté contemporaine, 1878/1950, by Henry Marc-Bonnet (Presses Univ. de France)

News Comment:

DON'T CRUCIFY THE BEATLES!

"A wave of protest", as they say in the newspapers, is sweeping America on the eve of the Beatles' visit. "Ban the Beatles!" - one after another radio and T.V. station joins in. Why? John Lennon said the Apostles were "thick and ordinary" (you expect Galilean fishermen to be hip and cool?) and while Jesus was all right, the Beatles were more popular than he was. Sacrilege! Sacrilege! screams the Voice of Godfearing America in defence of God Almighty (thus proving John Lennon's point). When did John Lennon say this? On the eve of his American tour? (Not likely!) Back in March 4th we read of it in the Guardian, and it provoked here a few smiles (even the "War Cry" merely said "Don't knock the Christian Church, John Lennon"). Really, the U.S. is becoming much too possessive about God.

THE DEBATE CONTINUES

"Bourgeois" & "Proletarian" Atheism:
Is there a distinction?

From Eva Ebury

It is difficult to deal with Mr. Thomas in his answer to me; I frankly admit I do not understand what he means; perhaps he will give quotations from the historians who classify history into two historical epochs, bourgeois and proletarian!

Perhaps he will also answer my question relating to the religious compulsive that has played so great a part in workers' revolts. Christianity itself was established first among a down-trodden populace, not indeed to urge to revolutionary action, but as a revolt against the accepted ideology of the ruling classes, with the hope (born of despair) that in a future state recompense would be found for its wrongs suffered here. I have already conceded to him the point that, as Christianity rose to power, it became the ready weapon of suppression used by the ruling classes. The French statesman, Necker, put it in admirable words, "The more the increased taxation keeps the people in dejection and want, the more essential it is to give them religious education, for it is in the restlessness due to misfortune that there is most need of stout fetters and daily consolation".

This is, however, only one side, the whole pattern is far less simple. Turn the medal, and we find Waldo, John Huss, John Ball, the Fifth Monarchists, Thomas Münzer, and even "The Elder Brother of Jesus Christ" (referred to in John Millar's article last month) leading their revolutionaries under the banner of Christ. The New Jerusalem to be here on earth, in Languedoc, Bohemia, Britain, Germany and China; the oppressed to come into their own; equality, liberty and fraternity!

And yet, when this did become the slogan of a revolutionary bourgeois class, the religious compulsive was absent. Why? If not because of the writings of a Voltaire, the Encyclopedists, the satirists, those bourgeois atheists and deists whose works had knocked the stuffing out of the image of a benign god who dealt everlasting torment and disobedience. That revolution was successful and pointed the way of success for all succeeding revolutions; not god, man must fight his own battle. Where the old religious compulsive is present in revolutionary attitudes, they fail. The organised peasant demand for justice in 1905 Russia, duped by priest and ikon, ended in disaster. The struggle for Irish freedom has been

politically consummated but economically thwarted, bedevilled by priestcraft, and superstition. The Freedom Marchers of today in the Bible Belt chant "God is on our side, we will overcome"; pathetic faith, so blind, when will they ever learn?

Oppressed peoples will rise; they do not need our encouragement. Their need is to see clearly their way and their goal to avoid false ethics and false hopes of divine assistance. Our task as a secular movement is to try to fit men for economic emancipation by mental emancipation. It was Marx who said that the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism. Freedom to criticise the "obvious absurdities" of the religious ideologies, was a necessity of the rise of the bourgeois class. Why should the working class discard so potent a weapon in their struggle for emancipation? It is not the "dross in our thinking" that Mr. Thomas should condemn but the cod's wollop that is served up in the school and by radio as divine instruction.

From James Humphrey

Eva Ebury was perfectly justified in suggesting that your ideas should be dressed in "less dated terminology". In the article referred to, the word "bourgeois" appeared 28 times; "proletarian" was used 21 times, and "revolution" 15 times. A number of vague terms such as "proletarian ideology", "revolutionary bourgeois" also appeared in the same article in the May issue. One that was missing was "man the barricades, comrades!" After reading this "analysis" as you called it ("reiteration" would have been a better word) anyone acquainted with Mr. F. A. Ridley would have thought that he had suddenly joined the Communist Party. Compare that with the article he has in this month's "Iconoclast" and the educational value of the latter is immediately evident.

