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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Concluded from page 226)

### The War and Religion

WHAT is most striking in the relation of the Roman Catholic Church to the war position is the almost inhuman disregard of human life and human interests where the interests of religion are concerned. It is quite plain that if Rome, as a city, had suffered the same measure of destruction that had befallen so many other towns and cities, with its tribute of human lives; if the same disaster had overcome Rome that had overtaken Greece, the status of the Roman Catholic religion would have suffered. But, if that had occurred, the effect on the reaction of the Roman Catholics in America, in this country and in Germany would have been great. There would have been a religious reaction in the direction of opposition to the war, with a cry for peace at any price. And to the more mentally alert there would have been developed a measure of doubt concerning the validity of Catholic religious claims. Neither Germany nor the Allies could risk this. The Papacy had showed no deep concern with the brutalities of the Italians in Abyssinia, or the German and Spanish brutalities in the case of the insurrection in Spain—an insurrection that would not have been successful but for the religious blessing of Franco by the Vatican, an inaction amounting to help by the Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments, and the help of German battle planes. The Vatican, it may also be noted, took with heroic nonchalance the brutalities of Nazis in Russia. The one instance in which it waxed most indignant was that of the German overrunning of Poland. But here again the action was obviously determined by religious interests. Poland was a stronghold of Roman Catholicism, and the interests of Rome were evident. One ought not to forget the very substantial monetary deal that the Papacy made with Mussolini in the early part of his career as a miniature Hitler. It was a modern edition of the New Testament story of the twenty pieces of silver.

But when the Germans saw that the bombardment of the "holy city" would be no more than a delay in the advance of the Allies, and would bring dangerous reactions in other directions, one would have thought that recognition of the forbearance of the Allies, and the security given to the Vatican by Allied leaders, would have brought something like grateful recognition of the struggles and casualties of the Allied troops. What did appear, when Rome was saved, was a desire to boom Catholicism without a word of recognition concerning the smashing of German control over the "holy city." Here is the way in which the Pope recognised his rescue from Nazi control; it is worth while noting its quality here, since none of the

newspapers have stressed it. Directly after the release of Rome by the Allies this is what occurred. Speaking from the Vatican to an immense gathering, the Pope said:—

"Rome yesterday was fearful for the lives of her sons and daughters. . . . To-day she sees salvation with new hope and some confidence. Therefore with deeply thankful spirit we raise our minds and hearts in praise and adoration to God, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, on whose solemn feast . . . both belligerent parties were inspired, in honour of religion and of the Eternal City, to spare the city from immeasurable peril. . . . We reverently bow to the apostles Peter and Paul, whose serene hands have protected this land, once steeped in the sweat of their apostolic fatigue."

There it is! Even in a situation where decency and sense would have set aside this blatant advertising of the Vatican's goods no notice is taken of the struggles of the Allied troops, of the dead and the wounded. They might at least have been given honourable mention. And as a lie more or less does not matter, we need not dwell on the crowning impudence of the Papal delivery that "serene hands" (angels) have protected the land. In the face of the Italian towns in ruins, and the towns that will share their fate, the blatant absurdity of the claim is unmistakable.

We shall expect in due course the appearance of some more stories and visions of the Fatima order. For aught we know, the leisure given to the Vatican by the success of the Allies may be devoted to preparing an account of how the Virgin and her retinue hovered over the Vatican for the protection of the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church.

Let us go back to the Pope's appeal made before the Allies entered Rome, which ran: "Whoever dares to raise a hand against Rome will be guilty of matricide in the eyes of the civilised world." That appeal is, like so many religious appeals nowadays, very artful. It says one thing and means another. It is on all fours with a man who asks for money in the interests of the deserving poor and then puts it in his pocket on the ground that he himself is the most deserving of all the poor people with whom he is acquainted. On this point we are pleased to be able to quote from a leading article which appeared in the "Evening Standard" for June 3. It is not for the first time that the "Standard" has given a sharp rap on the knuckles to the Churches; it is, in fact, the only London paper that is not afraid to now and again administer a rebuke to our religious leaders—or even to say a good word for the work done by well-known Freethinkers. The article takes up the Pope's appeal to the Allies not to bomb Rome, which we have already cited, and stresses the narrow and untruthful historical position of the Pope. It

reminds him that his statements are a one-sided, untrue presentation of historic fact. It says:—

“Athens gave to us something which we do not rate below the bequests of Rome; she gave us a love of beauty and truth. We do not recall that the Pope spoke out so loud and bold when the Parthenon was endangered. Jerusalem, in both Testaments, stands for us as the emblem of righteousness; she, too, is part of our heritage. Yet when was her sanctity coupled with Rome’s? And since Christians may worship on the hills of Samaria as devoutly as in the Temple itself, we may ask what manifestos were issued when Addis Ababa was in peril?

“Paris first spoke the words which have enthralled mankind from that day to this; she, too, is our parent, and we shall never disown her. So much that we strive for to-day was bravely pronounced within her beleaguered gates that we would be dishonourable indeed if we forgot our debt to the people of France. And if this example is not sufficiently modern, we may cite Moscow, upon whom the whole of the Free World centred its hopes in 1941.

“We are English, and we love our own native land best of all. London is our mother. She has ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples, not as ancient but no less lovable than the glories of Rome. We prayed in 1940 that not one stone of that beauty would be touched, and yet we preferred that the whole of our city should be laid in ruins rather than that the Nazis should march as conquerors through our streets. It is that resolution which now enables Rome to be rescued from the infamy perpetrated in its midst during the past twenty years.”

