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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Religious Freedom and the War

IT is not too late to remember, and it is certainly not unimportant to recall, the attitude of the people in this country, particularly the Churches and other vested interests, towards the Russian Revolution. We said at the time that it was the most important of events that had happened since the French Revolution in 1789. That marked a turning point in the history of Europe. In France, it established the "Rights of Man." In England, the reaction was to bring into daylight the common man. He had scarcely been heard of before, and even in the latter half of the 19th century John Richard Green fell into great disfavour because he wrote his well-known "History of the English People." It was the use of the word "People" that offended. The Russian revolution marked a second great stride by not merely effecting a great advance in the life of Russia, but by killing for intelligent people the foolish cry that Russians would never make engineers, and so forth. The truth is that man is capable of almost anything within the bounds of reason for the very fact that he is at birth the most helpless of all animals. Russia demonstrated the fact that man could become an expert in the use of tools and in the play of ideas to an almost unlimited extent provided he uses his share of the wealth that his ancestors have given him. Nothing has done more to befog the mind of the average man than such expressions that A. is a musical people, B. a mechanical people, and so through the long list of human capacities. Russia has taught the world that man can really be the shaper of his own destiny if he is permitted so to do. Or he can become a mere shivering slave, a breeder of superstition, kissing the very hand that whips him.

It was a leading article in the "Evening Standard" of July 20 that has led me along the line of these notes. The writer was concerned with the peace treaty signed by Lenin with Germany. By that treaty, he said—

"Germany had extended her control over Eastern Europe to the Arctic Ocean . . . and had acquired the undisputed abutment of the fate of fifty-five million inhabitants of Russia's western fringe. The Russian who had demanded that his country must sign this frightful treaty was condemned as a Judas. 'Intolerably severe are the terms of peace,' said Lenin. 'Nevertheless, history will claim its own. Let us seek to organise, organise and organise.' To-day the rhetoric of twenty-five years ago became a world prophecy of momentous significance. . . . The Russian people, by their faith and by their skill, by their endurance in peace and their heroism in war . . . Britain never fought with a more courageous ally, and to-day, when the Russians celebrate the dramatic resurrection of their greatness . . . is a good day to affirm that the

alliance between us shall be unchanging and unchangeable."

That is the cold truth, and to the ideal of world peace Russia is indispensable. We must, if we can look at our social life without being dazzled with tales of descent, with old-fashioned rights that too often register the continuance of equally old-fashioned wrongs, note there will be need to bear these things in mind when the present war of force is displaced by the war of wits and cunning faces wisdom in the political and social arena. Indeed, we doubt whether those whose reckless opposition to new ideas made the world-war inevitable have yet learned their lesson. Those fatally wrong ideas are not discarded because they are no longer shouted from the house-tops. "When the devil was sick . . ." Everyone knows the rest of this ancient piece of wisdom.

To scientific sociologists the one clear lesson that Russia has taught the world is the falsity of the teaching that we must travel very, very slowly if we are not to wreck the whole of the social structure. Russia has given the lie to that ancient folly. What Russia did in a single generation we can also do. The tools, in the shape of all that man has already accomplished, are therefore ours if we will use them. Russia has proved this to be the greatest of sociological truths. But perhaps it was Russia's greatest crime that it pressed this truth home by demonstration, and without the help of God. There it struck at one of the most primitive of beliefs, and threatened some of the oldest of our vested interests.

I do not mean by this that the Russian people are all Atheists. That would be a foolish belief. But the transformation was achieved without any recognition of God. The men and women of Russia fought and toiled without any official recognition of God. It had no days of prayer. Nay, it openly and honestly made it one of its purposes to create a new world without God. The new Russia was achieved without God. The people relied upon their own strength, their own skill, and their own wisdom. History will not deny that.

