

## THE MASON AND HIS OATH

THE first chapter of *Darkness Visible* is concerned with how Mr. Hannah obtained his information on the Masonic ritual and secrets. With the accuracy or otherwise of his results I am not concerned, as the point is of the smallest importance. An unpleasant and dishonourable smear which vitiates the integrity of the whole book is contained in this chapter, however, which admits almost as an afterthought that two "Christian" Masons read and checked the manuscript of the Ritual disclosures. I rather suspect that the dedication ("To Lionel — an Operative Stone-Squarer") may give another clue to Mr. Hannah's real but unpublished sources of information. It would be interesting to know who Lionel is, and why he should be accorded the dubious honour of having the most vicious book of the century dedicated to him.

In the third chapter, on "Masonic Obligations", the author attempts to justify his baseness and complete absence of the most elementary sense of honour by attempting to prove that oaths solemnly sworn on bended knee on the Holy Bible are not binding in conscience! Could perfidy go further? Is not this chapter, bolstered up with argument which even a Jesuit might envy, enough in itself to justify the Bishop of Chichester in unfrocking Mr Hannah forthwith? Even more surprising is the fact that Dr. Demant, Regius Professor of Pastoral and Moral Theology at

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Oxford, has so far forgotten his high position and responsibilities as to declare that it is difficult for a Christian to take these Masonic Obligations without being guilty of vain or rash swearing. Mr. Hannah quotes this authority with obvious glee, but they neither of them explain how a solemn obligation, willingly entered upon in full realization of its solemnity, sealed on the Word of God, and in the presence of God in a consecrated Temple could possibly be described as either vain or rash. Is nothing sacred to our calumnious detractors?

But let us meet Mr. Hannah on his own ground. He makes a great play of the fact that the oaths do, in fact, contain certain penalties which are equivalent to a sentence of death, and that they are indeed sworn by the sincere Mason "without evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind". Do they mean what they say, or do they not?

Rightly interpreted, they do mean quite literally what they say, and no Mason has ever yet, to the best of my knowledge, shown any qualms in taking them. Hence why should the non-Mason worry?

Certainly it is not for us to exact the penalties, strongly as the Mason may feel that the violation of a most sacred and solemn oath may be a worse crime than murder. We leave the issue in God's hand. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord". The oaths nowhere indicate how or in what existence the punishment must be met. Nor is it for us to speculate on the nature of the tortures of hell, the

existence of which, however, is clearly stated in that same Word of God on which the initiate humbly and trustingly takes his oath in the course of a ceremony which may well be for him the most sacred and solemn moment of his earthly life. The faithless Mason who has betrayed this sacred trust may well live out the remainder of his life, unhappy and miserable in conscience, a scorned outcast of men who prize virtue and honour above all worldly considerations; he is unlikely in our present state of civilization to meet a violent or unnatural death, but by his sacred compact with Almighty God in the Lodge he deliberately forfeits all hopes of salvation by his heinous crime. Mediaeval artists and sculptors have depicted the tortures of hell with torments no less frightful than those which the Mason declares are his rightful due should he prove a traitor. The Church has never disowned such representations as "ludicrous", "unreal"; or "posterous"—why then should Mr. Hannah apply these insulting epithets to those solemn and sacred words with which the Freemason hallows his life to the service of the Great Architect of the Universe, and to his brethren in Freemasonry? God is our Heavenly Tyler with the two-edged sword, and it is in His Holy Name that the oaths are sworn.

This point of view may sound harsh and vindictive, but the Christian may well remember that there was no forgiveness for Judas who betrayed his divine Lord, Judas preferred evil to good, which is the ultimate sin against the Holy Ghost. Masonry is actively engaged

in perpetuating the work of Our Lord today, and in making its members more Christlike. To betray this order, then, "more honourable than any other order in existence", is in a sense (and I weigh my words carefully in making this grave accusation) a sinning against the light. And Mr. Hannah in encouraging and in making use of such shamefulfulness is equally as guilty as the perfidious betrayer.

One hears it lamented on all sides today that the moral fibre of our country is weakening, that the honour and the word of an Englishman are no longer what they were in the world's esteem. Masonry stands as an impregnable bulwark of these eternal values, and any attempt to undermine her sense of truth and honour or to minimise the binding nature of her oaths can only be looked upon as a satanic and fiendish attack on decency and integrity, and a lowering of our national prestige to that of the Latin Catholic races of backward Europe.

not dream of questioning their complete loyalty to the Craft, for it is their version of Christianity, not their masonry which is at fault, and longer experience of Masonic principles as I have already explained, can often exert an extremely wholesome influence on belief as well as on character.

Yet there is a danger, very remote and embryonic at present, which must be carefully watched, and its implications fully understood. Absurd and fantastic as it may sound to the great majority of the Brethren, there are curious rumours afloat to the effect that there are Churchmen in the Craft who would like to see certain "reforms" in our workings in order to meet the totally ill-formed objections made in *Darkness Visible*.