That is well said, and may serve as an example for those writers in the Press who are afraid to say anything that would directly displease our ecclesiastical authorities or their very Christian readers. Most of our leading papers seem to live in deadly fear lest they should offend the religious powers that be; for it would be an insult to their intelligence to assume that they do not see through the falsity of religious beliefs and the vicious character of Church teachings.

### Christianity and the World

But the story is not completely told when it is pointed out that other nations have their cultural claims. There has, in fact, been an unregistered conspiracy to place “Christian” Rome in the front of the picture to the detriment of a sane and scientific historical picture. There have been two Romes — the pagan Rome to which the world owes much, and “Christian” Rome which has annexed the greatness of the older influence, and while all the time fighting a rearguard action in defence of reaction has managed to place itself in a prominent position in the picture. We said there were two Romes; there has been, in fact, four. First we have the Rome of pagan antiquity. That came to an end, say, about the 4th or 5th century, the period which Gibbon marked as providing the triumph of “barbarism and religion”—the Christian religion. That period was followed by another Rome in which the Church was unchecked in power. That was a period of social decay, of Christianity triumphant, with the ancient learning of Greece and Rome substantially forgotten. This Rome

existed until about the 12th century, and bears the interesting label of the “Dark Ages.” Then followed the period of the Renaissance (the re-birth). The title itself is an indictment of the Church, for the life-giving influence came not from a revival of Christianity, but from the recovery of Greek and Roman art, science and literature, and which reached the Christian world mainly through the influence of the highly civilised section of the Mohammedan world. But, as we have said, the title given to the period—that of “Renaissance”—tells its own story to those who can read with their ears as well as with their eyes. Finally, we have a fourth period, the existing one, the date of which is not easy to mark, but which we may say began early in the 16th century and is with us to-day. These are rough-and-ready figures and must not be read as a lesson in mathematics; but they will at least set an intelligent reader on a track that will enable him to find the right road. It will help to kill the established lie that the world is indebted to any extent for its arts and sciences and social developments to Christian influence. Nothing is more stupid than to place to the credit of Christianity the development in art and science that took place in Europe covered by the Renaissance. Some credit for the form taken by art may be given to the Church, but the spirit of the artists was mainly pagan. In both art and architecture the Church owed much of its form to non-Christian sources. Not only in art and architecture is it possible to see the direct inspiration of the non-Christian world, but in the structure of even many of the Churches in Rome it is possible to note the direct influence of the Mohammedan world. And so far as the sciences are concerned there was no other channel to which life could come to the Christian world than that which came from pagan Greece and pagan Rome through the improved developments of Mohammedan Spain and Baghdad. And it is open to all who will not keep their eyes closed that pagan culture gave the lead and the impetus to the new world. Non-Christian culture also lies even at the base of our law, and where there is no law bearing on a subject Roman law is not without its power in our Courts.

We take this opportunity of commending to readers two volumes of the “Legacy” series issued by the Oxford Press: “The Legacy of Rome” and “The Legacy of Islam.” It will help them to realise the deliberate and concerted part played by Mohammedan countries in developing the scholarship of the world. It is time justice was done. But justice and Christianity have never been close friends.

And now I may bring this lesson to an end, at least for the moment. The Pope began it by his impudence in placing the safety of the Vatican as of world-wide cultural importance. To have said this openly and honestly would have exposed its falsity and its narrow-mindedness. So Rome (undated) is placed before the world as the centre of culture; and not one out of a hundred pause to ask themselves, “Which is the Rome to which the world justly gives its admiration?” Ask that question, insist on an answer, and the bubble is broken. We again thank the “Evening Standard” for having the courage to prick the Roman Catholic lie of the world’s special indebtedness to the Christian Church, the thing that worked so hard to stamp out Greek and Roman culture, which has opposed with might and main almost every scientific discovery, can have no honourable place in the history of human develop-

ment! To the end it has run true to form. It could maintain friendly terms with Mussolini; it could give an eager help towards discouraging the greatest effort made for a development of social life in Russia. It can hardly be expected to flinch at a lie where its own status is threatened.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## THE INCEPTION OF MEDIAEVAL CITY LIFE

WHEN the Dark Ages that followed the overthrow of Pagan Rome slowly lightened into day, the urban areas of Western Europe became the centres of a revived civilisation. Wasteful warfare and productive husbandry were the outstanding activities of the early mediæval centuries. In the manors and monasteries a few industries were in their infancy, but competent craftsmen were confined to Constantinople, the capital of that Greek Empire in the East.

The Roman municipalities had been superseded by the despotism of bishops and bandit barons and ancient freedom had practically disappeared. But with the disintegration of Charlemagne's ramshackle Empire and the renewal of barbarian invasions, an increasing population tended to congregate within cities where industry and commerce could be conducted by an urban community largely released from the laborious restrictions imposed in rural life. Also, it appears probable that the depredations of the invading Northmen and Hungarians necessitated the erection of protective walls around settlements and stimulated the development of town life.

