

OVER-THE-COUNTER RELIGION

It takes a certain kind of conspiratorial devotion to minutiae and obscurity to make sense of the music underground, so it's inevitable that somebody would create *Dagobert's Revenge* (\$5 from Tracy R.Twyman, 2301 New York Ave., 2nd Fl., Union City, NJ 07087), subtitled "Musick, Magick, Monarchism." It's got the style and look of a music 'zine, but it's all about the Knights Templar, the Scottish House of Stewart and its alleged bloodline going back to Jesus Christ and King David, the Holy Grail, the severed head of Baphomet, the US government's underground tunnels—that kind of thing. There's a record review section, but it's entirely devoted to albums by bands named after Freemasonry (the Templars, Masonic Youth, the Gnomes Of Zurich...). The writing is all under silly pseudonyms (Sir Hiram Firam, Mason Dixon), and very deeply into Templar conspiracy theory. There are interviews with Scottish prince-in-exile Michael Stewart and H.E. Sir Scott Stewart, who an introduction notes is "the American Ambassador to the Royal House of Stewart... as well as a manager at Circuit City." In a few places, the 'zine gets a little too deeply whacked-out, as when it reprints part of the *Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion* (a forged anti-Semitic libel, which it doesn't mention) or provides a list of people who "must not be allowed to breed" ("Women's Studies majors" and "people who wear ribbons for social causes," for instance). But there's also some amusing "found" material, like a page of dreadful poetry found in a Masonic magazine from the '60s and a lot of fascinating religious-conspiracy-theory images.

In a more conventionally religious vein, Jai Agnish's 'zine *Flygirl* operates at the intersection of indie-rock culture and Christianity, which is an unexpected but surprisingly fruitful combination. Agnish lets his contributors take a few pages to do whatever they like, sometimes concerned with music and spirituality, sometimes not, but generally surprising and visually striking: Inside its scribbly cover, it's a beautiful-looking magazine, with lots of breathing room. Issue #8 (\$7 post-paid from 43 Morris Ave., West Milford, NJ 07480) includes a CD with tracks by indie-types that have done explicitly Christian work before (Brother Danielson, Soul-Junk), a few unknowns (including Agnish's own projects Jags and Indiam), and one big surprise—Bonnie Prince Billy, a.k.a. Will Oldham, covering Joe Wise's "Watch With Me"—which isn't really such a big surprise, on reflection. And, instead of articles about bands, Agnish gives musicians space to work with: Julie Doiron contributes five photographs of her family and friends, Dennis Callaci of Refrigerator and the Shrimper label handwrites a long, spare poem, the Silver Jews' D.C. Berman does a very peculiar one-page prose piece, and Buzzsaw does a weirdly hilarious comic strip conflating Moses and Grandpa Munster.

And, for a look at a completely new theology—if, admittedly, a fictional one—check out Zander Cannon's charming, engaging comic book *The Replacement God* (\$6.95 from The Handicraft Guild, 89 S. 10th St. #315, Minneapolis, MN 55403). Cannon has been publishing the series through a couple of bigger companies, but with the mammoth sixth issue—80 pages!—he's started self-publishing it. The main story is a convoluted fantasy concerning a freed slave who's destined to take over for a dying god and destroy a kingdom, the spirit of a dead Visigoth, a couple of religious warriors, and a million soap-operatic subplots. This could get out of control pretty quickly, but Cannon is a born storyteller, whose narratives stay clear and engaging even where he hasn't quite worked out the kinks in his drawing style (and it's mostly there, with cartoony figures set against detailed, *Prince Valiant*-ish backgrounds). He also keeps the dialogue lighthearted and slangy, which lets him sneak in some awfully bulky sword-and-sorcery background without making a big fuss about it. And he's got a couple of background features that let him stretch out a little more: "The Knights Of Houlihan's," a strip about hard-drinking knights drawn in a cute "bigfoot" style, and "Knute's Escapes," an ongoing joke that works on the strength of its Rube Goldberg formula. Keep your eye on what Cannon does: He's got great things ahead of him.

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