Believing in complete frankness and honesty, I must admit that such reports might be useful in assuaging rather disingenuously any future agitation engineered by our enemies in Convocation for the insult of a Church inquiry. But it would hardly be honest, as it must be quite apparent that no such alterations could possibly be brought about, and that it would be a disastrous capitulation of principles if they ever were effected in any way that would narrow the basis of the Craft to include only professing Christians, or alternatively that would omit the religious element altogether, and reduce Masonry to the level of a benevolent society.

Nothing is perfect, and there is always room for legitimate development and improvement. It is pos-

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## A MASON LOOKS TO HIS LANDMARKS

I TRUST that I have now satisfactorily proved that Freemasonry is not a religion in any sense of the word that could conflict with a reasonable, tolerant, and liberal interpretation of Christianity as held by the Church of England. And yet it is undeniably true that we have within our ranks a smallish minority of Brethren (particularly a sprinkling of "Anglo-Catholic" clergy attracted to us doubtless by their love of ritual and their hope of making closer contact with their parishioners, and an even smaller number of extreme Evangelicals), whose outlook on Christianity is as narrow and unenlightened as Mr. Hannah's. Indeed it is our boast that under our banners are ranged men of all faiths and all schools of thought, and no religious differences or discussions may ever mar the harmony of the Lodge, for here is a true and fraternal unity of all believers, the only one in the world. I am speaking as a clergyman, not as a Mason, however, when I say that in the case of these few extremists it is difficult to understand how they can pray together in the Lodge with those whom they believe it wrong to pray together in their Churches, to recognise in Masonry the validity of other conceptions and titles of God which they bigotedly reject in their own Churches in the context of their idea of Christianity. Logic, however, is not an outstanding characteristic of the British people, and it is, after all, entirely their own private affair, and as a Mason I do

sible that certain clauses in the Solemn Obligations might be re-phrased to emphasise their symbolic rather than literal character. I for one, however, and I think most of my Brethren, would deeply deplore any such tinkering with these relics of antiquity. Grand Lodge of England has no official Ritual as we all know, and no precedent for enforcing one. Efforts to obtain uniformity in the past have resulted in failure, and it would seem that the obstacles in the way of any such alteration, even were it desirable, are almost insuperable.

Any major alterations in emphasis which would give any satisfaction or support to Mr. Hannah's or Dr. Box's ignorant views would be unnecessary, unthinkable and disastrous. Fortunately they would also be quite impossible for they could not be effected without removing or altering our precious and sacred landmarks, which are constitutionally both irremovable and unalterable. Every Past Master in particular will remember his Obligation on Installation to preserve these intact. Article 55 of the Constitutions on *Irregular Propositions* stipulates that if any resolution before Grand Lodge itself contains anything contrary to the Landmarks, the Grand Master shall refuse to permit the same even to be discussed. Hence it is difficult to see how the question could be raised at all.

Although in England the majority of Freemasons are also Christians, or if not formally so, are at least heirs of our Christian civilisation, and because the Grand Lodge of England has a certain primacy of

honour as the Mother Grand Lodge of the world, the Freemason must never forget that the Fraternity is world-wide and fundamentally non-sectarian. Any attempt to modify in any way this absolutely basic landmark would be for a majority to abuse its responsibilities to the minorities elsewhere. For the Jews, the Moslems, and the Hindoos have just as much (or as little) right to suggest that Freemasonry be modified in other respects to conform with the sectarian tenets of their faiths as the Christian has that it should conform to his.

Our Landmarks indeed are our guarantee of unchanging continuity and unalterability, our guarantee of the one-and-the-sameness of Freemasonry as spread over the surface of the globe, as binding upon us as the Volume of the Sacred Law itself. Even the suggestion of their alteration in dealing with the religious emphasis of the Craft would arouse bitter resentment from the rank and file against the Church at a moment when everything should be done to restore harmony, allay fallacious misgivings, see the unseemly agitation in its proper perspective, and forget it altogether. Any other course would be to sacrifice the wisdom of the ages to the folly of the moment; even if this policy involves a certain number of resignations and a closing of the ranks. It is to be hoped that nothing will be heard of such changes, which would only give importance to a sporadic outburst of spite and petulance far better dropped quietly into the limbo of forgotten things.

## A MASON'S CHARITY

"PURE religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this," wrote St. James, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction . . . Ye see then that by works a man is justified."

Here, then, more than in any wrangling over creed and dogma with which Freemasonry will have nothing to do, is the ultimate, the incontrovertible answer not only to *Darkness Visible* but to every snarling cur that has ineffectively yapped at the heels of the Masonic fraternity, to every outburst of venom and spleen insidiously oured forth from our insignificant calumniators. And it is not our answer, but the answer of God Himself in the Volume of the Sacred Law.

Benevolence and charity are impressed upon the Freemason no less than the sacred dictates of honour and morality. One of the first lessons impressed on the initiate in a singularly dramatic fashion is the profession of this virtue, which "has the approbation of Heaven and earth, and, like its sister, mercy, blesses him who gives as well as him who receives." They are indeed truly Masonic ornaments, and no other institution has done more for the widow and orphan, the sick and the destitute.

Nor are we content with mere words, with stressing Charity as an ideal and a virtue only. For, to quote St. James again, "If a brother or sister be naked, and

destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled'; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead."

