

THE FREETHINKER

▪ EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN ▪

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The New Phase of the War

I WOULD have dealt last week with the new war situation that has arisen had my space not been mortgaged to the notes on Sir James Frazer. For many reasons there are some who regret Russia entering the war as our Ally, but to the vast majority Russia is doubly welcome; and, indeed, if the war is to end in such a way that the world situation will completely discredit war as an instrument of policy the co-operation of Russia should be more than welcome—it will be essential.

On the surface there did not seem any pressing necessity for either the Prime Minister or Mr. Eden issuing a notice that they were still opposed to Communism. It might have proven bad tactics, but it was probably intended as a soothing measure against certain powerful home interests, religious and other, to whom a boycott of Russia would be welcome. But one does not accept an invitation to dinner and send a private note that one's host is still distrusted and must not expect to be met on terms of firm friendship. The right of every British citizen to fight for or against Communism should be taken for granted; but Ministers have to face the fact that there is a very influential class in this country that showed by their pre-war flirtations with Mussolini and Hitler they were ready to go a long, long way to meet the two Fascist dictators in order to prevent the growth of Communism. We have no great liking for Communism, but it must be met as a theory of social life and argued for and against as we discuss other social theories. Loose talk about robbery and murder, backed by lying religious opposition, will not make for the lasting peace of the world. Even Mr. Churchill may need reminding that great as are his services to the country during this war, yet his reputation as an authority on social and economic evolution has yet to be established; but, as we have said, we fancy that the Prime Minister's declaration was not intended for Russia at all, but to a class in this country to whom both Mussolini and Hitler owe much for the positions they now occupy. We saw this influence in the Japanese invasion of China, in the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, and the German and Italian invasion of Spain.

The Churches and Our New Ally

Setting on one side the amusing right-about-face of those who were converted overnight to the support of the war the moment Germany attacked Russia, the most awkward situation of any group in this country was that of the Churches. The Fascist structure of the Roman Catholic Church marches very much in line with Nazism and Fascism. It has the same method of appointing a supreme leader; it claims the control of education and the family; also the same right to suppress all who by speech or act make for the injury or the discrediting of its teachings, and shows the same readiness to suppress, on the ground of high principle, heretical literature and freedom of criticism. Finally, it also has the Fascist taste for rewriting history in order to justify its claims and teachings. Totalitarianism runs throughout its structure.

Moreover, the Churches as a whole had entered the war with a declaration that the purpose of the war was to preserve Christianity; thus giving the war the air of a religious crusade. Even Goebbels must have looked enviously at the author of that lie. Bad enough as this was, the situation became sheerly grotesque when circumstances compelled all to welcome as an ally a vast nation whose Government actually gives its sanction to Atheism, while our own Government, without adequate legal warranty, declared itself on the side of Christianity.

The situation is now more than grotesque; it is serious in both its immediate and in its ultimate implications. We have had our Days of Prayer, and we shall have more; and when the German forces are beaten we shall probably have another Day of National Prayer to thank God for having given us the victory—and it may well be that for many reasons the entry of "Atheistic Russia" may prove a decisive factor on our side. Diplomatically, the Churches are in a bad situation. If we lose the war they tell us that the worship of the Christian God will cease. If we win it the Christian God finds his enemies in Russia firmly established—and with our help. The Russians will, therefore, find their "Atheistic" efforts helped as a response to the prayers of Christians.

The dilemma of the Christian Churches does not end at this. When the war ends—and there is no reasonable doubt how it will end—Atheistic Russia will benefit in two ways. First, Russia will have got rid of the one dangerous enemy on its borders. Next, the defeat of Germany will, in existing circumstances, increase the intellectual and moral value of the Russian "stock" in the Christian market. It will be impossible for us to continue to treat as a pariah a people with whom we have fought side by side and with whom we have won the most important victory of the past thousand years. Those of our retired generals and highly placed people who before the war sang the attractiveness of Ribbentrop, the geniality of Goering and the many good things Hitler had done for the German people cannot, after the victory, turn back to their pre-war position.

All this will be to the good: for there should be a greater readiness to discuss social and religious theories of all kinds than this country and others have ever known since the rise to power of Chris-

tianity. The influence will act on all; and it will mean a great weakening of the religious spirit. We may even see some sort of return to a freedom of discussion such has not existed since the best days of ancient Athenian civilisation.

Still further, and more importantly, economic reactions will or should make for greater freedom of intercourse between peoples. The Churches and other institutions will be less rigid by the very breakdown of social and economic barriers; and against a free war of conflicting ideas there is no institution, no tyranny that can hope for an extended existence. The end of the war should bring a greater readiness to meet and examine ideas. Schools and universities would become less breeding grounds for stereotyped ideas and partake more of the helpful character of institutions in which the warfare of opinion is one of their most prominent features. I can see a great many useful consequences coming from our closer alliance with Atheistic and Communistic (?) Russia.

The Religious Press

But the religious Press? Poor things! One feels almost sorry for them as one notes their wriggles in the issues following the announcement of a virtual alliance between Britain and Russia. Their difficulty was obviously that of how to stand in with God and be on good terms with the godless. How to keep up the cry that we were fighting to preserve Christianity and work hand-in-hand with avowed Atheists. The "Church Times" found—or thought it had found—a distinction by saying that "Great Britain and Russia were not allied but associated in a common undertaking." But what are the Poles, the Dutch, the Norwegian and other Governments that actually have a residence in England? Are they our allies or not? An alliance with another country does not involve interfering with their feeding or the clothes they wear. Besides, an alliance is always an alliance for a distinct and distinctive purpose and for an agreed term. We wonder what would be the feelings of a Russian who accepted the definition of the "Church Times" and said, "So we are not allies with Britain. She is merely with us so long as it suits her purpose, and when that purpose is served we must expect to return to all the old propagandist lies that were in vogue before the alliance." But the Russian statesmen have long heads and the English statesmen have shrewd ones; and I for one expect that, having broken the barriers between Russia and Britain it will lead—it ought to lead—to a freer interchange of ideas, and with that a better understanding: the only road by which war can or will be ended.