But definite information concerning the genesis of urban centres before the twelfth century is scanty, and even when their craftsmen's trade guilds appear in the full light of day, little record remains of their origin. For a considerable period, as Professor Thorndike notifies in his instructive "Mediæval Europe" (Harrap, 1920), "most writers were priests and were little interested in business and commerce except as the monasteries report records of their own property. Nor had the authors of literature for the knightly and feudal class much inclination to dwell upon the affairs of despised traders and working men who had struggled up from serfdom. It was only when the townsmen became educated enough to speak for themselves or rich enough to hire writers that we get adequate records of their lives."

Although many of these towns were erected on the ruins of forsaken Roman cities, others arose in the vicinity of religious houses and feudal castles and many settlements once under Roman rule, such as those in Africa and the Balkan Peninsula, were deserted. As protection against marauders was essential, many towns were built on eminences, while rivers, so serviceable to the trade communications of the period, were convenient sites for urban dwellers.

Adventurous and enterprising men anxious to escape from the disabilities of serfdom sought refuge in the towns. This indirectly led to the partial amelioration of the peasants' plight, and their tardy emancipation proceeded from economic and social causes, and they owed little or nothing to the beneficent activities of the Church. As Dr. Thorndike justly notes: "Indeed, it was the existence of walled towns where runaway serfs could find a hiding place and an opportunity to engage in other than agricultural labour that helped to make possible the emancipation movement among the peasantry."

With the creation of the merchants' guilds the feudal owners of the soil upon which the townsmen's habitations arose, found it increasingly convenient to commute for money payment the personal services previously exacted from their tenants and serfs.

In addition to the merchants' guilds or "manse," the artizans formed guilds of their own. These associations might include

apprentices, journeymen and master workmen. These last employed labour, but themselves remained workers, having passed through the preliminary phases of apprenticeship and journeymen. The small master continued to labour among his helpers and remained in close communion with his few employees. Thus was sustained a personal relationship which modern large scale production has swept away.

A high standard of workmanship was the aim and ambition of the competent craftsman who prided himself on the superiority of his handiwork, and fair prices were customary as a result of critical public appraisal. As the artificer usually sold directly to the consumer and his identification in the small communities was easy, his credit suffered seriously if his products proved inferior in quality.

The trade guilds, despite their utility, were by no means universal, and in several leading French cities, such as Lyons and Bordeaux, none existed. It is noteworthy that "Florence, one of the most populous of mediæval cities, had only 21 guilds, but they were very influential in town affairs. On the other hand, by 1500 Hamburg had 100, Cologne 80 and Lübeck 70."

The number of separate crafts seems surprisingly large, and the manufacture of woollens and linen was very extensive, while tailors, shoemakers, jewellers, goldsmiths, potters, glassmakers and many other arts and crafts had their separate guilds. Nor were the guilds' activities restricted to their special industries, as their participation in public life plainly proves. The members assisted those in need and promoted philanthropic endeavours, while some of the brotherhoods were political in character and "under the cover of social and religious meetings hatched schemes to win concessions of liberty from their lords."

Some famous cities established communes which succeeded in freeing themselves in large measure from seigniorial exploitation or even became independent and self-ruling communities, although environed by feudal estates. Still, communes seldom gained their autonomy without a bitter conflict. Laon, for instance, was drastically ruled by a malevolent Bishop who gave his negro slave a busy time as executioner of the episcopal enemies. When this worthy prelate was absent abroad, the townsmen of Laon formed a commune after purchasing permission from the local clergy and nobles who claimed rights over the town. The Bishop was infuriated by these proceedings, but expressed his satisfaction on the receipt of a substantial sum of money, and the assent of the French King, Louis VI., was secured by a similar payment. Then, Dr. Thorndike tells us, "when the King presently paid a visit to Laon, the treacherous Bishop tried to induce him to annul his consent. The citizens offered Louis £400 more if he would keep his word, but the Bishop outbid them with an offer of £700, and the King declared the commune abolished. The Bishop then set out to recover his £700 by taxing the townspeople, but this was too much for them to bear and proved his undoing. They took up arms, raised the cry of the commune, broke into the episcopal palace, massacred its defenders and, when the Bishop was found hiding in a barrel, a serf beat out his brains." The King then led his army to Laon to avenge this sacrilege and pitilessly sacked the city. Yet, in later years, Laon secured its commune, although some privileges were reserved for the Crown, Bishop and Barons.

Outside Moslem Spain, the sanitary conditions of 12th century European towns, and in far later centuries, were extremely disgusting. Indeed, the splendid sanitation of Imperial Rome was not restored even in London until the 19th century of our era. Still, despite their filthy surroundings, mediæval town dwellers in their relatively small settlements were far nearer the fresh air of the countryside than the inhabitants of present-day slums. And in the better-built houses of the later Middle Ages, glass windows which let in light began to appear and, as they helped to exclude the rain, snow and wind, their use soon

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## ACID DROPS

FAR more urgent than any of the planning that is going on for the new world, says the new Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, is "the spiritual regeneration of our people." Of course! It is a case of "What shall it profit the Church be a man ever so good who does nothing to help God and his priests?" God is not made for man; man is made for God—and both man and God are created for, primarily, the benefit of an established clergy.

Another wonderful thing—one that calls for praise for the Papacy—is that, in the newly occupied towns, British officers are asking priests and bishops for information about the people in these places. Of course, the officers take help from whoever is willing to give it; but that is not mentioned. It contains no advertisement for the Church. "And he who will not help God's representatives on earth shall not have a front seat in the City of God." We are not sure that we have quoted the New Testament properly, but it has more truth in it than the advice usually given therein.