Masonry, therefore, not only believes in deeds, it *performs* deeds, and in this alone we are justified in the eyes of God. Not for us the plaintive and repeated appeals from the pulpit of some tired vicar who knows he has said it all before, to a congregation politely yawning in the realization that they have heard it all before, followed by a meagre collection-bag jingling with the smallest coins that can decently be offered. For Masons give, and give lavishly and bountifully, give by the hundreds of thousands of pounds every year, without recourse to pathetic wheedling and undignified begging. Many a clergyman depressed and discouraged by the luke-warm charity of his flock, has opened his eyes in amazement after initiation into Freemasonry at the spontaneous and munificent generosity which it inspires.

We never boast about this, because we regard it as our simple duty and privilege as Masons to contribute to the Masonic charities. Mr. Hannah points the finger of scorn at the Charity Jewel, and impertinently calls it a piece of outrageous pharisaism. He goes even further and says that the more spiritually-minded Masons themselves have their misgivings over displaying this adornment. I cannot conceive how Mr. Hannah imagines himself to know any such thing,

particularly as he himself appears too much lacking in spirituality to recognize a spiritually-minded Mason. I myself have never been aware of such misgivings, and wear my own jewel with a humble and pardonable pride, not in myself, but pride in our glorious Masonic Institutions and benevolence to which I am unworthily privileged to make my small contribution.

"In a society so widely extended as Freemasonry," runs a certain passage which will be familiar to my Brethren, "the branches of which are spread over the four quarters of the globe, it cannot be denied that we have many members of rank and opulence; neither can it be concealed that, among the thousands who range under its banners, there are some who, perhaps from circumstances of unavoidable calamity and misfortune, are reduced to the lowest ebb of poverty and distress." We are not content to leave it at that, to shrug our shoulders and say that the poor are always with us, or that calamity is necessarily a visitation and a discipline sent from the Most High. We are actively concerned in relieving distress in our Brethren and their afflicted families.

The oldest of our Masonic charities is the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls, which was founded as far back as 1788. The Senior School is housed in magnificent buildings at Rickmansworth Park in Hertfordshire, where the particularly lovely School chapel is a gem of modern architecture, and a source of religious inspiration to the pupils which must surely be life-long. The Junior School is now at Weybridge, in Surrey. Ten

years later was founded the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys, which has a Senior and Junior School at Bushey. These schools are lavishly equipped with everything that could possibly be desired for the education of youth. No expense has been spared, nothing is regarded as too good for the sons and daughters of Freemasons. I doubt if there are any better schools throughout the length and breadth of the land, even among those that exert outrageously high fees for the snob value of an ancient name. When I compare them with many of the squalid, tumble-down rat-ridden parochial schools, dark and insanitary, that Churchmen seem to consider good enough for the sons and daughters of indigent and working-class Christians in our villages and cities I am almost ashamed to be a clergyman; yet one is tempted to rejoice that the inadequacy of Christian giving to maintain and modernise these schools is having a beneficial effect in that the State is being forced into taking them over, and narrow sectarian teachings which only perpetuate Christian divisions will come to an end.

Our Masonic Schools, however, not only give the sons and daughters of deserving Freemasons the benefits of the best possible education in the finest and best-equipped surroundings, but they undertake the entire maintenance of their charges. A full allowance of clothing and school uniform, sports gear, books, everything that could possibly be required and of the best quality, is bestowed without cost on each pupil. On leaving school, every effort is made and all possible

practical help is afforded to give them a good start in life. A real personal interest is taken in all. Such is the comprehensive breadth of the Freemason's charity to the children of his less fortunate Brother. Throughout the land there must be thousands of Old Masonians who bless the day that their fathers "saw the light" in initiation. It will take more than a few paltry worthless attacks on the Fraternity to dissuade them that Masonry is indeed a "Craft divine, Glory of earth, from Heaven revealed."

"I was sick, and ye visited me." Here, in the words of Our Blessed Lord himself is described one of the acts of mercy and charity which will lead us to Heaven, and here, too, Freemasonry has nothing to fear by comparison with any other body in the world.

The Masonic Hospital at Ravenscourt Park is probably the finest in the whole London area if not in Great Britain. Money has been lavished upon it, donated by thousands of generous hearts moved with practical compassion for the sick and suffering among the Brethren and their families. The bright flower-filled rooms have every possible comfort and luxury to ease and gladden the bed of pain. The operating theatre has every modern equipment to further the skill of the surgeon. Costs have risen heavily in recent years, but so has the level of Masonic charity, and there has been no stinting, no falling off in the quality of the services rendered. This hospital has every amenity of the most expensive private nursing-home, and yet the minimum fee is not fifteen or twenty guineas a week,

but a paltry three! And in cases where even this figure might prove burdensome there is a Samaritan Fund which will not only assist towards it, but even pay railway fares and ambulance fees. Could warm-hearted generosity go further?

Nor are the old folks forgotten, the Mason who has born the heat and burden of the day, and yet have none to assist them in the time of need or render the close of their days happy and comfortable. The Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution and the Fund of Benevolence are ever ready to care for the Brother as he approaches the evening of his life, ensuring that the setting rays of the sun may shine kindly upon him. Annuities are granted in cases of need, homes are provided, the sorrowing widow is cared for, and peace, security, and happiness ensured as the elderly Brother approaches that solemn moment when he must pass to the Grand Lodge above.