The "Universe," the chief Roman Catholic organ in this country, dare not oppose the alliance, but saves its face by suggesting that Russia has been safeguarding its own interests. That is a charge which admits of an easy retort. It also says that Russia shared in the partition of Poland. That is nonsense. Russia did what England would have done in the same circumstances: it made its own boundaries as secure as it could. And we have done that in all parts of the world whenever we could. It is noteworthy that the "Universe" never thought of the plea that we were not in alliance with Russia—we were only in association; but it does think that "Revolutionary Atheism in Moscow may yet give place to such a revival of Christian Russia as may shatter the Red tyranny of Moscow." In pursuance of that hope, we may find more accounts in Roman Catholic papers of Churches which they had reported as having been destroyed or closed as now crowded out with worshippers who had all been either killed or suppressed. Goebbels, we believe, was brought up a Roman Catholic. He never outgrew his early training; he developed it.

In the circumstances, one is not surprised to find the "Catholic Herald" saying that "The entry of Soviet Russia into the war cannot but raise in our minds serious perplexities." The "Herald" is the clearest and best of all the religious papers that I have seen, and it admits that the alliance with Russia "weakens considerably any pretence that we are fighting for a Christian Europe as such because there can be no compatibility between such an exalted end and the ends of a strong and inevitably influential partner likely to be backed by a good many sympathisers at home." That seems to me a quite fair conclusion. Let us hope that the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who have been foremost in asserting that this war is to preserve Christianity, will publicly recant this well-circulated lie. If they do so it will be the first instance in Christian history when a lie told in the interests of a Church has been publicly withdrawn. But we do expect the cry will be less frequently heard in the future.

Finally, the entrance of Russia into the war, and as an ally of Great Britain and other countries, and substantially the U.S.A., should bring nearer the realisation of the ideal of the abolition of war as a method of settling disputes between nations. Unless that can be done when this war is over nations will be simply working together in a preparation for world suicide. It is no more possible to preserve peace while each nation insists on remaining the sole judge of what it is inclined to call its own "honour" than one can maintain peace in a community while individuals are permitted to try their own case and issues and act upon their own verdict. If personal honour can be vindicated by an appeal to a properly constituted tribunal, what essential and irremovable difficulty is there against nations settling their disputes in the same manner?

It is said that this was tried and failed in the case of the League of Nations. That is not true. The League of Nations broke down because it was never an impartial tribunal and because the jealousy of the representatives there had their own personal game to play. It was a gathering of the old political and diplomatic gangs, each group trying to gain advantages over others, none of them trusting others.

We can only have world peace when each nation surrenders the right to go to war on its own account. If we would have peace we must give as well as take. We must surrender the power to make individual war as a condition of preventing general war. So far as the world needs policing—and the absence of this need is too far off to be even thought about—it should be as much an international force as a police force belongs to a country. But so long as we advertise the fact that only by each nation being strong enough to carry out by force its own decisions can "honour be satisfied," so long must we be prepared for war—which, in terms of modern intercourse, must spread over a wide and widening area with the deadliness of a forest fire.

CHAPMAN COHEN

THE CULT OF SATAN

DURING the era of the Renaissance and Reformation, in particular, c. 1400 to 1700, the "sin of witchcraft"—the practical cult of His Infernal Majesty—enjoyed its age of gold; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say "of fire": for throughout these three centuries the fires of the stake were lit with a persistence which no vestal virgin of classical antiquity who tended the quenchless sacred fire could possibly have surpassed.

In particular, between 1488—when the Inquisitor Sprenger published his famous text-book on witchcraft, "Malleus Maleficarum" (i.e., Hammer of Evil Doers)—down to 1596, when our own James I. published his voluminous "Collected Works" on "Witchcraft," there was virtually an uninterrupted massacre of adherents of "The Black Arts." (From the latter date the persecution began to decline and about a century later became extinct. We may add that Scotland and Sweden, then about the most backward lands in Europe, furnished, in proportion to their size, the largest quota of victims.)

Since about 1700 no one has died on account of "the sin of witchcraft"—at least, in civilised countries. But the underlying belief is, whatever interested apologists may say, still far from extinct: it is, indeed, an integral part of any dogmatic Christianity that is based either on the "verbal inspiration" of the Bible or on the tradition of the Catholic Church, which has always taught the "Fall of the Angels" is an article of Faith. (cp. Joseph Turmel—"Histoire des Dogmes," Vol. IV.—"Les Ages" ("The Angels"). As for the Bible, did not Jehovah (God the Father) command Saul: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"? And in the New Testament Jesus both believed in devils and habitually cast them out: even, according to Professor Huxley, violating the rights of private property in the case of the miracle of the Gadarene swine! When, in our day, when Billy Sunday challenged the Devil to fisticuffs, he acted like a perfectly orthodox Christian should.

We now turn to the three theories of the historic cult of the Devil: we do so in chronological order.

(a) The Theological Approach to Satanism

We have not forgotten that Satan was introduced into Christianity from the dualist creed of the Persian Prophet Zoroaster, which adored his historic prototype, Ahriman, as the god of the Evil Lands. Ahriman was transformed into Satan ("Satan"—"The Accuser" in Hebrew) through the agency of the Jewish Synagogue and, very particularly, of the Asiatic heresiarch Marcion, who strove to acclimatise Persian Dualism to the soil of Christianity (c. A.D. 130). Finally, the struggle ended in a compromise: Ahriman became Satan, the Devil, but instead of being a god, like his Persian original, was reduced in rank to a revolted angel.