The "Universe" finds it "inspiring" that in "moments of crisis" the King "appeals to the 'Christian tradition.'" It would have displayed better judgment and taste if those responsible for the King's speech had remembered that there are myriads of non-Christians among his subjects who do not believe in the "Christian tradition" at all. Of course, the religion of an English king goes with the post; but, all the same, fairness and decency should receive some consideration. By the way, we wonder what the King would say if he were a quite independent person and said exactly what he thought. We wonder if we should be far from the truth if we said that, while the voice was that of the King, the matter was provided—certainly the religious matter—by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We wonder how many have noticed what a magnificent advertising agency is the Catholic Church. Since the war started there has not been a week in which the Catholic journals have not made an exhibit of some Catholics who have done deeds of courage or kindness, as though either were things to marvel at. It is good advertising because the majority of people have such faint notions of the springs of human conduct.

Here is an example from the latest issue of the "Universe." A priest, a prisoner of the Nazis, was detailed to paint a wall. Near him was dying someone he knew to be a Catholic. Both were in hospital. The priest offered to hear the dying man's confession, but stopped when he saw a guard approaching. When the guard had passed the priest proceeded with the ceremony. The man died the next day. Allowing for all things, one would be surprised if any man did not help a dying man. The moral—the unconscious moral—is that Roman Catholics are so little given to kindness that when one does display it it deserves at least honourable mention. Of course, we do not share this very low opinion of Roman Catholics. When they are let alone they are as human as others.

It was William Kingdon Clifford who said that if a thing is true it should be shouted from the housetops, and if it is false that should also be shouted from the housetops. Good counsel, but what a few people regulate their lives by it. Men and women go through their lives crawling in fear of offending someone or afraid of risking some privilege they are anxious to gain. Instead of counting their ideas as among the most valuable of their possessions, they treat them as something to be hidden, or expressed with such deference to what they believe to be wrong that the people whom they are afraid to offend treat them with contempt. And when a man does not put a value on his own ideas, what right has he to expect them to offer them hospitality?

The Roman Catholic archbishops and bishops sent a message to the Pope rejoicing with him that "Rome has been spared

in accordance with your prayers." Now what exactly does that mean? Does it mean that God only wakened up to the danger confronting Rome when the message from the Pope arrived in heaven? Does it mean that but for the message the Allies would have bombarded Rome? Which they did, as a matter of fact. Does it insinuate that the reign of Fascism for over 20 years was unknown to God? If it does, what on earth was his army of saints and angels doing? And if God could save Rome, why could he not save other places? Is it because the forms for protection must reach God properly drawn up and sent by one of his accredited representatives on earth? If the message from the English priests does not mean any of these things, are we to assume that the Roman Catholic archbishops and bishops are just "kidding" the who sitteth on the throne?

According to a Roman Catholic paper in England, "Rouen Cathedral has been hit by an aerial torpedo and completely destroyed." What was God doing to permit this? Was he too busy reading the flattering message from the Catholic archbishops and bishops, or did he not act because he did not get the information in time? These be great mysteries.

The Upper and Lower Houses of the Convocation of York have passed a resolution expressing "grave concern at the prevalent drift from the Christian faith." The situation must indeed be grave when a Church Convocation comes to this point. But it does help to explain why the King's advisers put into his mouth a speech that sounded as though it came from a fourth-rate evangelical parson.

The "Sunday Chronicle," which often reads as though much of it is supplied by clergymen, says that "days of prayer are a particular expression of our national character." All that need be said is, if that be the case, and judging from the admitted proportion of the people that attend church, there is no other national characteristic that is so fearful of making itself known. For even the clergy do not claim more than about 30 per cent. of the public attending church—and that does not look very representative.

There is one padre with the Forces who seems to be a very jocular sort of man. He writes in the "Sunday Chronicle" that in these days, when we are all anxious and restless for news from the front, people should fix their minds on Jesus Christ by way of easing the strain. Well, we do not doubt that people who believe in God will find some pleasure in praying to him; and from a general business point of view the Rev. F. Hughes will find pleasure in those who follow his advice. But to some whisky is quite useful in drowning care; so is opium or any kind of sedative. "It is a matter of knowing Jesus Christ." Certainly one must find some sort of satisfaction whatever plan one adopts in moments of strain. But why limit it to Jesus? Any god will do. But you must believe in him beforehand. Quack medicine-sellers have made a good living by "belief."

The Rev. F. R. Barry thinks that a "planned society without God may prove to be a more enslaving tyranny than anything the world has yet experienced." Well, we are not over-fond of the prospect of living in a society in which every hour of our lives is planned for us. There are some homes so orderly in their outfit that one never can feel at home in them. One is always living in a nice store where nothing can be moved or done, and where one begins to wish to break something or disarrange something in the interests of human enjoyment.

So far we agree with the Bishop of Southwell. But, as is usual with bishops, when one of that kind says anything sensible the fact is so unusual that one begins to look for its cause. And the fly in the inkpot is found in the society of the future in which we must have a god; and, putting all high-flating words on one side, all that Dr. Barry means is that no society will be satisfactory in which ecclesiasticism does not rule the roost. And that is just downright religious nonsense!