God and the Army

In a recent issue of the London "Star" there was an illustration of General Montgomery reading the church "Lesson" of the day before his troops that were there—by command. Behind the General sits a clergyman—ranked as an officer, with officer's pay—in full canonicals, and in the background there is what appears to be a man playing the organ. One is left to imagine the concourse of men facing the General. What these men think of the performance we also are left to surmise. Some will feel that a religious service is the right thing, others don't care the proverbial damn whether it is religion or not, but believe that the fewer Church parades the better, others would like to give their opinions on the whole business. But the Churches must have their advertisement.

So far the matter is quite clear. But General Montgomery is at the head of this mass of people not on account of their religious or non-religious opinions, but for their fighting qualities. The holding of a religious service should be for those who wish to take part in one, but it is getting very near an insult to other men to order them to church or to a special religious performance whether they wish to be present or not. Religious belief is not part of their quality as soldiers, nor is it a condition of their service ability. When a man joins the army, he is not tested as to his religion, he is enlisted on account of his physical and mental fitness, and the essential consideration ends. The compulsory profession of religious belief belongs to the "Dark Ages"; there should be none of it in an army or navy or other military force to-day. Provision for those who want religion and religious services is another thing in existing circumstances. But we are quite certain that if a Free-thinking officer took it into his head to advertise among the men that he would hold meetings where lectures would be given on the origin of the belief in gods and the social value of religion there would be a devil of a row. When men have reached an important position in the army or navy or air force they should be at least careful not to parade their religion. One might, very properly, see that freedom of belief and speech was given to all, without in the least believing in what was said. But certainly, as General, that is not General Montgomery's business, and his place is of so great an importance that it should not be marred or weakened by any avoidable circumstance.

Meanwhile, it may be well to remember that it was not the Russia that lifted itself from the depths of ignorance and superstition, and single-handed created a new and better world, that we are praising, but mainly the Russia that has astonished the world by the courage and skill with which it could meet and defeat the greatest military country in the Christian world. The testing-time will come when the world returns to a more normal life. How far then will Christian friendship extend?

Soldiers Without God

Let us run rapidly over what should be well-known ground. When a man—or a woman—joins the Armed Forces he, or she, has to pass an examination as to physical fitness; he, or she, is asked: What religion? The choice of religion is there. So also is the right to reply "None," and that is where trouble often begins. It is, and has been for more than half a century, the law that an affirmation may be made wherever a religious oath is legally necessary. (An exception exists in the case of the Lord Chancellor—perhaps it is thought that a Lord Chancellor cannot be expected to act honestly unless he feels that some superhuman force is being brought to bear upon him.) But it often happens that the official taking the new fighting man's particulars sits up at the "None." The official is flabbergasted. He may point out, with the perseverance of a tradesman when trade is slack, that there is a very fine selection of Gods from which to choose, or he may hand over this newcomer to an officer, or the man may ask to see one. The officer may be puzzled, and he is sometimes unwise to enter into an argument. As a mere matter of law the recruit need not give any explanation. He has a legal right to affirm if he wishes to do so. In some cases he is handed over to a "Padre," which adds insult to illegality.

There is one further consideration. One who entered the army believing in God may have grown beyond that mental state. (We may note in passing that this fact never comes out in any of the B.B.C. lectures. One may lie in silence as well as with speech.) But although registered as a believer in God, he may revoke at any time and leave God to find his supporters elsewhere. Or he may wish to exchange the nonsense of the Roman or the English Church for the absurdities of an opposite body. That also is his, or her, legal right. It was a very great advance when it was agreed that a mere soldier might have opinions of his own. "Theirs not to reason why" began to crack.

The truth is, and it is a truth that needs emphasising, that when religion enters the field there is a strong inclination to set aside the principles of fair play and honest dealing. We have not the slightest doubt that General Montgomery would, in other matters, act with perfect straightforwardness and justice. He would not summon a body of men under his command to attend a course of lectures, advocating the truth or value of his ideas on politics, or economics, or any such question. He might suggest, in a friendly way, that they should listen to a lecture on this or that subject, but it would be a suggestion and nothing more. He would argue with both justice and logic that it was not his place to order them to attend to something that is outside the business of their engagement. He might argue with his men on a question of ethics or politics, but it would be on a ground of equality, and each might be the better for an exchange of opinions. Why is there an exception in the case of religion?