Could this angel seduce souls from the allegiance that they owed to God? Could Satan establish a rival religion upon earth, with himself as Deity? In theory, the theologians held that He could: we have not forgotten that, right up to the time of St. Anselm's (end of 11th century) great work, "Cur Deus Homo" (i.e., "Why God Became Man")—who transferred the Sacrifice on Calvary from Satan to God—it was universally held by the most orthodox theologians that the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary was offered to the Devil.

In practice, however, the theologians of the Dark and Early Middle Ages (c. A.D. 400—1300) do not seem to have attached much importance to alleged manifestations of sorcery, witchcraft and other supposed infernal activities of the Devil—or of subordinate devils: for the infernal hierarchy had been multiplied wholesale by the indiscriminate conversion of Pagan deities into (junior) demons of the victorious Church. The Popes, indeed, often manifested incredulity at these concrete manifestations of the Evil One; nor did the Inquisition (founded early 15th century) at first take much notice of them. To be sure, the greatest of all the Popes, Gregory VII. (Hildebrand; 11th century), rebuked the Danish Church for believing in sorcery in rationalistic language of which the "National Secular Society"

would thoroughly have approved. In substance, "There ain't no sich things."

In the later Middle Ages, however, a very different complexion was put upon such phenomena—for reasons which will presently manifest themselves (cp. ut infra). There followed that jungle of superstition lit by a forest of witch-consuming stakes that made the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries perhaps the most ghastly period—despite its high contemporary Renaissance culture—in all that "sorry scheme" of human history so aptly summarised in the pregnant aphorism, "Human history is the conjugation of the verb 'to eat'!"*

We will merely add that, according to the Church of Rome, the cult of Satan was never more active than to-day embodied as it is internationally in the cult of Spiritism (or Spiritualism) which Rome teaches to be of undoubted diabolical inspiration—incidentally, she has also made the same charge against Freemasonry (cp. Cardinal A. Lepicier, "The Unseen World": an exposition of Catholic Theology in its relation to Modern Spiritism). Lepicier is one of the most eminent modern Roman theologians, and his book was written in the present century with the express purpose of exposing Spiritism as of direct diabolical origin. E.G. He states (inter alia):—

"It (Spiritism—F.A.R.) is the continuation of Satan's revolt against God and must end in the irreparable ruin of souls" (cp. p. 283).

His view of Spiritism as diabolical manifestation has been popularised by Monsignor Hugh Benson, the Catholic priest and novelist, in his well-known novel, "The Necromancers."

(b) The Rationalistic Approach to Satanism

From about the end of the 16th century the reaction against the beliefs that centred around the cult of Satan has gained ground steadily. Beginning with the work of such Protestant writers as the German Doctor Wier and the English J.P. Reginald Scott (end of 16th century), the view that witchcraft is a delusion born simply of credulity and superstition soon became general amongst the educated public. In the 18th century this view definitely triumphed except in the restricted area where dogmatic theology still held its ground. And even there it became a merely speculative belief. By the mid-19th century it was universally accepted by the cultured public; and even amongst the clergy of the Reformed Churches the belief in Satanic inspiration was practically extinct. Wesley, it is true, still believed in literal demonic "possession" on the authority of the Bible. In the next (19th) century, Spurgeon was about the last well-known pulpit orator seriously to toy with the belief. Outside the Churches, scepticism was ubiquitous. "The sin of witchcraft" was sheer delusion: Sprenger, King James, etc., were merely learned fools. The witch-inquisitors were merely judicial murderers, ignorant equally of the first principles of humanity and of the first laws of evidence. The whole gigantic machinery of repression and detection organised by the Inquisition, the elaborate procedure of examination and investigation conducted by some of the ablest trained lawyers of the acutely critical Renaissance era: all this was so much sheer delusion and "old wives' tales." Such was the dominant viewpoint of the rationalistic 18th and 19th centuries: a view not so much defended as taken for

* N.B.—The curious reader can pursue this subject in the incomparably erudite pages of Louis Coulange's "Life of the Devil." It is to the point to mention that "Louis Coulange" is a pseudonym of the great critical historian of Catholic Dogma, the ex-Abbe Joseph Turmel, beyond question the most learned and acute of contemporary theologians.

granted by its classic 19th century exponents—the historians W. E. H. Lecky and T. H. Buckle in the course of their well-known historical writings. There never was a cult of Satan: as for witchcraft, it was stark folly, sheer delusion, unadulterated hocus-pocus! (cp. W. E. H. Lecky, "History of Rationalism in Europe"; T. H. Buckle, "Civilisation in England," etc.).

It might conceivably have occurred to a less "cocksure" century than the 19th was that this was rather a sweeping attitude: to indict wholesale the entire Renaissance civilisation, including many of its most acute intellects, who believed firmly in the reality of "witchcraft," often after carefully examining the evidence at first hand—which their critics had not. Can a whole civilisation go completely insane; and on a question that depended on first-hand evidence at every stage of the proceedings?

The "Rationalists" of the 19th century affirmed that it did: but the 20th century has already definitely disproved their temerarious accusation. The contemporary anthropological school has examined the whole question of the cult of Satan from an entirely new angle: one entirely factual and divorced from all *a priori* assumptions such as were made by both the preceding theological and rationalistic schools. The conclusions reached by the anthropological school can be briefly summarised: revolutionary in character, they must now be regarded as (literally) epoch-making in their particular sphere. They restore the Devil—but with a difference! They transfer the cult of Satan from the sphere of theology to that of science: from abstract speculation to concrete history.