Nor are these specifically Masonic charities the end of our boundless benevolence. Many outside institutions, some run by the Church, are in regular receipt of generous aid from the Lodges. I could not list them all, for I do not know their full number, and I doubt if many Masons do. One, however, is certainly deserving of mention—the Hostel of God at Clapham, where the Sisters of St. Margaret's, East Grinstead, run a free home for the dying, irrespective of race or creed. Assisted by our contributions, without which it would be quite impossible for them to continue, they lovingly attend the incurable, the fatally diseased, those for whom

their doctors have given up all hope on this side of the grave, those for whom other hospitals have difficulty in finding accommodation in the precedence for those who have hopes of recovery. I mention this charitable cause in particular for the truly astounding reason that Mr. Hannah was himself at one time their Chaplain! His attack is indeed treacherous and utterly incomprehensible and one's sympathy goes out to the Sister Superior for having nursed this viper in her bosom, and one hopes that this sympathy will take the broad-minded form of increased support to such a deserving cause.

And still the tale is not told. Wherever there is distress in the world, the helping hand of the Mason is outstretched in aid, and Grand Lodge is ever ready with a substantial grant. When floods or hurricanes destroy, when famines waste, when wars devastate, Masonic aid is speedily forthcoming. When charity makes her appeal, the Mason is quick to answer. Seldom does a Lord Mayor open a fund without a substantial grant from the Grand Lodge. During the late war nearly thirty thousand pounds was given to the Treasury for the relief of distress, the proceeds from melting down surrendered Masonic jewelry, and thousands of guineas were allotted to Red Cross and ambulance funds. I have yet to hear that the Church made any similar gestures by melting down her precious vessels of gold and silver, of which she has such unused and unwanted abundance in her sacristies.

Individual lodges, too, have their benevolent funds which make grants on a smaller scale to deserving local and national charities, and should a sudden urgency arise it is no uncommon thing for a special whip-round to be made, usually with truly surprising results. Surprising, however, only to the recipient, the newcomer to the Craft, or (if he ever hears about it) the outsider. We Freemasons are accustomed to this great miracle of boundless Masonic charity, and although we strive to maintain and even increase it year by year, we regard it as no more than our plain duty, the practical expression in our daily lives of the Grand Principles on which the Order is founded—Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.



## XIV

### A MASON IN HIS PARISH

As a handmaid to the Church, the value of the Lodge to the Parish can hardly be over-estimated. The non-Masonic vicar may not be fully aware of this, as he probably has no idea of who is, and who is not, a member of the Fraternity, but I think there can be few parishes where some, at least, of the most active men on the Parochial Church Council, quite possibly the Churchwardens, and certainly many of the most generous contributors to Church funds are Freemasons. The Masonic vicar is more aware of this benign influence, and thanks God for it. The loss of this vast body of faithful supporters and the drop in parochial income as a result of any move to outlaw the Craft would indeed be an incalculable disaster. One often hears the cheap sneer that the Church is mainly attended by women, and that men are conspicuous by their absence. Dose Mr. Hannah realise that his policy would turn that sneer into a reality?

Perhaps the experience of a personal friend will be more convincing than mere generalities.

Many years ago he was appointed to a very difficult parish. His predecessor had been an extremely narrow Evangelical Protestant, doubtless of great personal piety, but upholding a crude supernaturalism and an outworn and bigoted theology of "salvation only in the blood of Christ". His services had been long and dreary, sticking to the very letter of the Book of

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Common Prayer, even to the absurdity of Athanasian Creed several Sundays a year. It was a one-Church country town, and hence there was no alternative place of worship for the younger and more progressive elements. There was a certain clamorous "Anglo-Catholic" element who came fairly faithfully to the early Communion service and boycotted the Church for the rest of the day. But the young people, the teenagers and young married couples in particular, tended to stay away altogether.

He succeeded in shortening, brightening, and popularising the Sunday worship, and endeavoured not without success to present a more balanced and liberal gospel. He introduced coloured vestments to win back the "Anglo-Catholics". He became a joining member (and incidentally Chaplain) of the local Lodge, for which his predecessor had openly expressed an ignorant distrust and dislike. Gradually a few of the men became Churchgoers.

A very serious crisis arose when the local Nonconformist chapel found itself without a minister for some months. As they were temporarily deprived of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in their own place of worship, he extended a hearty invitation to them to partake of it at our own altar. In doing so he was perhaps in advance of the usual practice so far of the Church of England, yet it seemed perfectly in accord with the suggestion that Scottish Presbyterians in England should be allowed to communicate with us when deprived of their own ministrations.

Yet storms and protests arose. One of the Churchwardens, a survival from the old régime who had given him a great deal of trouble, made alliance with some of the more intransigent High Church elements and threatened to protest to the Bishop over his head. Bitterness and intolerance were clouding a straightforward issue of Christian hospitality and charity.