There is no objection to a superior talking with an inferior on religious subjects—at least, there would not be if those who believe in it could maintain their mental balance. In the army of to-day both general and private might benefit from an exchange of opinions. And such exchanges would probably end in greater respect on both sides. But, again, strong religious conviction and a sense of justice seldom run well together. Nor does it add to the dignity of a man in a high and responsible position to be taking sides where an aggressive religion is concerned. CHAPMAN COHEN.

A RARE BOOK

SIXTY years ago I had sent from America a volume containing 44 of Ingersoll's lectures and addresses on special occasions. In 1877, in a lecture at San Francisco, Ingersoll offered to give \$1,000 (dollars) in gold to any clergyman who could prove that Thomas Paine "died in terror" because of religious opinions he had expressed, or that Voltaire did not "pass away as serenely as the dawn." A Presbyterian paper edited by Rev. Irenæus Prime "The New York Observer" took up the challenge and called upon Ingersoll to put up the money and at the same time characterising Ingersoll's offer as "infidel buncombe." Ingersoll examined with his legal dexterity the evidence and proved many letters to be fakes. Even the Editor was compelled by Ingersoll to confess "that Paine died a blaspheming infidel." This challenge of Ingersoll is known as "The Vindication of Thomas Paine." Another lecture I should like to draw attention to—especially young Freethinkers—is "The Life and Deeds of Thomas Paine" by Ingersoll. It will give them a fine conception of this noble soldier of progress, Thomas Paine. A copy of this rare volume was published many years ago by "The Crucible," 1,330 First Avenue, Seattle, Washington. Price \$1 (4s. English money). JOSEPH CLOSE.

A NEW APPROACH TO LINGUISTICS

WITH the "Loom of Language," edited and arranged by Professor L. Hogben (Unwin, 1944; 15s.), Dr. Bodmer has enriched linguistics with a very scholarly and suggestive volume. This work is decidedly controversial, and many traditional philologists will dissent from its conclusions. But as a guide to the serious student who desires a working knowledge of foreign speech Dr. Bodmer is very efficient indeed.

The editor entrusted the authorship of this work to an accomplished linguist, as he himself has little aptitude for languages; and in his foreword Hogben declares that, "Like its predecessor, 'Science for the Citizen,' the project of the 'Loom of Language,' is based on the conviction that the orientation of studies in our schools, universities and Adult Education Movement does not provide a sufficient equipment for the constructive tasks of the society in which we live, that radical changes in the scope and methods of education are a necessary condition of continued social progress."

The "Loom" is not intended to supply quotational frills for smart people, but to prompt and sustain a wide appreciation of the powerful part played by language in social life, and to simplify the study of our own and other languages. Thus a clearer understanding of the psychology of other nations may be reached and many insular prejudices eliminated.

We in England are so isolated from the Continent by the sea that we have become the poorest linguists in civilised Europe. Also in the United States, isolation—despite the composite character of its citizens—has made Anglo-American the leading language of the American Republic. It is the language of business and social intercourse; its Press appears in English in its varied forms; and the plentiful supply of good translations of foreign masterpieces deadens any desire to read them in the original.

Dr. Bodmer opines that almost anyone can learn an auxiliary language, and that our distaste for linguistic studies is largely due to our unscientific educational system. Moreover, he maintains that, "In spite of all obstacles, anyone who has been brought up to speak Anglo-American enjoys a peculiarly favoured position. It is a hybrid. It has a basic stratum of words derived from the same stock as German, Dutch and the Scandinavian languages. It has assimilated thousands of Latin origin. It has also incorporated an impressive battery of Greek roots. . . . With a little knowledge of the evolution of English itself, of the parallel evolution of the Teutonic languages and of the modern descendants of Latin as set forth in the second part of this book, the American or the Briton has, therefore, a key to ten living European languages. No one outside the Anglo-American speech community enjoys this privilege." Therefore, there exists no serious impediment to a working knowledge of the tongues of our near European neighbours.