## "THE FREETHINKER"

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### TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mrs. S. H. WHITFIELD.—Glad to learn of your husband's interest in Freethought. There is a Freethought Society in Bombay. It works on substantially the same lines as we do, and with great skill.

C. L. RANCE.—Thanks for what you are doing to bring this paper into new hands. The idea of a rubber stamp, "Read 'The Freethinker'" is a good one. Some of our readers adopt that plan, but the more who practise it the better.

BENEVOLENT FUND, N.S.S.—The General Secretary, N.S.S., gratefully acknowledges a gift of clothing from Mr. Joseph Close to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.*

*When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.*

*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.*

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### SUGAR PLUMS

FROM one of our readers: "Anent your remarks on the matter of copies of prayer books stopping bullets, perhaps it may interest you to know that when we, some years ago, paid a visit to the castle at Trento, which at that time was being used as a museum, we saw among the exhibits a number of cigarette cases, metal matchboxes and wallets which, during the war 1914-18, according to the notice on the case containing the exhibits, had stopped bullets and so saved the lives of the soldiers concerned. Relatives of the soldiers themselves had sent the articles to the museum. I do not remember—neither does my wife—whether God was mentioned in the accounts related by the owners; nor have we come across any advertisements pointing out the advantage—'life-saving' or 'protection from bullets'—of buying certain brands of cigarettes or matches. I cannot say what the wallets contained when the bullets struck them. As the events happened before Mussolini made his pact with Papa at the Vatican, it could not have been Papal coin. Perhaps Peter's pence!"

In Long Buckby, Northamptonshire, the parsonry has been upset. It appears that on a home-made trial track, dogs are being run on Sunday. There seems nothing to make one shiver in this fact, but one result is that a number of boys have stayed away from Sunday School, and the clergy are a bit disturbed in consequence. It is astonishing how easy it is to lower church attendance. We imagine that it is not merely boys who watch the dog-racing, and we would say off-hand that adults are well represented. But look at the situation—first general adoption of turning Sunday into a holiday. Then cinemas, now of dog racing trials. And the Lord does just nothing!

In view of what has just been said one need not be surprised at the Rev. H. J. Powell writing in the "Kent Messenger"

complaining of the decline in Church attendance, and particularly of falling off of children in Church. Perfectly shocked. Mr. Powell informs the world that a child of seven "wandered into Church" of its own accord. It was the first time it had ever been to Church. It may be, of course, that it will never repeat its blunder. Let us hope so.

But the fact that the child did get to Church gave Mr. Powell an idea, and he says:—

"If I had my way, parents who brought up a child for seven years without his ever going to Church, should be brought before the magistrates and punished."

Now that strikes the authentic note—not the authentic note of recent years, but when God was God, his servants worked lustily in his service. We do not wonder that the paper put Mr. Powell on the front page. If he had been a world-wide gangster greater honour could not have been done him. What a force this preacher would be—with anyone under nine and over ninety.

We do wish the B.B.C. would print a dozen or two of the "Anvil" discussions on religion. No one can do it justice by just listening. Properly to appreciate it one must have it in cold type, and read the passages more than once, and roll them over in one's mouth with all the relish that comes from sipping a rare wine. The "Anvil" is run by Canon Cockin (the gentleman who had a discussion with an unbeliever, but arranged what the unbeliever should say) Fr. Andrew, Mary Trevelyan, the Rev. Mr. Scott, with Dr. Welch (of the B.B.C.) beaming foolishness, and always ready to give a ridiculous turn if, by some means, the rest of the team appear to be running into common sense. But the whole proceeding is so delightfully imbecilic that it deserves to be preserved. The artists are supreme. We say artists for it is hard to believe that so much sustained imbecility could be kept up without first-class talent.

The Rev. H. Parry, at the Assembly of the Congregational Union, held in London recently, said: "We have no right to make our services such that a real musician could not enjoy them." But they cannot help it; it is just as necessary to distort good music to fit in with the mumbo-jumbo of religion as it is to distort language and speech. Music, speech and language, used intelligently, are totally out of place in the atmosphere of Christian voodooism.

At the same Assembly, the Rev. Eric R. Routley said they wanted something "robust, aggressive and offensive" about their hymnal. We suggest the reverend gentleman should examine some of the Christian hymnals. He will then find (as the Army saying puts it) that "they've had it."

Another genius at the same brainy gathering (the Rev. W. E. Hodgson) pleaded: "For heaven's sake let us make a hymn-book that can be used by the young people, who do not use our lingo, much less the lingo of our forefathers." Sure, buddy; you've got something there. But the trouble is that the young people are also not using the same ideas. So what?

The Rev. G. H. Wallace, at the Presbyterian Church of England General Assembly, declared: "We are about to look upon a Europe in flames from one end to the other. The whole European centre will be in the melting-pot for the next fifty years. We have to impress upon ourselves and our congregations the vital necessity of Christian faith." Evidently Mr. Wallace overlooks the fact that "the whole European centre" is also the chief Christian centre. If he thinks that in the next fifty years Christianity will manage to do something that it has already had 2,000 years to perform, he had better think again. Still, Mr. Wallace did not say for what purpose Christianity is a vital necessity. He might have had his Church in mind, rather than the welfare of the people of Europe.

## THE DEVIL'S CHAPLAIN (1784-1844)

### II.

IN his "Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society," Robert Taylor put forward these four propositions which, he contended, could be "unanswerably demonstrated":—

1. That the Scriptures of the New Testament were not written by the persons whose names they bear.
2. That they did not appear in the times to which they refer.
3. That the persons of whom they treat never existed.
4. That the events which they relate never happened.