F. A. RIDLEY

(To be concluded)

ACID DROPS

MR. G. E. R. GEDYE, the author of that fine piece of work, "Fallen Bastions," ought to have known better. Candidly, we believe he does know better, but when one writes as a journalist, one must, it may be assumed, keep an eye on the policy of the paper. This is the only explanation—not justification—for Mr. Gedye, in the course of a recent article in the "Daily Express," referring to Hitler as "this blatant Atheist." Mr. Gedye must know better. Hitler has never renounced his Roman Catholicism, he has made frequent appeals to God and, in his speech announcing the attack on Russia, he plainly and categorically said that "with the help of God" he would release Europe from the threat of Bolshevism. Mr. Gedye is quite aware of this, because he speaks of Hitler as having "shamelessly called on the Almighty to bless his treacherous assault on Russia." Mr. Gedye is bearing false witness with his eyes open.

And why "blatant Atheist"? "Blatant" was, we believe, first used by Spenser in his "Fairie Queene," but no one appears to be certain as to its derivation. Still, in ordinary language, it means loud, assertive, aggressive and so forth. In that case, who more completely deserves the application of the term than, say, our archbishops or, indeed, the majority of Christian preachers? They cannot assist at the unveiling of a village pump without a "blatant" reference to Christianity. In a thousand and one ways they are always ramming their religion down the throats of other people in the name of God. They are a licensed public nuisance, chartered "blatanteers," operating by the authority of God. If any man other than a Christian behaved in the way Christians do he would be voted a public nuisance. Even Mr. Gedye cannot frame an indictment against Hitler—and that is not a very difficult task—without a vulgar and extremely "blatant" dragging in of "God." Mr. Gedye really should know better. We think he does know better.

We would not say that the clergy as a whole are good business men, but they do display all the keenness in running their individual stores that a tradesman could exhibit in advertising his goods. For example, take an item from the "Manchester Guardian" of June 24. A vicar, trading near Manchester, arranged with the commanding officer of the district to have a church parade, and the vicar prepared a selection of hymns, etc., so that the men should have "a happy, joyous and helpful service." The men did not ask for it, and if a vote had been taken, the "No's" would have been in the majority. But the trader in spiritual wares wanted it. He had goods for sale; most of the stock was very, very old, and the only way to secure customers was to order possible ones to come and inspect it. The commanding officer said he would order the men to attend the trade show.

And then something happened. At the last moment the commanding officer wrote saying that other arrangements had been made. Another church in another area had been selected and, not only that, but the vicar's area was put out of bounds for both officers and men. Hence the trouble. Instead of the men being ordered to be present at the trade parade of Vicar No. 1, they were sent to inspect the trade parade of Vicar No. 2. The goods were the same at both exhibitions, but the soldiers—who are engaged in fighting for freedom—were ordered to attend trade exhibition No. 2 and forbidden to look at the exhibits of trade exhibition No. 1. And it would have been useless for the aggrieved vicar to have claimed damages; the other one might have said that the sales were so small, nothing had been lost worth bothering about.

But how long will it be before our fighters for freedom have secured enough liberty to stay away from church whenever they feel inclined? There was, of course, a time when civilians also were ordered to attend church. But not to-day. Why should not soldiers have the same freedom of choice?

We do wish that some of our tame scientists, and the Government, would treat the general public as being sufficiently mature to hear the truth. We have particularly in mind the many "talks" to which we are subjected concerning food. Everything that we cannot afford to have in plenty, or must go without altogether, is pronounced in the name of science—generally the alleged scientific speaker's name is not given—to be of no great value, or of no value at all, and all we can have is as good, or even better, than our normal feeding stuffs. And it is proven so by a catalogue of vitamins from A to Z, or by other methods.

Now we have no hesitation in saying that this talk is mainly scientific rubbish; in other words, it is not science at all. There is a psychological factor in feeding—as in so many other things—that these anonymously scientific feeders entirely ignore. A scientifically devised food that one does not like, other things being equal, will not do one as much good as a diet that infringes or ignores these conveniently made "laws" of feeding. The gusto with which one eats a favourite food must certainly be of some value. The activity of digestive juices—we hope that is the correct word—at the sight of a food that is liked is different—at least in quantity—from that shown when the food is disliked. That we state as a demonstrated truth. If the experiments on conditioned reflexes prove anything, they seem to prove this. So why not treat the public as moderately reasonable beings and say plainly, "You will not be able to get foods that will nourish some of you as well as other foods would. But there will be enough food available to keep all of you in a fair state of health, and with that we shall have to be content." We believe the public "can take it." But scientists who preach according to political policy are decidedly not good, even though it may lead to a knighthood or a good job.

The true epic of our times is not "Arms and the Man," but "Tools and the Man"—an infinitely wider kind of epic.—CARLYLE.

"THE FREETHINKER,"

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London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. L. ENGLISH.—Thanks, shall appear soon.

C. W. EVANS.—If you can get together a sufficient number of helpers there is no reason whatever why a meeting should not be arranged. We know there are plenty of opportunities for propaganda in your district.

W. W. SMITH.—Thanks for corrections. The proofs should have been more carefully read. But we are only just getting things straightened out, and we have to work hurriedly—with the usual results.

W. CARROLL.—We never advise anyone to take risks if they are not personally inclined to do so. There are situations where a man must make up his own mind on the matter. The disgraceful thing is that such a situation should exist. We quite appreciate your frankness in the matter.

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—W. Perry, 20s.; R. B. Harrison, £2; Dr. J. Niven Laing, £5 5s.; H. Garside, 5s.; D. Henderson, 1s.; Miss M. Ray, 5s.

E. K. T.—We are pleased to say that our library at home has not yet been damaged. It was the collection of books and other publications dealing with the history of the Freethought Movement, which were kept at the office, that has gone. Our intention with these was to leave them to the N.S.S. to form the nucleus of a Freethought—not a mere liberal—library. We have not the time we once had to go book-hunting, but we shall do what we can.