It was taking advantage of your position as editor to write a distorted reply in the same issue (an old bourgeois trick) as that in which Mrs. Ebury's letter appeared. You commenced by stating "Mrs Ebury ... seems to deny the existence of economic classes in present day society". But Eva Ebury does not seem to deny anything of the kind. What she does say is: "As religion functions as the cement of class society, let us pick away at that cement with whatever tools are available, and welcome attacks on superstition from every angle from your contributors and League members". (Cont. on p. 6)

Continued from overleaf.

She also asks the pertinent question, "When did ridicule cease to be the most potent weapon against absurdities?" But you did not answer the question! Maybe you were called to the telephone, or perhaps you are unaware of the significance of the question?

We are then taken for a ramble through almost a full column, into the realms of phantasy where almost every sentence is nonsensical prognostication in language not befitting a secular journal. These begin with "in fact, if we are to believe her..." But what happens if we are not to believe her? The word "believe" used by a secularist in this context is strange indeed, and in the Iconoclast is out of place. Ecclesiastical humbugs and members of Parliament say "I believe" in this sort of context when they don't know; it is an escape expression.

One last request. Perhaps you would be good enough to explain what you mean by "bourgeois secularism" and proletarian secularism. Are they two different kinds of secularism? This question if answered will be of great interest.

* * *

From Albert Meltzer

It is hard to know what Eva Ebury is objecting to. She points out that religion played a part in working-class and peasant movements before the rise of capitalism, and that the bourgeois secularists were revolutionary in their time. Surely this is common ground? One could equally say that the industrialist played a revolutionary role. She in fact answers Mr. Humphrey's question as to "what is bourgeois secularism?" but we cannot of course go back to the days of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists. The French bourgeoisie today send their daughters to convent schools and give fat cheques to Catholic politicians, not because they are more credulous than before, but because - faced with another rising class - they found that religion was an essential bulwark to them just as it was to the Bourbons. That class then becomes the rebels against authority and rejects religion (hence the expression "proletarian secularism" and where it differs).

When exactly was satire the "most potent" weapon against absurdities? One suspects even in the Golden Age of Aristophanes a cleverly worded epigram was not the surest defence against a swiftly welded brickbat! It may be argued that reasoned analysis vies with satire as one of the weapons against absurdities; but when the Nazis carted

away professors and satirists to the concentration camps for deflating the absurdities of Aryanism, few could say that any purely literary exercise was the "most potent" weapon against them (moral axioms as to pens and swords notwithstanding). It was, as in Warsaw, a fair choice: "to the barricades" or "to the gas chambers, comrades!" - which has the merit of being "up-to-date" at least!

(Joe Thomas will answer criticisms and sum up next month)

"CRIME AND BANDITRY
DISTRESS AND PERPLEXITY "
can be decreased
by opening up an enquiry into the
Panacea Society.

The Camden Branch of the Secular League gives notice that it intends to apply to various newspapers with an advertisement stating that it has, in a box, the results of the 1967 Derby, the winning lines for Littlewoods Pools, and a Premium Bond that will receive first prize of £25,000 in January. One guinea fee will be requested. This advertisement will be fraudulent, but advertising managers will be requested to state their reasons for refusing same.

These reasons will be placed before the Press Council, together with published advertisements of the Panacea Society who allege that "crime and banditry" etc. will end when Johanna Southcott's box is opened. The Press Council will also be asked whether advertising managers are aware:

- whether the box does exist;
- whether the promoters sincerely believe in the panaceas advertised;
- what is the purpose of the advertisement?

Nobody is invited to join; on the contrary, the Society keeps alive on legacies which it does not wish to share with newcomers. Is it inviting the bishops to open the box? It would be cheaper to write to them. Or is it merely pretending that the cult still exists, in order to justify retaining certain not inconsiderable assets that otherwise might fall to the Public Trustee or the Charity Commissioners?