For us in these days, broadly speaking, these propositions are just commonplaces. In his anxiety to make his propositions and proofs short, however, Taylor certainly made a few errors. For example, he believed that Paul existed, and that he wrote the Epistles, and he says so later in his "Diegesis." By Proposition No. 3 he means "demoniacs, devils, ghosts, angels, hobgoblins, persons who had once been dead, who could walk on water, ride in the air, such as Satan and Jesus Christ, are the persons of whom these Scriptures treat; and that such persons never existed is demonstrable." The proposition as it stands is just a little too sweeping.

But it was a heavenly opportunity for such an experienced debater as the Rev. John Pye Smith to pour the whole of his Christian broadsides on to the "unhappy man," as he was fond of calling Taylor. He commenced his pamphlet against the Manifesto with: "It is scarcely possible to imagine a more flagrant instance of audacious falsehood than is the case before us," and through page after page all the scurrilous invective he could muster was added to the aforesaid broadside. It has a vocabulary worth remembering: "Dishonest, false, wilful deceiver, shameful misrepresentations, gross untruth, disgraceful ignorance, shameless perversion, disgusting, dishonestly garbled, miserably incompetent, impudent forgery, unprincipled slanderer and deceiver, effrontery, pitiable writer," and so on. Taylor gave a long list when he sat down in his prison cell to which he was consigned by the Pye Smiths of his day, to write the "Syntagma," his reply to this typical Christian defender and bully.

The truth was, of course, that Smith knew perfectly well that Taylor's onslaught was, in the main, quite unanswerable; that Taylor's knowledge of the Christian faith came from the *inside*—that is, as a fully ordained priest, he was liable to "spill the beans." He was, in the eyes of men like Pye Smith, a renegade, and nothing could be worse. But Taylor was far too brilliant a debater to be caught by the sorry invective of even a Pye Smith, and the "Syntagma" is a scintillating reply which not only defends the Manifesto but gets in a terrific onslaught on the usual Christian evidences. So powerful a reply was it, indeed, that Pye Smith felt he must have another chance, and he was obliged to add nearly 60 pages to his first edition. That he was badly stung is shown by the fact that he then had to admit that Taylor "shows himself to be possessed of considerable ability and adroitness in the management of his case, extensive but desultory and superficial reading, and some shallow learning. . . ." It must have been gull and wormwood for Pye Smith to admit this much, but Taylor was miles ahead in both learning and reading of a man like this Nonconformist divine; and when it came to discussing Fundamentalism, Pye Smith, taking the primitive and, even a century ago, an outdated view of Christianity, was beaten before he started.

I must give a specimen of Pye Smith's reply to Taylor's very true statement that in discussing the credibility and authenticity of the Gospels, "the Germans seem far to have outrun us in the march of general scepticism." That is so true

that everybody familiar with the great work done during the 19th century by numbers of German theologians working as far as possible in the interest of truth, knows it quite well:—

"No doubt this appears to him a very pleasant march, the emulation, highly flattering and exciting, and the termination of the course . . . a 'consummation devoutly to be wished'—the total extinction of truth, honesty and honour; the exploding of history, science, and every branch of liberal knowledge; the denial of all certainty to reward the noblest researches of the human mind; the abandonment of private virtue and social morality; the ruin of all that renders the condition of man a blessing, that lightens his sorrows, or makes his comforts pure and happy; the disbelief of responsibility, of a future state, and of every sentiment above mean selfishness and brutal sensuality; the degeneracy of mankind into the ignorance and wretchedness of a savage life; Atheism, despair and fathomless misery! This is the end of your 'march of general scepticism!'"

Readers of this journal will, I hope, be able to appreciate this extract; it is typical of the kind of Christian writing of a century ago against "infidelity." And not many people these days know much of the way in which unorthodox opinions in matters of religion were treated by our sternly upright Christians.

Taylor had quoted Mosheim, that great Protestant theologian, in whose "Ecclesiastical History" he found much to support his views. Pye Smith hated the idea of Taylor's appealing thus "to learned Christian advocates," and he stigmatised one extract as "a most infamous piece of forgery." He soon had reason to be sorry for himself, for in his second edition he was obliged to admit that he, the great John Pye Smith, D.D., "had made a mistake," and he actually forced himself to apologise for the "fault or error."

I should have liked to deal further with the "Syntagma" and Pye Smith, especially as both the book and the pamphlet are very scarce and few Freethinkers know much about them; but space forbids. The reader can take my word for it that most of the positions taken up by Robert Taylor in his criticism of the documents forming the New Testament are just commonplaces these days. For even the average Christian theologian is bound to admit that ghosts and hobgoblins do not exist, that there is no certainty whatever as to who wrote the Gospels, or when or where they were written; that the New Testament, as we have it this day, was written many years after the events it is supposed to describe; and that many of the events described never happened. Time has certainly vindicated Taylor, while it has almost completely forgotten Pye Smith.

Following the "Syntagma," Taylor's busy pen produced the "Diegesis," a work which he wanted to be judged by the Master, Fellows and Tutors of his old college, St. John's, in Cambridge, from the point of view of genuine scholarship. He dedicated it to them as "the employment of many solitary hours in an unjust imprisonment incurred in the most glorious cause that ever called virtue to act or fortitude to suffer." His "undivided aim was to set forth the truth, and nothing else but truth." And as far as it was possible, in prison in 1829, to produce a work detailing the "origin, evidences and early history of Christianity," Taylor certainly did it.