J. WILLIAMS.—Until the creation of the Ecclesiastical Commission the bishops were very often great landowners in virtue of their being bishops. In any case, most of them were receiving huge salaries, and nepotism was rife. This was just over a century ago. The Church also completely dominated the Universities, and they were at their lowest as a consequence. The claim that the Church received its wealth from pious benefactors is one of those established falsehoods on which, and by which, the Church retains its political and social power. While it is true that many Churchmen were in favour of social reform, the statement that the Church called for reform is as great a lie as the current one that we are fighting a war to protect Christianity.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

"The Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

SUGAR PLUMS

"BLOODY," thanks to Mr. Bernard Shaw, is now quite a permissible term in polite society. Even the B.B.C. permits it to be used in its broadcasts. But there are limits. On June 29, Mr. Ebury, one of the N.S.S. outdoor speakers, had occasion, in the course of a lecture in Hyde Park, to use "bloody" in describing an incident while in the Army. Mr. Ebury and four witnesses gave evidence in the police court that the word carried no reference to Jesus. But two young police constables, in a verbal agreement that did not differ by a single letter, said otherwise, with the result that the magistrate at Marlborough Street Police Court fined Mr. Ebury £5 for offending the Park regulations. No one in the audience was shocked and no one complained. The meeting was quite orderly from beginning to end. But the magistrate was shocked, and wound up the hearing with some quite unnecessary comments on the National Secular Society with which we will deal next week. Even a magistrate might reflect that it is necessary to know something about an organisation before criticising it in conditions which do not permit of either refutation or rebuke.

We received the other day a letter from a new recruit in the Army which tells a very curious story. The man in question had registered as not being of any religion. Afterwards, he found his identity disc marked Church of England. When a church parade was called the man, quite properly, asked to be excused from the service. There was a warning that he would be put on something like fatigue service—a thinly disguised threat, although he was told he could be of any religion he pleased. In the end he was sent to visit the padre.

Now we are curious to know why this was done. It must be remembered that these servants of the Lord are ranked as officers, with an officer's full pay (frequently their pay is continued by the Church to which they belong), and a man who comes before him is naturally handicapped. It is likely that any really strong opposition offered to the views of the padre would be counted as insolence. But why is the parson given the power to cross-examine soldiers? He certainly has no moral right to cross-examine a man who says he is without a religion? It is a sheer tyranny that this should be done. And in this war for liberty, as we have said more than once, it might be recognised that the first right a man should claim is that of following his own opinions where those opinions do not interfere with military discipline. There is no reason why every soldier should not be able to state what his is with perfect freedom, and to live up to his declaration. Freedom of religious opinion in the British Forces does not sound a very bad "slogan." To have the choice of a religion only is not freedom at all.

An old friend sends us the following lines from Le Galien's translation of Omar Khayyam:—

The Koran? Well, come put me to the test,
Lovely old book in hideous error dressed;
Believe me, I can quote the Koran too,
The unbeliever knows the Koran best.

He says that we have only to substitute Bible for Koran and it fits "The Freethinker." We agree, but as we have pointed out very often, man is not saved by understanding a "sacred" book. He has just got to believe in it.

We are getting on as rapidly as possible with the reprinting of books and pamphlets, and also have new publications in view. But this is not an easy task. Many who could have undertaken work in normal times cannot now do so. There is, of course, the paper shortage to deal with, which becomes steadily more acute. Even the cloth for binding is so scarce that we may have to resort to stiff boards. The situation keeps one very busy and very much on the alert, but it is interesting, none the less. It is like playing a game with a skilful opponent. There is more interest in the fighting and greater pleasure when the difficulties are overcome.

The offer to send a copy of "The Freethinker" each week free to any member of H.M. Forces likely to be interested in our literature and movement is still open. Readers and members of the N.S.S. and Secular Society Limited are asked to send us the names and addresses of such likely persons; we will do the rest. The opportunities and possibilities of spreading our views among men drawn together by Army, Navy and Air Force life should induce all Freethinkers to help in the scheme and thus join in the good work done in that direction.

INSPIRATION

WHILST we may firmly believe that God's providence has led ancient believers to preserve and hand down to us all that we need as the record of his uttered Word, there can be no hard and fast lines at the margins. Some of the books still preserved, lying outside the Canon, may still witness the truth of God to us, and some of those preserved within the Canon may be of less use to us than those without it.—DR. H. W. ROBINSON, in "The Bible, Ancient and English Versions" (1940).

Do not confound the sacred name of honour with that ferocious prejudice which places all virtue at the point of the sword, or at the mouth of the pistol, and is only calculated to make brave villains.—ROUSSEAU.

THE "MAN" JESUS

VI

IN his well-known book, "Eccce Deus," Prof. W. B. Smith devotes a special chapter to what he calls the "silence" of Tacitus. He points out what Robert Taylor urged against Gibbon (who believed in the authenticity of the reference to Jesus in the "Annals"): that "it is inconceivable, then, that an event (the Neronian persecutions), so supremely memorable, should have escaped all record and all reference. Early tradition is absolutely silent about both the Neronian persecution and the Tacitean testimony." Smith minutely analyses many of the Early Christian writers to show they knew nothing of these things whatever the charges they made against the "monster" Nero, and he claims that "by three entirely independent lines of inquiry we are led to precisely the same result," namely, that the chapter regarding "Christ" "wears the appearance of being interpolated." But, declares Smith, even if the passage is genuine, "it could prove nothing to the point."

But the question of the authenticity of the "Annals" has been examined with very great care in a book written over 60 years ago to which reference is often made—though critics appear to me to run away from the argument. This work is "Tacitus and Bracciolini: The Annals Forged in the Fifteenth Century," by J. W. Ross. The author did not write from an anti-Christian standpoint; indeed, he does not even mention throughout his 430 pages the disputed passage. He claims that the whole of the "Annals" were forged.