One thousand five hundred different languages are employed by our planet's population of about 2,000,000,000, but some 50 only form the speech of more than 10,000,000. Nearly 50 per cent. of the earth's human inhabitants speak an Indo-European language, while its Anglo-American representative is the native language of more than 200,000,000, without reckoning the enormous number who habitually use it in social and economic transactions. Indeed, for commercial purposes, Anglo-American is much more extensively utilised throughout the world than any other spoken language.

The difficulties of oral and epistolary communication with those who speak another language have encouraged the appearance of many artificial forms of expression. These were intended as an auxiliary method to secure the intercommunication of all civilised communities throughout the world. Ever since the 17th century attempts have been made to establish an international language of this character. As our author states,

"Esperanto is only one among several hundred languages which have been constructed during the past 300 years; and many people who are in favour of a world auxiliary would prefer to choose one of the languages which a large proportion of the world's population already use." Apparently, the various difficulties inseparable from the adoption of an artificial language for international intercourse are insurmountable.

Volapük was the first constructed language that was put to practical use both in speech and writing, and it won wide support and spread rapidly after 1880; but when its adherents decided to conduct the proceedings of its third Congress, in Paris in 1889, in Volapük the experiment proved a complete fiasco. The difficulties of mastering this artificial language, or of giving it expression, were made manifest to all. The decline of Volapük was also hastened by the quarrel of Father Schleyer, its creator, with influential supporters of the new language. Thus, the life of Volapük was of brief duration.

Dr. Bodmer criticises Volapük very adversely. Still, it was a laudable endeavour to bring about intercommunication among men. Pirro's "Universal Sprache" preceded Volapük, but attracted little attention. There were other artificial products, but the rising star of Esperanto soon eclipsed all competitors. Its founder was a Russian Polish Jew, one Zamenoff, who solicited suggestions or corrections of his system from the public. Despite Zamenoff's willingness to accept improvements, his new language passed unheeded. Until 1894 Esperanto was unchanged, and then Zamenoff made drastic changes. His language found its first converts in Russia, and it spread to Scandinavia, Middle Europe and France. Esperanto fell into abeyance during the first World War, but revived with the outburst of pacificism which followed the Peace Treaty. It made marked progress, especially in Germany, until in 1935 the Nazis made it illegal on the ground that "the use of artificial languages such as Esperanto weakens the essential value of national peculiarities."

The famous Danish philologist, Dr. Otto Jespersen, who in earlier years favoured Volapük and Esperanto in succession, constructed a language of his own in 1928 which he termed "Novial," which Dr. Bodmer thinks an improvement on Ido and Esperanto. He urges that, as "Jespersen is the greatest living authority on English grammar, it would be surprising if a constructive linguist failed to recognise the cardinal virtues of a language so dear to him." Yet, this product of Jespersen's parentage is subjected to Bodmer's caustic criticism when he dismisses Novial as "a mongrel pup." Unfortunately, no artificial product so far evolved seems to satisfy the requirements of a universal auxiliary language.

The pronounced merits of English as a means of world-wide expression were long overlooked. Our very irregular spelling is a stumbling-block to the foreigner. Ogden and Richards' "Meaning of Meaning," however, cleared the air. "Hitherto," confesses Dr. Bodmer, "we had thought of English as the language with the large dictionary. Ogden's work has taught us to recognise its extreme word economy."

Bodmer claims that a completely essential grammar is much simpler than that of the two constructed languages that have thus far obtained popular currency.