As might be expected, it was his fellow-Masons who rallied round and helped him to win the day for Christ. The merest hint from him was enough. At the annual Easter Vestry meeting of all parishioners, the Lodge turned up almost to a man. The obstructionist Churchwarden was voted out of office, and a new one elected, a true Brother in every sense of the word. This broke the back of the opposition, and the invitation to the Free Churchmen was carried into effect. As the new Warden said to me with unanswerable logic, "How can it be wrong to worship together in Church if it is right to worship together in the Lodge?"

Here then is a clear instance of a Masonic influence being brought to bear that is more truly Christian than is the attitude of many professed Christians. And there must be many parishes throughout England which have deep cause for gratitude to the Lodges, even though they may not realise the full extent of the debt. Masons, I find, can almost always be relied on to take the side of reasonableness, tolerance, charity, and commonsense.

I am not alleging, of course, that any Lodge as a Lodge could or ever does take sides in any parochial

controversy, however clear the issue, for religion and politics may not even be discussed in them. It is the example of individual Masons, moulded by the principles of the order, which exerts a sane and healthy influence in whatever spheres of activity may concern them. As Mr. Hannah quotes (and subsequently completely ignores) in *Darkness Visible*, one of the purposes of Freemasonry as expressed by the President of the Board of General Purposes to Grand Lodge in September, 1949, is that "character can be moulded and strengthened, and aptitudes developed, so that our members are thereby better qualified to exercise a wholesome influence as citizens in their private capacities on all matters of public issue."

## CATHOLICS AND FREEMASONRY

"It is well known," says Mr. Hannah in *Darkness Visible*, "that Freemasonry has been condemned by the Roman Catholic Church, and that any Roman Catholic on initiation becomes *ipso facto* excommunicate.

This sweeping utterance may have a certain superficial truth in this twentieth century, though there is plenty of evidence that even today there are many Catholics, more enlightened than their Church, who are sensible enough to ignore this stupid ruling and to seek Masonic initiation, apparently without incurring visible censure. This is certainly true in the United States of America where there have been cases, on the decease of a Catholic Freemason, of a requiem mass in a Catholic Church for the benefit of family and relations being followed by the Masonic burial rites at the cemetery for the benefit of the Brethren. This appears to be the case also in Australia, where a certain monk bearing the appropriate name of Dr. Rumble has thought it necessary to produce a pamphlet (*Catholic and Freemasonry*) denouncing this alleged double allegiance. The fact that this pamphlet has been re-printed in England suggests that the Catholic hierarchy of this country are less sure of their ground than they pretend to be.

That the comprehensive truth and breadth of spiritual vision of Grand Lodge Masonry is incompatible with Romanism, or indeed even with any form

of Protestant Christianity that similarly adopts an attitude of exclusiveness in its theology of Christ I am not concerned to deny. *Darkness Visible* is only beating the air and stressing the platitudinously obvious in making this point, which is here more fully discussed in other chapters. Rome, however, has not always adopted an attitude of outright condemnation to the principles of Masonry, nor in certain respects does she do so today. Nor can she be exonerated from the charge of blatant hypocrisy in this matter.

The secret and underground attitude which is or at various times has been adopted by Rome to Freemasonry may be considered under three headings; the existence in the past and present of individual Roman Catholic Freemasons, the attempts made by Rome to gain control of Masonry for her own ends, and the establishment, on the failure of this policy, of secret societies of a quasi-Masonic nature which contain all or most of those very elements in Masonry which she professes to detest.

The existence of the individual Roman Catholic Freemason today has already been mentioned. Yet it must be admitted that this situation is clandestine as far as Rome is concerned, and that she would like to put an end to it. Except perhaps in the case of a few wealthy or prominent people whom she dare not offend, she cannot be accused of connivance in this dual allegiance. Freemasonry makes no distinction of religion or creed, and makes no attempt to bar the Catholic from its ranks if they have every other reason

to believe that he will prove a loyal Brother, and indeed the Mason may welcome such in the charitable though of course unexpressed hope that the Catholic may thereby broaden his horizon beyond the intolerance of his creed, for tolerance is a primary Masonic virtue.

But in times past the Roman Catholic Freemason has not always been in such an invidious position as regards his Church, and there have been many cases where the Church does not appear to have exercised any censure on Lodge membership.

A few instances will suffice. In Liège the Roman Catholic Bishop Velbrück, who ruled his diocese from 1772 to 1784, was a devoted Freemason, and so were many of his Cathedral Canons and officials. One of these Canons, indeed, the Rev. de Geoes, was the founder and first Master of *La Parfaite Intelligence* Lodge. Another, Canon Nicolas Devaux, was Master of *La Parfaite Egalité*, another Liège Lodge. The first Lodge to be founded in Vienna, in 1742, had as its first Master the Prince Bishop of that city. In Spain a Catholic priest, Fr. Joseph Torrubia, saw no inconsistency in undergoing Masonic initiation in 1742, though he apparently did so only to betray the names of every member of the Lodge to the notorious Inquisition! Such are the methods of Catholics throughout the ages.

There is strong evidence, too, that Pope Pius IX was secretly initiated in Sicily, and that he remained a Freemason throughout his life and pontificate.