His argument was not at all liked by Christians, who have very keen noses where the taint of heresy is concerned. As an example, take the following letter written by the Rev. Mark Pattison to Prof. Churton Collins—it will be found on page 77 of the "Life of Churton Collins." Mr. Pattison says:—

"In that absurd Tacitean criticism called 'Tacitus and Bracciolini,' which came out anonymously about two years ago, it was proved conclusively that the 'Annals' were written by Poggio in spite of the fact that one MS. of the 'Annals' is at least as early as the 11th century, a consideration which the critic, whose name I forget, did not think worth his attention."

To anyone familiar with Ross's work this letter proves that either Pattison never read "Poggio and Bracciolini" or took the risk that Collins would not do so, and therefore felt, in the interest of his religion, he could safely declare that Ross did not deal with the 11th century manuscript. The plain and sufficient answer is that a description of all the MSS. will be found in the book; the question as to whether a particular MS. can be dated the 11th century being one for experts to decide.

The late Dr. F. C. Conybeare, in his "Historical Christ," also mentions the 11th century MS. without, just like Pattison, giving any authority. Conybeare is a typical example of the angry Rationalist or semi-Rationalist I had in mind when referring to such, and his book shows him at his worst. What does Ross say?

"The four most important MSS. are those known as the First and Second Florence, the Buda and that from which Vindelinius of Spire published the last six books. The two oldest are the 'Second Florence' and the 'Buda.' It would seem that the 'Second Florence,' from the note at the end, dates back to the year 395, though the Benedictines, in their 'Nouveau Traité de Diplomatie' (Vol. III., pp. 278-9), thought they recognised in it a Lombard writing of the 10th or 11th century. Ernesti modified

that to the 9th; others, again, changed it to the 7th and even the 6th; but it will be shown to satisfaction in the course of this treatise that it belongs to the 15th century."

I am, unfortunately, not a Latin or a classical scholar. I cannot, therefore, discuss the various points raised and so ably argued by Ross with the authority I should like. I can only say that as far as the actual text of the "Annals" is concerned, Ross subjects it to a very critical analysis—as he was thoroughly qualified to do. Before this analysis can be dismissed with a wave of the hand, so to speak, it should be methodically examined and shown to be in every way false; only thereby can Ross be declared as answered.

He claims to show that the famous Florentine, Poggio Bracciolini, was the forger of the "Annals"; in favour of which view he says:—

"I have tried to make out a case by bringing forward a variety of passages from the 'History' and the 'Annals' to show an extensive series of contradictions as to facts and characters, departures from truth about matters connected with ancient Roman life, laches in grammar and use of words that could never have proceeded from any patrician or plebian of the world-renowned old Commonwealth, with a number of other things that will readily strike the intelligent and sober-minded as utterly inconsistent with the existing belief of the 'Annals' being the production of Tacitus."

A full account of Poggio and his activities is given—a remarkable picture of Italy in the 15th century. It was undoubtedly an age of imposture, as "the temptation was great to palm off literary forgeries, especially of the chief writings of antiquity, on account of the Popes, in their efforts to revive learning, giving money rewards and indulgencies to those who should procure MS. copies of any of the ancient Greek or Roman authors. Manuscripts turned up, as if by magic, in every direction from libraries of monasteries . . ." Unless the picture of the times drawn so ably by Ross is fully taken into account the problem cannot be properly envisaged. And from the offhand way in which the probability that the "Annals" was forged is dismissed the earnest inquirer is very often put off from making any kind of investigation himself.

Prof. W. B. Smith also discusses the linguistic problems offered by the "Annals," and, without going as far as Ross, he makes it clear that the Tacitus of the "History" cannot have been the author of, at least, the disputed passages in the "Annals" on the question of Latin alone. Much greater researches were undertaken by the Frenchman, Hochart, as pointed out by John M. Robertson; and it seems to me, as a lay student of these matters, that the final word has by no means been said on the authenticity of the "Annals" of Tacitus, and particularly on the passage containing the reference to "Christ."

That Rationalists can be found, in the face of all this, supporting the most credulous of Christian evidence-mongers in regarding the evidence of Tacitus as practically irrefutable is something more than a surprise, particularly when they never, if they can help it, make any show in overthrowing either Ross or Hochart. Until they produce a work dealing in detail with these authors and proving them to be hopelessly wrong, I decline to discuss the subject seriously with them. And I repeat again that Tacitus, genuine or not, provides no evidence whatever that there lived and died in Palestine anybody called Jesus of Nazareth, man or god.

H. CUTNER

PILGRIMS

"A GREAT name, like unto the great men that are in the earth," magnetically induces pilgrimages from all parts of the world.

"Great men," says Carlyle, "are the fire pillars in this dark pilgrimage of mankind . . . the revealed possibilities of human nature . . . the guides of the dull host . . . how many weighty reasons, how many innocent allurements attract our curiosity to such men!" (*Mis.*, Vols. II, III, IV.)

Drawn by many motives, visitors become more of a hindrance than a help to great men.

So much can be taken from, and so little given to, genius by its patrons! Sought after by the literary, the curious, the convivial, often as a mere entertainment, great men suffer untold harm, while warm-hearted fellows like Burns are hopelessly ruined.

Edward Carpenter spoke humorously about his "worshippers," many of whom, he thought, by no stretch of imagination, could be credited with sanity.

Tolstoy's genius was often sorely taxed before he could rid himself of his many peculiar friends.

And so with other great men.

The following four illustrations of these visits have been selected from a great number, not because of their intrinsic merit so much, probably, as old associations.

1. Solomon: The Queen of Sheba visited Solomon "to prove him with hard questions, and to see his wisdom." Her riddles numbered about 19 and all of them amusing. Here follows a few, as samples, and Solomon's answers:—

Q.: What is a well of wood, a pail of iron which draws up stones and pours out water?

A.: A tube of cosmetic!