The "Diegesis" is a careful examination of the *literary* sources of Christianity, and the author, when he feels it necessary, is not afraid to cross swords with the great Gibbon himself. A detailed examination of such a work—over 440 pages of close print—is impossible here. Suffice it to say that Pye Smith was quite right when he admitted that Taylor was "adroit." His profound knowledge of Christian literature, which he had to study to become a priest, gave him an advantage over the ordinary layman and, in addition, he gave his authorities whenever possible in their original languages. I

do not, of course, wish to imply that Taylor made no mistakes—though I know very few ones—or that his own opinions or speculations always hit the mark. We must remember that he wrote over 100 years ago and in prison.

The "Diegesis" was published when Taylor was released, and with the help of Richard Carlile he went on an "infidel mission" in many parts of the country. An account of their adventures will be found in Carlile's "Lion."

On their return, Taylor commenced the series of discourses later published as "The Devil's Pulpit." Most of them were delivered at the old Rotunda in Blackfriars Road, with the lecturer in full canonicals—and with a globe with stars and planets on the pulpit. No wonder Robert Taylor earned the title of the "Devil's Chaplain."

H. CUTNER.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

SIR,—The reply of Mr. A. D. Howell Smith is pretty much as I expected, but I cannot congratulate him on it.

The neglect of Massey and certain other well-known free-thought scholars and investigators by writers claiming to be efficient modern Biblical critics is extraordinary.

May I remind Mr. Howell Smith that Massey agrees only "that Jesus, or Jehoshua Ben-Pandira, was an historical character known to the Talmud, but that this did not prove the personal existence of the Jesus found portrayed in the Canonical Gospels."

May I say, further, that in regard to his own book, "Jesus Not a Myth," I take it that Mr. Howell Smith is arguing for the personal existence of the Canonical Jesus. If not, what is he arguing for?

The second paragraph of Mr. Howell Smith's letter utterly begs the question. For any value to exist in Mr. Howell Smith's arguments he must answer Massey, not merely dismiss him. As for the statement that Massey "counts for little as a Biblical critic," that I suppose is merely Mr. Howell Smith's personal opinion. Other people may think differently.—Yours, etc.,

"ALERT."

### BERTRAND RUSSELL, MYSTIC!

SIR,—Mr. McCall, in his interesting article, quotes several passages from Bertrand Russell which certainly seem to indicate that "even a scientific thinker like Bertrand Russell is guilty of this"—that is, accepting a philosophy combining mysticism and logic. He does not, however, quote the outstanding passage in Russell's "Mysticism and Logic" which seems to me to completely counter all suggestion of mysticism. I have not the book by me, but this passage made an indelible impression upon me, and I am able to quote from memory, though it is some 20 years since I read it:—

"Brief and powerless is man's life. On him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. For man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts which ennoble his little day.

"Disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of fate, to worship at the shrine which his own hands have built, undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny which rules his outward life, proudly defiant of irresistible forces which tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world which his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power."

I think this is an unsurpassed passage of English both in feeling and expression. If there is a finer I should like to know it.—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR HANSON.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon. Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields: Sunday, 3-30 p.m. Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Messrs. WOOD, PAGE, and other speakers.

### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. RENNIE SMITH, B.Sc.: "France's Summer, 1944."

### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Various speakers.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture. Chester-le-Street (Bridge End).—Saturday, June 24, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m. Debate: "Should God Intrude?": Rev. GORDON LIVINGSTONE v. Mr. F. SMITHIES.

Enfield (Lanes).—Friday, June 23, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

Herrington Burn.—Tuesday, June 27, 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

Huncoat.—Monday, June 26, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Alexandra Gates).—Friday, 7-30 p.m. Mr. W. A. ATKINSON: A Lecture. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.: Mr. C. McCALL will lecture.

Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Bigg Market).—Sunday 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

New Kyo (Durham).—Thursday, June 29, 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m. Mr. T. M. MOSLEY: A Lecture.

Padiham.—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

### THIS WEEK'S OFFER. PAINE & PALMER.

1/4-Leather-bound volume in good condition, containing the following:—Theological Works of Thomas Paine. Printed by R. Carlile, 1819. Principles of Nature, by Elihu Palmer, Carlile, 1819. Ecce Homo, D'Holbach, London, 1813. Good Sense, D'Holbach, Carlile, 1826. Doubts of Infidels, Carlile, 1819. Carriage paid £3 7s. 6d.

PIONEER BOOKSHOP, Charlotte Place, Goodge Street, London, W.1.

### THE INCEPTION OF MEDIÆVAL CITY LIFE

(Continued from page 235)

extended. Another mediæval innovation was the introduction of chimneys furnished with flues which enabled the housewife to heat her rooms without creating a smoky and asphyxiating atmosphere which blackened ceilings and walls and darkened what furnishings she possessed with greasy smuts.

The invention of printing, with its far-reaching results was, perhaps, the most revolutionary product of the 15th century. Clocks, gunpowder, spectacles, the rudder, the mariner's compass and other utilities, all then prepared the path for the emergence of an ensuing civilisation, unfortunately destined to be sadly delayed by the crimes and commotions which accompanied the revolt from the tyranny of the Roman Church.