In Great Britain there is no doubt that the Chevalier Ramsay, who sought to enlist the sympathies of Freemasonry for the exiled House of Stuart, was both a sincere Mason and a sincere if non-bigoted Catholic. And the Jacobite cause was essentially a Catholic one.

A more prominent if less controversial figure in the annals of Masonry was Lord Petre, who was elected Grand Master in 1772. Lord Petre was not only known very publicly as a Roman Catholic from birth, but was very generally regarded as the lay leader of the Catholic body in England, and had a prestige in that body similar to that of the Duke of Norfolk today. Yet so liberal was his outlook that he was able with no straining of conscience to preside for five years over Grand Lodge despite the petty thunderings of the Vatican against that body. His enthusiasm for the Craft was boundless; after the expiration of his term of office he frequently presided as Past Grand Master, the last occasion on record on which he did so being within a few years of his death. There is no question of his ever having resigned from or disowned Freemasonry, and he died as he had lived, a Mason and a Catholic. His charitable benefactions, among which Masonic charities bulked large, amounted to some five thousand pounds a year.

Another Catholic Freemason, celebrated within the Craft if less well known outside it, was Peter Gilkes, the well-known Preceptor of the Emulation Lodge of Improvement, and who before his death in 1883 had been Master of some ten Lodges.

Even in Ireland there is evidence of a considerable overlap between Masonry and Catholicism. To quote but one instance, it is on the records of Lodge No. 60, Ennis (now Dunboyne) that on St. John's Day, 1800, the Lodge attended as a body the Roman Catholic chapel at Ennis and heard a sermon by the parish priest, Fr. McDonagh, who afterwards dined with the Brethren. It is not ascertainable that this priest was himself a Freemason, but the incident very strongly presupposes that the majority of the Brethren were Catholics.

And lastly, according to a Canadian paper, there are today at least two Lodges in the French Canadian city of Montreal made up almost exclusively of Catholics.

The evidence for my second point in considering the Roman attitude to Freemasonry, her own efforts largely through the instrumentality of the Jesuits to gain control over it for her own ends, is, as might be expected, somewhat fragmentary, though the fragments when taken together certainly seem fairly conclusive.

As we shall see, whatever may be her outward protestations Rome does not in practice object to secret societies as such. They are useful, and indeed almost essential, in maintaining her hold over the illiterate, the ignorant, and the superstitious. But only when they are completely and absolutely under her domination and control, for Rome's intolerance will brook no rivalry and no co-operation with other religious bodies. Hence when modern Freemasonry arose, full of vitality and exercising a profound influence for good

upon its members, it is antecedently highly probable that Rome would make every attempt to capture its strength and pervert it to her own sectarian ends.

Certainly the Church was always on excellent terms with the medieval Masons' Lodges, and was their chief patron and protector. These Lodges were of course directly concerned with operative stone-masonry, and their membership mainly confined to workers in that trade, and yet from the earliest dawn in history there has always been an element of the speculative, of the spiritual and numinous, of the secret tradition in these Lodges, to which the Church of Rome never took exception. The Lodges were obedient and subservient to the Church, and the Church therefore was content and asked no awkward questions.

When Freemasonry was revived in a more speculative and less operative form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, it was a different matter altogether, for this revival was neither sponsored by Rome, nor did it owe it any obedience or loyalty. Hence there is evidence that before the breach became complete, Rome attempted to regain control. The Prince of Hesse declared that as early as 1714 the Jesuits made use of the mysteries of the Rose-Croix for this purpose through the so-called Hermetic Lodges.

Another particularly absurd attempt, not so much to absorb Grand Lodge Masonry as to establish a rival body which would entice away its adherents, was made in England early in the eighteenth century. This was

the Ancient Noble Order of Gormogons, a puerile and utterly ridiculous body set up in 1724, allegedly instituted by Chin-Quaw-Ky-Po, a mythical Chinese emperor who was supposed to have ruled many thousands of years before Adam. Confucius was claimed as a member of this body, and (even more imprudently) the Great Mogul of India and the Czar of Russia! Masons of any religion were invited to join it, the only condition being their renunciation of Freemasonry. Yet it was the declared intention of the Gormogons to place the Order unreservedly at the disposal of the Pope, and it was confidently expected that the College of Cardinals would accept initiation.

The German authority Kloss attributes this short-lived and unsuccessful futility to a deeply-laid scheme of the Jesuits (possibly in alliance with the Chevalier Ramsay who was then in Rome, but this seems unlikely) to seduce Masons away from the Grand Lodge of England. Except for an insignificant few (including the highly unsatisfactory one-time Grand Master the Duke of Wharton) the plot was an abysmal failure, and the Order very soon became deservedly extinct.

On the continent of Europe and particularly in France Masonry was rapidly increasing in popularity, and there was a fashion of evolving new degrees and new rites, each outbidding its rivals in its pretensions of antiquity and magnificence of ritual, decorations, and titles. Most of them were spurious and had little or no connectoin with Regular Masonry. They failed to gain any recognition from the established Grand

Lodges of the day. But behind some of them we can trace the Jesuit master-plan to absorb and dominate.