Among the advantages possessed by English as a universal auxiliary is its wealth of literary treasures available at reasonable charges in normal times. As Dr. Bodmer contends, "It is the exclusive vehicle of commercial transactions in the Far East and the common tongue of business enterprise on the American Continent. It is also a *lingua franca* for the publication of a large bulk of scientific research carried on in Scandinavia, Japan, China, and in countries other than France, Germany and Italy. For all these, and for other reasons, the movement to promote Anglo-American as a world auxiliary has

ACID DROPS

SAYS the Radio padre, the Rev. Selby Wright: "We cannot do much for men at the front, but they want us to keep faith with God, the Father of us all." He means all our men, and that is too clumsy to be called a lie; it is just a habit formed by careless training in honesty. The picture of even half the men in the forces worrying whether their relations or friends are praying for them or not is too slovenly comical, even to raise a smile. He adds that we can "all keep faith with God and sustain them (our men) in our prayers." And that, being interpreted, means keeping the Reverend Wright at his job. But what a clumsy way of putting it. We could draft a more persuasive lie while playing a game of chess.

The Rev. Dr. Martin has been "translated" from Plymouth, as a vicar, on a salary of £700, to Liverpool, as a Bishop, on a salary of £4,200. He is not complaining, but is quite ready to shoulder his burden with the contentment that becomes a follower of he who had nowhere to lay his head. But the new Bishop has his troubles, for the coupons allowed him will not permit him to buy all he needs in the shape of ecclesiastical millinery. We would remind him that when the husband of Jesus's mother found himself with a plank that was not quite long enough, Jesus obliged Joseph by stretching the wood to the required length. Why cannot the trick be repeated with a piece of cloth?

"Can a Christian be a pessimist?" asks the Rev. S. M. Berry in the "Sunday Times." Of course, he answers, "No." But that is not the case. The Christian is the most complete of all pessimists. The belief of a Christian is that this world is wrong and suffering; that man is helpless so far as making things better is concerned. The world is full of sin and without hope unless he gets help direct from God. The constant theme—six times weekly—of the 7-55 moaners and groaners is to call God to help us, for we can do nothing without him. Allow that man can have all that is necessary for human welfare without God and the Christian scheme falls to pieces. This should be obvious to anyone who understands Christianity. We expect that Mr. Berry knows the truth of the matter well enough, but he is a parson, and consistency in thought is not one of his parsonic features.

It is worth pointing out that so brilliant a writer as Edgar Saltus placed Jesus Christ among the pessimists—granting that he ever lived. And if he lived his place is among the pessimists, but not as a high intellectual character. But if a man who looks at the world as so full of evil that only God can save individuals, is not a pessimist, in what category can one place him?

The nebulous quality of Christianity to-day is well illustrated by the comments of Sir Firoz Khan Noon on a visit to an English church. He said: "There was little difference between the Islamic faith and that of Christianity." Naturally, a die-hard paper like the "Church Times" does not like this, and says that a Churchman "will read with shame" this judgment of an honest Mohammedan. But this is an example of the please-everybody practice of current Christianity. One after another of the Christian beliefs has had to be toned down or discarded in order to keep a hold on the people. The one thing that the higher clergy are really interested in is power and cash.

But we should imagine that the Mohammedan is just pulling the legs of Christians, for there is after all a very radical difference between Islamism and Christianity. To go no further. Islam has only one God, and that God is not a family man. Christianity has a God—unmarried—but with a son who is older than his mother. It has also a Holy Ghost who came from no one knows where, and who forms one of the strangest family parties that is known to mankind. And there are other differences. Mohammed said the pen was greater than the sword, and Christianity has always depended more upon the sword than it has upon the writer—that is, if he wrote anything that was sensible. Finally, Mohammedanism did build up something like a civilisation; Christianity gave the death-blow to two civilisations and came very near wrecking a third.

From the Catholic "Universe" we collect the news that in the town of Gennazano a bomb partly destroyed the Augustinian Church. Cardinal Salotti, after examining the church, found the "historic painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel." He decided that the safety of the picture was due to "the miraculous intervention of Our Lady." We do not question that the Cardinal is right, but what a peculiar person "Our Lady" must be! Why didn't she save both the church and the picture?

In any case, we do not think that church has much to chortle about. Goebbels has reported that the escape of Hitler from assassination was due to the act of God. As things stand, God saving Hitler is more spectacular than saving a picture. Anybody could do that. If Goebbels is right, God is no friend of the Allies. Indeed, if he were he might have given them victory long ago.