Q.: What is it which comes from the earth as dust, the food of which is dust, which is poured out like water and which looketh toward the house?

A.: Naphtha!

Q.: What is it which proceedeth all like a general; which crieth loud and bitterly; the head of which is like a reed; which is the glory of the rich and the shame of the poor, the glory of the dead and the shame of the living; the joy of the birds and the sorrow of the fishes?

A.: Flax!

Q.: Seven depart, nine enter; two pour, one drinks?

A.: Seven days of woman's uncleanness and nine months of pregnancy; two breasts of the mother at which the child is nourished!

Q.: A woman saith to her son: "Thy father is my father, thy grandfather my husband; thou art my son; I am thy sister."

A.: This mother is one of the daughters of Lot who were with child by their father! (*Gen. xix. 30-38.*)

(*The Jewish Encyclopædia*, Vol. XI., p. 236.)

2. Dean Swift was sought after by all and sundry, from palace to slum, e.g. his barber, having added a public house to his business, requested the Dean to write a few lines to put on it by way of motto, to help him to draw customers. "And what's your sign?" said the Dean. "The Pole and Bason," said the barber. The Dean took out his pencil and wrote:—

"Rove not from pole to pole, but step in here,
Where naught excels the shaving but the beer."

3. Sir Walter Scott, visited by peer and pauper, like the Dean, did not escape the attention of the publican.

A Scottish innkeeper, having adopted the sign "Flodden Well" for his inn, waited on Scott, observing, "As you have written so much about it, you might ken something that would do for an inscription." The poet immediately replied, "Why man, I think ye cannot do better than take a verse from the poem itself." The innkeeper agreeing to do so, Scott said, "Why, then, you have just nothing to do but to leave out a letter and put for a motto:—

"Drink, weary traveller—drink and pay, instead of pray, which you might not attend to so punctually."

4. Robert Burns was ruined by visitors!

An apostle of African emancipation, while on a tour through Scotland, canvassing for petitions to Parliament, became obsessed with an idea that if he could get Burns to write a stirring poem on the Slave Trade it would help toward its abolition.

When passing through Dumfries he called on Burns and received a cordial welcome. After stating the purpose of his visit, he was surprised to learn that such a poem could not be made to order. "Well, then," said he to the poet, "I leave this place by the mail at 6 o'clock to-morrow morning (it was already evening) and you can let me have the song before then."

Burns smiled and, ordering a bowl of punch, requested the deputy to tell him what progress the cause was making.

The apostle of human brotherhood unburthened his soul of the woes and sufferings of the poor African, and bewailed the fact that the Christian Churches were the foundation of the slave trade. It was capitalised and run by Christians. Slaves were looked upon as property. The Christian Churches made huge profits from their human investments. Progress, therefore, could only be heartbreakingly slow.

Unfortunately the muse of Burns remained uninspired.

The scene which followed became animated and delightful. Burns paced the floor, unpacking his heart of words—while the fascinated African keenly watched, as it were, the unveiling of a god:—

For proud and fiery and swift and bold—

Wine of life from heart of gold—

The blood of his heathen manhood rolled

Full billowed through his veins.—(B. V.)

Hour after hour passed unheeded until "the cock's shrill clarion" reminded the worthy apostle that his hour of departure drew near. But, alas for the song!

Another bowl of punch occupied the time till parting. The deputy was then lifted into the mail humming as well as he could:—

"I hae been i' Hornie's den,
Bonnie laddie; Highland laddie."

The sweet singer of Caledonia, left to himself, went out to sniff the caller, morning air.

GEORGE WALLACE

POPERY AND MARRIAGE IN EARLY TIMES

WE quote from J. F. Nisbet ("Marriage and Heredity"). He refers (p. 48) to "the stigma attached by the Church to all that relates to the reproduction of the species . . . it would surely be difficult to maintain upon strictly philosophical grounds that an instinct or appetite upon which the very existence of the human race depends is essentially a degraded one. As well stigmatise eating and sleeping."

There is no more painful spectacle in history than the attitude maintained by the Church towards marriage during the first ten centuries. We can hardly say indeed that the Church has ever touched the subject with clean hands, for its tardy adoption of the sacramental view of marriage appears to have been dictated, if possible, by less worthy motives than its previous hostility to the nuptial union. For many centuries after Christ marriage was regarded as purely a civil union. It was bitterly assailed in that form by the Fathers of the Church, and there was a particularly nauseous element in the reforming zeal of these holy men. Chastity was preached not because it was a good thing in itself, but because man's fall and the necessity for his redemption were traced to an indiscretion committed in the Garden of Eden. The polluting influence of passion was not thought to be redeemed by marriage. All intercourse between the sexes was discountenanced. It was taught that to have children under any circumstances was a sin, as it only supplied food for death, and that woman was an instrument of Satan. Continence was declared to be the perfection of virtue. In pursuance of this doctrine, Origen, one of the Fathers of the third century, did violence to his own person, and emasculation thereafter was not infrequently practised. Young people were enjoined to enter into vows of celibacy, and multitudes did so, nunneries and monasteries being established to receive them. Second marriages were denounced as especially abominable. St. Jerome, in the fourth century, while treating simple marriage as evil and vicious in itself, reserved the worst vials of his wrath for what was called bigamy (second marriage). This pious Father considered that the "clean" animals in Noah's Ark were those that had had no intercourse with their kind, the "unclean" being the remainder. (Tertullian declared that second marriage was only a species of fornication.)