Most important of these was the Chapter of Clermont, which was started in Paris in the year 1753. Yet it is generally accepted that its real origin was some years earlier in the Jesuit College of Clermont, from which it took its name, under Jesuit auspices and inspiration. The statutes, according to Heckethorn's *Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries*, were apparently drawn up many years earlier by Fr. Lainez, the second General of the Jesuits, but were kept in cold storage until the time was deemed ripe to launch the Order. The Chapter of Clermont worked the three degrees of Freemasonry, plus some additional higher degrees of a Templar character, and the Rite spread, not only in France but also to Germany, where it scored very considerable if temporary success. Indeed for a short time the greater part of North Germany came under this new disguised Jesuit Masonry.

Encouraged by this measure of success, Rome advanced a step further. Out of the Chapter of Clermont Rite in Germany arose the Strict Observance, which professes to represent the resurrection of the suppressed Knights Templar, and which claimed an underground but direct and unbroken succession from them, the identity of the Grand Masters being kept a profound secret meanwhile. But its real founder was a certain Catholic convert, Baron von Hunde.

The Strict Observance was wholly under Jesuit influence, and membership was restricted to Roman

Catholics. Universal jurisdiction over all Freemasonry was the undoubted aim, a jurisdiction under Roman and Jesuit control. Indeed it very nearly succeeded; the greater part of continental Europe had been pervaded with it by the middle of the eighteenth century, almost to the exclusion of all other forms of Masonry. Yet it never took hold in Protestant England, whose pure and ancient Masonry eventually re-conquered the continent. By the end of the eighteenth century the Strict Observance had practically ceased to exist.

Arising from the Strict Observance, however, came yet another attempt at Jesuit domination in the persons of the notorious Weishaupt and the Illuminati in Bavaria. Weishaupt had been a disciple of the Jesuits in his earlier years, and although later on he professed to break with them, he never ceased openly to admire their system and their methods which he shamelessly reproduced. The Illuminati, however, only existed for some eight years, and were then suppressed in 1784 by the Elector of Bavaria. This movement had caused such an unsavoury stir, however, that all Masonry was unfortunately banned in South Germany with a complete lack of discrimination between sheep and goats.

Other degrees devised at this period which owe their origin to Roman Catholicism were certain rites founded by a French Benedictine monk, Dom Antoine Pernety. He was responsible for the foundation of the short-lived Illuminati of Avignon, and also the Knight of the Sun, an earlier form of the 28th Degree of the Ancient

and Accepted Rite which was later entirely re-cast by the American authority Albert Pike.

Thus it will be seen how flimsy is the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that she has always and in all places outlawed Freemasonry. She only attempted to do so after her abysmal failure to penetrate, infiltrate, and dominate the movement for her own ends.

If this point of view seems fantastic to those who know Rome only on the surface and who take her recent pronouncements against secret societies at their face value, a survey of modern Catholic secret societies, some of them formed with the purpose of combating the very Freemasonry she failed to control, should convince the most sceptical that there is nothing *per se* incompatible between Rome and secret organizations even when their nature and form closely ape the despised Masonic originals.

The original Knights Templar certainly seem a case in point. This Order was founded with the blessing and full approval of the Holy See and it was an Order possessed of mystic secrets, though what exactly the nature of these secrets was is difficult to determine with precision. As long as the Knights Templar continued to serve Vatican ends by supporting and fighting the Crusades they enjoyed Vatican support. When, however, it was suspected and probably with some truth that their esoteric mysteries had departed from the path of strict orthodoxy, and when they acquired considerable lands and worldly possessions, the Pope saw the red light and proceeded systematically and with ruth-

less cruelty to exterminate the order and confiscate their wealth, in which task he received assistance and co-operation from his minion the King of France.

The Jesuits themselves are an essentially secret order dedicated to the sole aim of pursuing with that subtle and unscrupulous intrigue for which the order is notorious the aggrandizing aims of the Roman Church, and the undermining of true Protestant Christianity. Jesuitism indeed is a far more secret society in the true meaning of the word than Masonry. There is no secret about Masonic membership of all grades and degrees, whereas Jesuitism has many thousands of underground affiliates whose identity is kept a profound secret. Then, too, it is hard to understand the Romanists' alleged scruples about Masonic obligations, when the Jesuit oaths contain clauses that are infinitely more offensive to the Christian conscience.

It is hard to see how the Knights of Columbus can possibly be styled anything other than Catholic Freemasonry. This organization exists throughout the English-speaking world under slightly varying titles, and would appear to have every feature which Rome professes to find objectionable in the Craft—save only that the Knights of Columbus owe dutiful allegiance to the Pope! They have an elaborate ritual and strict oaths of secrecy. They have secret pass-words and methods of recognition, they have their regalia. At best this organization can only be described as a consolation prize for the good boys who might otherwise be tempted into Freemasonry!

Then again, before the Vatican hurls any more damp thunderbolts against Grand Lodge, it might well consider the possibility of supplying a few further facts about the highly secret Catenian Society, which appears to be another Masonic substitute, only working underground for the overthrow of enlightened religion in this land.