From South Africa we learn that the Dutch Reformed Church of the Free State has refused to fix a day of prayer for the young men involved in the war. The reason is that the danger is only temporary. That seems unusually sensible on the part of the deity. Some of the young Afrikaners, and their people, are likely to blame God for not taking better care of his followers. On the other hand, God ought to pretend to do something to earn the praise on which he feeds. Even gods ought to be made to work for their emoluments.

The "Osservatore Romano," the official Vatican paper, appeals to all Catholics to "support a Christian peace based on a covenant of supreme laws and a proclamation of spiritual values." All of which sounds good to Christians, but which—to the extent that Roman Catholics have their way—means a dictatorship from Rome that will place the world under definite Christian rule. More or less, that rule has been influential in Europe for over fifteen centuries, and the result is written in the present world war. It is time we tried a world in which the State definitely treated religion as a completely private matter. Of course, more than that is needed, but it would be a good step in the right direction.

Here, by the way, is a fine example of the average Roman Catholic mentality. A good Christian writes to the "Catholic Herald" inquiring information on the following point. It seems a priest "introduced" him to "Blessed Peter Chanel," and the inquirer has "addressed many petitions to him with marvellous results." Now the recipient wishes to know who he was. He turns out to be a priest who was killed about a hundred years ago, but is still carrying on business. The social value of that type of mind is worth studying.

We have insisted from the time when German Nazism first loomed on the horizon that it was essentially a religious movement. Hitler himself is a Roman Catholic, and the Roman Church has never mentioned going to the length of using its religiously powerful weapon, Excommunication, against him. And as the situation of the Nazi crowd grows more desperate, it is worth noting that the religious aspect becomes more pronounced. Such expressions as "Germany has a mission," etc., while it runs in line with our own preachers that we have a "mission," presents us with nothing new. Hundreds of leaders of this or that form of Christianity have declared they had a "mission," and that mixture of fraud and fanaticism will exist so long as any form of genuine religion exists. Self-deception is characteristic of most religious leaders, and it will continue as long as the figure, or figures, of gods darken the horizon.

The following example of the wisdom of the Archbishop of Canterbury is worth noting: "If it is right to be engaged in resisting German tyranny by force of arms, then this is something to be done as an act of service to God." Oh, the nonsense of it. The war with Germany is either justifiable or unjustifiable. If it is justifiable, it is so without the slightest reference to God. And if it is not justifiable, then all the gods in the world will not make it so. The Archbishop reminds us very forcibly of the parson who asked his congregation to believe that God in his wisdom had arranged that death should come at the end of life instead of in the middle of it.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. L. MARTIN.—We deny that a really good Christian ever *gives* anything. He invests—that is, if we are to trust some of our Christian leaders that all goodness and kindness would fade out of the world in the absence of the belief in God.

C. M. LEAR.—Thanks for report. It is good that the dealings of the Papacy with Mussolini should be borne in mind. The Papacy made a very sharp ready-money transaction with Mussolini, and, as the President of the Free Church Council said, the Pope was aware of Mussolini's villainies in Abyssinia. So, for that matter, were many of our own leading politicians. Thanks for your high opinion of "The Freethinker."

S. LUFF.—Cuttings very useful. Our space is so limited that we have to refrain from printing much that we should like to publish. All the time we are trying to cram a quart into a pint pot.

E. H. JACKSON.—There may be a *last* man, but it is almost certain that there never was a *first* one. Man, as a recognisable animal from the outset is a myth. The difference between animal and man established itself gradually, with a possibility of a more rapid development, given the opportunity.

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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.

SUGAR PLUMS

WILL secretaries of branches of the N.S.S. please remember that notices of meetings must reach us at latest by first post on Monday. We have said this many times, but without it having much effect. There is no need to write a letter; a post card will do. But if an envelope, "Lecture Notice" should be written *outside* the envelope. We cannot promise insertion if these simple rules are not obeyed.