"Decrees were made forbidding married women to approach the altar or to touch the eucharist, and it was even declared to be doubtful whether married persons cohabiting with each other could be saved. St. Chrysostom, in the fifth century, boldly averred that if man had not sinned the world would have been peopled by other means. All married persons were exhorted to pray for grace to keep themselves undefiled, and wives were commended for declining the embraces of their husbands. As the result of these doctrines innumerable impediments were thrown in the way of marriage. The forbidden degrees of consanguinity and affinity were extended to a ridiculous length. Widows who had promised to live a single life were excommunicated if they married again. Any married woman who wished to be a nun was allowed to leave her husband and enter a convent, and he was forbidden to take another wife. All married persons were asked to abstain from cohabitation three days before Communion and forty days after Easter; next it was held to be as great a sin for a man to cohabit with his wife in Lent as to eat flesh; then marriage was forbidden during Lent and at sundry other specified seasons, until, as an old writer quietly remarks, 'there were but few weeks or days in the year in which people could get married at all.' No ordinance, in short, no tale too extravagant, to serve the purpose of checking the legitimate intercourse of the sexes."

All this ecclesiastical lunacy had a very bad effect on the status of women. "The early Church did its best" (or worst?) "to throw women back into a state of serfdom, and succeeded only too well. It was in the Middle Ages and under clerical influence that they were loaded with the civil disabilities from which they still suffer in most Christian countries with respect to property; and chivalry, while professing sentimental aims, was in reality the first protest raised against this retrogressive policy. (The Married Women's Property Act of the nineteenth century conferred on Christian women for the first time a right which had been enjoyed by the women of pagan Rome over 1,800 years before.)"

Do not get the idea that the ascetic epidemic attacked all the people of the Roman Empire straight off. It was of gradual growth. We have referred to the funeral of St. Simeon Stylites. This was in A.D. 359 and its pomp shows that by then the ruling classes were paying great deference (in public) to the ascetic cult, and the masses had no doubt got the opinion that the ascetics were the highest representatives of religion and holiness—though with reservations; for, as against the tendency to ecclesiastical "benediction" on marriage we may set the statement of Mr. McCabe in his "Popes and Their Church" (p. 127): "For at least six centuries the laity obstinately refused to submit their marriages to the clergy, and they freely used their right of divorce." But the ascetics gradually got a dominant position in the Church. Their "philosophy" of sex and marriage became the official doctrine of the Church. Of course, they could not get everybody to be celibate or to practice strict continence. The human race was not quite so silly! Marriage and the procreation of children had to continue. But the ascetics' theories have dominated the Church to this day, and from the twelfth century have imposed celibacy on the professionals of that Church; all to the tremendous harm of the Church, the professionals and the world that has had such a cancer in its midst.

We may note some of the steps on the journey to the goal of enforced priestly celibacy.

We find even in the New Testament the germ of the idea that religious professionals should be restrained in their sex life to a greater extent than ordinary men. St. Paul says that an overseer in religion (possibly what we now call a bishop) should be the husband of one wife only. This shows at any rate that in the New Testament bishops could be married—or perhaps **should** be. The text, however, is so vague that it is not clear whether it means that a bishop should not have more than one wife at a time (i.e. should not be a polygamist) or whether he should not marry another wife after the death of his first (i.e. he should not be a bigamist). We would prefer to think that Paul, although a bachelor himself, considered that a bishop should preferably be married, but it seems to be mostly taken as expressing the sentiment that a bishop, for the credit of his calling and the increase of his reputation as a

specialist in religion, should submit to a decrease in the sex ration as allowed to the ordinary man. Whatever the exact meaning of Paul's words, it is certain that polygamy became definitely unchristian, and a definite trend set in among laity and clergy that clerics should show their superiority in holiness by reduced sex rations. Marriage for clerics was still practised, but a cleric committing bigamy—i.e. entering a second marriage after the death of the first wife—caused a grave reflection in his morals. In A.D. 325, at the Council of Nicea, there were many delegates who strongly expressed the opinion that bishops, priests and deacons should refrain from sexual commerce with their wives; but they did not have a majority in the voting. But ere long the law was made stricter; priests and deacons, if not already married had not to marry, and if married had to live apart from their wives. In A.D. 385 the Bishop (Pope) Siricius of Rome interdicted the marriage of clergy, but as clergy did get married for another 700 years, it shows that the Pope of Rome had no great authority in A.D. 385.

We can imagine that when there came to be a large proportion of priests celibate, these would look with jealous eyes on their happier mates. (Priests soon get a jealous eye.) And, in fact, feeling became very bitter. The married priests did not submit without a struggle. Lecky tells of a papal zealot who went to Cambrai in 1077 to preach the doctrine of priestly celibacy. He must have used irritating language, for the married priests took and burned him! Lecky follows up this tale with another dated 50 years later. A papal legate in England delivered a fierce denunciation of priestly unchastity—no doubt stressing the "unchastity"—of a priest having a wife. A few hours later the legate was surprised with a whore. Celibates' talk about chastity is generally hypocritical cant.

From about the early 1100's priestly celibacy was practically general. We may mention two papal ordinances of the last stages of the campaign against married priests. Gregory VIII. threatened to excommunicate all laymen who attended a Mass performed by a married priest.

Urban II. gave licence to nobles to reduce to slavery the wives whom priests obstinately refused to abandon. How's that for an infallible Pope and an infallible Church, sole authority on morals? Bah!

C. BOLTON

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.0. MR. L. ERURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, MR. L. ERURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30. Thursday, MR. E. C. SAPHIN. Sunday, 6.0, MR. R. H. ROSETTI.

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday, 11.0 a.m., PROFESSOR G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D. "The British Army: Past, Present and Future."

COUNTRY

Blyth (The Fountain), Monday, July 14: 7. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Chester-le-Street (The Bridge), Saturday, July 12: 7, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Darlington (Market Steps), Sunday, July 13: 7, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

North Shields (Harbour View), Tuesday, July 15: 7, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Stockton (The Cross), Wednesday, July 16: 7, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Kingston and District N.S.S. Branch (Market Place), Sunday: 7.30, MR. J. W. BARKER.