In the United States this imitation of the Masonic enemy appears to go even further, and if imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery we should, I suppose, feel gratified at the compliment. It appears that in America the Ancient and Accepted Rite (commonly called the Scottish Rite, comprising the Higher Degrees) is considerably more popular and more numerous than in this country, and there is a very highly-respected organization, not strictly Masonic but carrying a Masonic qualification, known as the Mystic Shrine. This is only open to those who have taken the Higher Degrees, and is noted for its exalted morality and lofty spiritual ideals. Its ritual is, of course, highly secret and very carefully guarded.

Nothing daunted, the Church of Rome followed suit with the Order of Alhambra. This is open only to Knights of Columbus of the third and fourth degrees, again has a secret ritual based on Moslem symbolism and traditions, and secret methods of recognition outside the "Caravans", as their Lodges are termed. Catholics who narrow-mindedly claim that Freemasonry draws its inspiration from symbols and traditions other than Christian may well be surprised (but I hope not



shocked!) to learn that the legend of this Catholic degree takes the form of a symbolic pilgrimage to Mecca!

These organizations, then, show the depth of hypocrisy to which the Church of Rome will sink in her bid for universal domination. Nobody acquainted with these facts will pay the slightest attention to her diatribes against pure and ancient Masonry, which are not, as they claim, based on religious or moral principles, but are rather the cynical and highly disingenuous weapons in her dying struggles for the possessions of the world. They may well be compared to the equally hypocritical cooings of the Communist in democratic countries.

## PROTESTANTS AND FREEMASONRY

THE title of this chapter is misleading if my readers imagine that it is intended to be analogous to the preceding one. Generally speaking, Protestantism, being itself historically a revolt from Popish superstitions to the pure and enlightened religion of Jesus of Nazareth, has appreciated the value of Regular Freemasonry and has welcomed, with no nonsense about a dual allegiance, the overlap between Masonry and true Christianity.

Yet, as Mr. Hannah points out, there have been dark exceptions, mainly among the less spiritually tolerant and backward Protestants who cling to an outmoded fundamentalism, and who still adhere to sixteenth century Confessions of Faith which teach a religion and theology about the Christ rather than the simple and untheological religion of Jesus. There are Protestants as backward, as bigoted, as exclusive as Romanists, and it is but a few sects of these who have similarly made themselves ridiculous by criticizing Freemasonry. The Methodists may appear to be an exception to this. But although it is true that John Wesley himself wrote some rather slighting remarks about the Craft (of which he knew nothing) the Bradford condemnation does not really represent the mind of the Methodist Church. It was the nefarious activities of a single ignorant fanatic, the Rev. Penney Hunt, who was responsible for stampeding the conference against its better judgment.

Although Protestant anti-Masonry has so far been

insignificant compared with that of Rome, and although her methods have differed completely in the occasional attempts to outlaw the Lodges, there are two very ugly instances of a similarity in results, attributable to Protestant hostility to the Craft.

In South Africa, as has been already mentioned, the Dutch Reformed Church of which Dr. Malan is a minister took it upon itself to ban Freemasonry. A literal, narrow, and fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible coupled with complete ignorance of the ancient teachings and nature of the order appear to have been responsible for this disaster. But what has been the result! The formation in its place of a thoroughly dangerous and sinister secret society, spuriously quasi-Masonic, known as the *Afrikaner Broederbond*, which is fanatical in its race-hatred against the Negro. Dr. Malan himself has been initiated into this, and it is said to be growing in numbers as its policy of *apartheid* gains popularity. Strife and bitterness between the political parties in South Africa is also growing. Is not the attitude of the Dutch Reformed Church towards Freemasonry largely to blame?

In the Southern States of America it is the same type of intolerant Protestantism that has given birth to the even more detestable enormities in race-persecution of the *Ku-Klux-Klan*, another fanatically secret society with a quasi-Masonic ritual and practices. This is devoted to warfare against Catholics, Jews, and Negroes, but it is of course the latter who unfortunately bear the full brunt of their criminal activities,

lynchings, murders, and lawlessness. Yet the *Ku-Klux-Klan* is too strong in its Protestant membership for any government to dare to suppress it.

Now admittedly Freemasonry in South Africa and in America does not actually admit Negroes to its Lodges at present. There are excellent reasons for this apparent race discrimination which only a Mason can fully understand; suffice it to say here that, feelings being what they are, such a step would endanger the harmony of the Lodge, which is a very primary consideration. Secondly, although Negroes today may technically fulfil the Masonic requirement of being "free", their subordinate economic, educational, and cultural position is such that they hardly fulfil the spirit of that pre-requisite to initiation. The point is, however, a trifling one. The important lesson to be drawn is that if fundamental Protestantism were to welcome and encourage the broad, tolerant, peace-making and charitable influence of Freemasonry instead of attempting to exile it on petty doctrinal grounds, these nightmare evils of the *Broederbond* and the *Ku-Klux-Klan* would wither away from lack of support and from a superior enlightenment driving out the darkness.

If the good is driven out, from whatever motives, the evil will creep in and take its place. If a Protestant Christianity in England should be so criminally foolish as to ban Freemasonry from our shores, who knows what evil substitute might infiltrate its way into the resulting spiritual void?