Mr. W. Martin—evidently a newcomer to these pages—asks us: "Is it true that G. W. Foote, the founder of this journal, once ran away from a provincial hotel without paying his bill?" Mr. Martin's tale is incomplete. After Mr. Foote left the hotel several items of value were missing from his bedroom; he had borrowed a sovereign from the owner of the hotel, "lifted" articles of jewellery from other rooms, and was in a state of intoxication all the time he was staying there.

Many of our readers are familiar with the writings of Mr. G. Ryley Scott. He has not been a contributor of late, which is our loss more than his, but the older readers will remember his name and his work. Mr. Scott has now brought together a number of his articles which have appeared in "The Freethinker" and other magazines under the general title of "Man and His Illusions." Mr. Scott adds the sub-title, "A Collection of Unpalatables." But these essays are only unpalatable to those

who shrink from serious and witty writing, and who are afraid of the conclusions at which the author arrives. The book is published by Lloyd Cole at the price of 6s. We wish it every success.

"Thus saith the Lord"—What? Anything, everything, which when put together signifies nothing. There are few things that gods have not either praised or damned. They have exhorted kindness and authorised brutality. They have advised charity and brought starvation and misery to millions. They were present at the torture of a Bruno, and bade men love one another. They have praised the virtue of marriage, and sanctified celibacy. God made man and then damned him for his not being of better material. Gods have been full of affection for their worshippers, but they have relished the sweet savour of human sacrifice. Gods have promised men that they would endow them with immortal life, and then, one after another, have faded away to nothingness themselves—a nothingness so complete that even their names are lost to human memory. Poor gods! Let us pity the gods.

The close association between Christianity and war is only questioned by Christians in peace-time. During hostilities, religion is looked upon as part of the soldiers' equipment, and we receive many letters from Freethinkers in the armed forces describing the antics employed to fasten religion upon them. One such letter to hand is from a serving soldier, home after three years in the Middle East. To change his description from C. of E. to Atheist he had first to submit to fatherly advice from his C.O. Meeting with no success, the C.O. ordered an interview with one of the big clerical guns, a chaplain with the rank of a brigadier. The soldier held his own, and the interview ended with the chaplain's admission: "I can't do anything with you." That is the usual result of such interviews if the Freethinker knows his case. It is the frankness of the chaplain in this case that is not usual. The soldier is now described as "Atheist." But it says little for the reality of much of our talk about our love of liberty when a man has to fight so hard for what should be an elementary right.

Says Mr. Gandhi: "There is such a thing as world opinion of the authorities." We agree—in fact, the truth of such a statement is obvious. But it is the main aim of every authority to see that this independent opinion is muzzled and muffled as much as possible. And in times of war it tends to rank as a nuisance to be curtailed as much as possible. Not always by open and declared action, but in the name of "patriotism," "defence of freedom," "love of country," etc.

The "Catholic Herald" announces the appointment to the Bench of Judges of Mr. G. J. Lynskey, K.C., under the headline, "New Catholic Judge." It should hardly be necessary to have to remind even so sectarian a newspaper as the "Herald" that there is no such thing as a Catholic Judge. There are simply Judges, some of whom may happen, as private individuals, to profess the Catholic religion. To stamp a Judge with a religious or denominational label on the occasion of his appointment to the State Judiciary is a mark of exceedingly bad taste, which even fair-minded Catholics will deplore. We have observed that the "Catholic Herald" is not quite so ready to use headlines of a parallel character where less worthy figures in the courts are involved—for instance, "Catholic Criminal Sentenced." If one, why not the other?

"A determined effort to stop leakage among Catholic boys and girls leaving school" is to be made by a Northern Catholic association. That rather lets the cat out of the bag. We are often told that the Catholic Church is progressing in this country, not losing membership. This rather indicates, however, what we have often said—that even the Rock of Rome must weather and crumble in the winds of scientific knowledge and understanding. Moreover, the need for "a determined effort" suggests a pretty serious problem.