It should be pointed out that the Press Council have already barred certain advertising that proclaimed panaceas; this advertisement is always subtly worded in archaic fashion so as not to make any specific promise (what is "distress and perplexity" anyway?) but if there is no box at all, it lies.

News Comment"Freethinker"

JESUS WEPT

Admitting that "it is indeed an incredible story. One of the most incredible of all time", the News of the World, 24th July and following week, tells us the story of a thirty shilling crucifix of Christ which is weeping, presumably over the sins of mankind on which the News of the World is a source of constant information.

No Reservoir The crucifix was bought from a Hoe Street, Walthamstow, newsagent, Mr. David Glass, who sold it for thirty pieces of silver to a Mrs. Walker, who presented it to her faith-healer, Mr. Alfred Bolton, who noticed that the eyes were weeping, and called in the News of the World, and scientific investigation, as well as our old friends the Psychical Research Society. The scientists confirmed that there was "no reservoir" in the cross.

What are we supposed to assume? That in fact the crucifix does weep? This is hardly Christianity, one would have thought; indeed, if Mr. Glass had lost thirty bob from the till, we doubt if he would have accepted the argument that Abraham gave Terah - a saucy "perhaps the image took it". He would have been more likely to call in the police than the Psychical Researchers.

The weeping crucifix follows many famous Fleet Street stories (e.g. the famous one of the photograph taken when flying over the Alps, which showed the mountains in the form of a bearded man's face. It was Christ! It could equally well have been George V., Huxley or Dickens, but "it made atheists believe" and Christians worship). More particularly, it follows on the story of the "People" only a week before, when a photograph taken in an abbey showed the outlines of a ghost, and again obliging scientists proved there was "no fake". Psychical researchers might care to investigate the phenomenon of something mystical turning up in the News of the World every time it turns up at the People. Ghosts in one are followed by weeping Jesuses in the other. It is too remarkable to be explained by coincidence and the possibility of collusion can definitely be ruled out.

The Ku Klux Klan Reading of the Civil Rights struggle in America, one would suppose that the entire clergy supported the Negroes. It is however the fact that the solid South presents a solid Methodist front that is, if not completely identified with the Ku Kluxers, in close accord. Churchwarden and klan wizard are often the same person. But no "liberal" comment makes this clear. As long ago as the 'twenties, H.L. Mencken pointed out "the

clatter about the so-called Ku Klux Klan is typical (of taboos on discussion in the U.S.A.) The astounding programme of this organisation was discussed in the newspapers for months on end, and a committee of Congress sat in solemn state to investigate it, and yet not a single newspaper or Congressman, so far as I am aware, has so much as mentioned the most important fact, to wit, that the Ku Klux Klan was, to all intents and purposes, simply the secular arm of the Methodist Church... the intimate relations between Church and Klan... must have been plain to every intelligent American"

(Prejudices)

Billy Graham's campaign, aimed at the nonconformists, was not directed at the West Indians who now fill London's nonconforming churches and represent a good 50 or 60 per cent of the congregations of London's free churches. It is all very well to go out to Africa and convert, but when one has to consider one's Southern Methodist backers, one strictly leaves alone Negroes in a Caucasian country. They can find their own way to God (whom, one trusts, is Caucasian too).

In the autobiography of Malcolm X, just published, he refers to the biggest headache U.S. Christians now have; so complete is the identification between what is called "Uncle Tom" attitudes ("Quislings" in relation to white authority) and Christianity of all brands, not only are increasing numbers of American Negroes turning to Islam, either the old-fashioned brand of Mohammed or the new-fangled crackpot brand of Elijah Muhammad, but almost all Negroes in prison who have suffered injustice automatically switch over.

Negroes & Islam The credo of Elijah Muhammad is fascinating to read. He believes the world was all inhabited by the Black Race but that a mad scientist, Mr. Jakub, bred a race of white devils on the Island of Patmos, who enslaved the black man. His credo is neither more nor less fantastic and ridiculous than, say, Mormonism (which is Black Islam inside out); not much more absurd than Christianity itself. But it is easy to see how crackpot someone else is. He at least is breaking down the identification of Negro with Baptist.