T. F. PALMER.

## "YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!"

ON some American motorways, where danger spots lie ahead of the traveller, there are posted signs which, after indicating the nature of the danger, add the further precautionary expression "You have been warned!"

Some of us have recently been posting signs along the Co-operative highway, indicating the danger that lies ahead in allowing religious elements to creep into the Co-operative movement under official sanction. There is just time yet—but only just—to add to our signposts the postscript, "You have been warned!" in the hope that wisdom may prevail before July 2, which is the day on which Christianity threatens to pollute Co-operation, and bring in its distracting and damaging influences.

In my pamphlet, "God and the Co-op.," I remarked: "This is dangerous ground . . . so dangerous that even treading warily will not do." Some co-operators told me they could not see any danger, and when I said that coupling up Co-operation with Christianity put a weapon in the hands of their enemies, I was frequently smiled at with the smile that is reserved for the crank who exaggerates his case.

But he who smiles last smiles with most justification; and now it is difficult to repress a cynical smile as the evidence piles up to show how necessary and how justified were our warnings.

The storm broke late in May, when the anti-Co-operative section of the Press wakened up to the fact that, by cashing in on Christianity, the Co-operative movement was committing an action which contained a patent injustice to Christians outside the Co-operatives; an action which, containing for once in a way a legitimate cause of complaint, could be effectively used to the disadvantage of the Co-ops.

So up went the trumpets of the Press Lords, to scream out to the British public that there was

"a conspiracy by the Co-operative movement to shake the foundations of the Church,"

as one writer put it. The "Daily Mail," the "Daily Dispatch" and other newspapers loyally rallied to the banner of Christianity and Capitalism, not so much to defend anything in particular, as to attack the people's trading movement on the vulnerable spot which it had, by its own folly in trucking with religion, left open to them. And they dealt damaging blows, for they had logic and a measure of justice on their side. These hefty blows could only be parried by weak explanations and thinly veiled excuses which must have made intelligent Co-operators feel shame for their movement as they read the sickly answers of their own Press.

Bearing in mind that many Christians are engaged in private trading, who can deny the strength of the following argument from the "Daily Dispatch"?

"Whatever may be said either against or on behalf of the Co-operative movement, it is surely no part of the duty of either Church or education committees to publicise the efforts of a movement whose objective is the elimination of the private trader."

Sensitive to any chance of hitting the Co-ops. a telling blow, private traders' associations then got busy, and in Manchester, Salford, Sheffield and other places, official organisations of the grocery and provision trades raised their voices in the anti-Co-op., shouting—again more with a view to hitting the enemy rather than because of any special love for Christianity. But it is action rather than object that counts in such controversies, and who can deny that forcefulness lies behind the declaration of a Grocers' Federation official:—

"Many grocers are engaged in Christian service. They should . . . take effective action to prevent their churches

from being used as an advertising medium for one section of the trading community."

Who can deny the weak-kneed apologetic spirit that lies in the following reply by a Co-operative official:—

"All true Christians will be glad that Co-operators have not lost their appreciation of spiritual values, despite material achievements."

It is difficult in the first case to ascertain the meaning of the sentence; it is worthy of inclusion only in the repertoire of a person; and the phrase, "true Christians," is a piece of impertinent humbug which Christian private traders may justly regard as insulting.

In desperation, Co-operative officials had to cut the ridiculous caper of dragging in the Archbishop of Canterbury to support their case, quoting remarks made by him when Bishop of Manchester. Fancy dragging that skeleton out of the cupboard which Dr. Temple probably sealed up before he went to York, let alone Canterbury! For the Co-operative movement to have to throw the Archbishop of Canterbury in the teeth of some hard-working, coupon-crazy private grocer, on a working-class street corner, is the limit in religio-Co-operative humbug.

So the merry game goes on, with the Co-operative neck hamstrung in a noose which it hung upon itself, forgetting that enemies at the loose end of the rope were waiting for the moment when the word "pull," spoken in the right quarters, could give that neck a severe jolt.

But there is just time to heed the postscript, "You have been warned." Let the Co-operative movement admit that over-zealous Christians within its ranks blundered, and blundered badly; let it be honestly admitted that mutual-aid is certainly not a Christian idea, but existed in human society ages before religion began; let it be acknowledged that Christianity never helped, but often hindered, the people's movements of various kinds; let us admit that, if ideologies are to be considered, it was men and women of Freethought outlook, and not Christians, who 100 years ago launched that little boat which now, evolved into a gigantic liner, draws the envious eyes of a covetous Christianity, which sees in it a fruitful source of exploitation for the "greater glory" of a God who was, through his earthly representatives, ever a burden upon the people's backs.

Let the Co-operative movement seize this last opportunity to cut out from its centenary celebrations this festering spot, which provides opponents with the rare weapon of a genuine and legitimate grudge; and by so doing drive those opponents back to those shams and subterfuges which do little harm because, being as weak in justification as is the Co-operative defence of its Christianity blunder, they can be seen through just as easily.

Christian festivals are already far too common. People's centenaries are far too rare. Let July 2 be one of the rare and truly memorable events, and the First Centenary will be remembered when Christianity is decayed and discarded.

F. J. CORINA.

"**THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS.**" By C. G. L. DU CANN. Price 4d.; postage 1d.

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