Review

THE LORD'S DAY

by Charles Hunter

"Mrs. Grundy: Studies in English Prudery" (Peter Fryer)

In Mr. Peter Fryer's splendidly documented work (published 1963), there are two chapters of special interest to Freethinkers - "Day of Gloom" and "Misery Martin versus the Twentieth Century". Mrs. Grundy is the unseen "heroine" of Thomas Morton's play "Speed the Plough" (1798) and Mr. Fryer has cleverly utilised her to show readers what certain aspects of British prudery can look like when thoroughly analysed.

The "day of gloom" was of course the British Sunday and as it was impossible for Christians to torture, burn alive, or imprison other Christians for not keeping the Sabbath Day holy as the centuries rolled on, the "authorities", that is, the Christians in charge all over Britain, did their utmost to make Sunday a day not of rest, but of horrible misery. After all, Jesus was always depicted in picture and story as the "Man of Sorrows" so there was a good precedent. Nobody has ever depicted Jesus smiling (his principal expletive being nearly always garnished with the word "Woe") and Christians were early taught that the Lord's Day, which was also called the Sabbath Day, had been adroitly changed from the Jewish Saturday to the Pagan Day of the Sun; and it was, so to speak, God help any Christian who thought he could laugh on the Day of Rest, or indulge in anything but hopeless misery.

Indeed, the secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society was only too pleased to be called "Misery" Martin, and was never happier than when he found how easily he could compel Christians to be miserable on a Sunday.

It was William Wilberforce, the man who abolished, as far as possible, slavery in England early in the nineteenth century who preceded Misery Martin in the latter's holy work. It was he who in 1787 caused the Privy Council to issue a proclamation "which prohibited playing at dice, cards or any other game on a Sunday, either in public or private houses, and which urged the enforcement of laws against excessive drinking, Blasphemy, Profane Swearing and Cursing, Lowliness, Profanation of the Lord's Day, or other dissolute, immoral Practices... loose and licentious Prints, Book and Publications, and the selling of refreshment during the time of divine service." Wilberforce's reputation rests on his fight for the abolition of slavery, but it will come as a surprise to most people that he did his utmost to fasten the fetters of misery on his fellow-countrymen which in many cases could be

as bad as those on slaves, and all in the name of gentle Jesus, meek and mild. Of course, it may have been the French Revolution which goaded him to fight against slavery, rather than his Christianity, and if so, we can perhaps understand him a little better.

In any case, the Lord's Day Observance Society was founded in 1831, and (thank God) it still persists in all its miserable glory in 1966, but perhaps not in all its dismal hatred of happiness. The Sabbatarian laws were passed not without some sturdy opposition. It was an Irish landowner, Sir Thos. Agnew, who led the Sabbatarians in Parliament in 1832 and earned the description which a fellow-member of Parliament said of him: he... hanged his wicked cat on Monday
Because she killed a mouse on
Sunday.

The Sabbatarian adults did not always have it their own way, but they had no difficulty in "passing the buck" to their poor little children, who for many of their young days had to submit to the torture of a complete repression of any happiness on a Sunday.

The first real break of the appalling misery inflicted on the country by enforcing Sabbatarian laws came with the First World War, in spite of the fact that almost every officer and sergeant-major in the three Services was an out-and-out Sabbatarian. Woe betide any unbelieving soldier who asked to be excused "Divine" Service! But, once a man was out of camp on a Sunday, he used his freedom to the utmost. His Christianity was blown to the winds. However, after the war, Misery Martin came to the rescue and was able to bring back at least some of the dismal and depressing laws so dear to the Sabbatarian. We still have many of them even now. (They have even managed to stop children using park swings on a Sunday!)

Mr. Fryer's splendid book tilts at all kinds of Christian abuses with a freedom denied many previous works. If Mrs. Grundy were alive today, she would not merely be horrified at its freedom of expression on prohibited subjects, but she would learn that those of us who value liberty uncensored if possible, can no longer rely on "our Lord" for guidance. We can go forward to a freer world, the world of Freethought, or at least of free thought; and breathe freely and unhindered a tolerance and a freedom unknown in the days when Christianity was powerful, and little could be done to change it. The work of Freethought may still be necessary, but we are winning all along the line.