The Catholic Bishop of Leeds says Catholics suffered their Dunkirk over the Education Bill. It's not a bad Dunkirk that gives the Church 95 per cent. of something to which she is not morally entitled.

A GREAT AMERICAN

FOR every hundred tributes paid to the memory of Abraham Lincoln—all of them fully deserved, of course—I think only one will be given to the shy, retiring victor in the American Civil War, General Ulysses S. Grant. Yet it is not unfair to say that it is doubtful if we would have heard as much of Lincoln if it had not been for the victories of Grant, which kept the Union together quite as much as, if not more than, the iron resolution of the President.

Both men have interested me so much that I have always read whatever I could about them ever since, as a boy thirsting for adventure books, I found so many coming from the U.S.A. which dealt with the Civil War, and which made me as familiar with "Jeb" Stuart, "Stonewall" Jackson, Sherman, Farragut and many others as I was with Wellington, Nelson and Drake.

But it was Grant in particular who caught my imagination because it was he who licked the greatest of all American generals, Robert E. Lee—at least, in the opinion of military critics Lee is put higher than Grant, though I would never agree in my boyish enthusiasm.

Both Lincoln and Grant, however, should be of especial interest to Freethinkers; for though it may be true they were not Atheists in our sense of the word, they got as near as was possible in the Methodist-Presbyterian ridden atmosphere of America in the first half of the 19th century. Thomas Paine was regarded as a full-blown Atheist by many of his contemporaries—and called so—though he was, as we know, a Deist. Lincoln and Grant went far in those days in the direction of Freethought, and that should be remembered in their honour.

I remember many years ago listening to a fervent Christian declaiming against slavery and pointing out how it was Christianity which abolished it; and he even went as far as maintaining that the American Civil War was Christianity in action and a standing proof of his assertion. When question time came, I asked how was it that Lincoln and Grant, both of whom, on his own showing, fought against slavery, were not Christians, while Jefferson Davis, the Southern President, Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson were all not just ordinary believers, but thorough Fundamentalist Christians who fought desperately for the retention of slavery? And the sorry answer came, after a more or less furious look at me, that other questions came into the Civil War besides slavery; which was quite true, but not what the lecturer had implied in the first place.

Grant's father was a well-to-do tanner; but the boy did not like the work, and he was sent to the military school at West Point. He worked hard and received his commission, and when the war with Mexico broke out was sent to the front. Without influence of any kind, he soon was recognised as a most able officer, and was even mentioned in dispatches by his superior, Major Lee—afterwards the general who very nearly defeated Lincoln, and Grant's great opponent. After the war Grant retired to be just as ordinary farmer, and he took very little interest in politics. Though later he became twice President of the United States, it must be said that he never was a match for the political chicanery surrounding him—he was too honest and straightforward. The political game, especially the kind which infested America in the 70's of last century, was quite beyond him.

When the South determined to break with the Union in 1861, its supporters had no doubt whatever of the outcome. They had the greatest contempt for the "Yankees," as they called the Northerners; and certainly their optimism was justified after the first few encounters with the half-hearted forces sent to oppose them. It is quite a mistake to imagine

that Lincoln had all the North enthusiastically behind him at first, and the victories of Lee, Stuart and Jackson did not make him more popular.

Grant was one of the few who recognised that the South meant business, and that Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers meant very little in the ultimate. He offered his services and no notice was at first taken of him; but, of course, it was soon found that every available man would be needed, and he was eventually appointed Colonel of the 21st Illinois Volunteers.

Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to retail Grant's rapid rise in the service of his country. It was most brilliant, but space forbids. Suffice it to say that, after Lincoln's finest generals had been more or less beaten by the Confederates, it was more than a "godsend" to Lincoln to find one man not only holding his own, but actually defeating the enemy in turn. Grant's successes began to fill the South with alarm, especially his magnificent capture of Vicksburg. And he gave Lee and his rebels no rest. No wonder that Lincoln made Grant his Commander-in-Chief.

The fall of Richmond, and the surrender of Lee at Appomattox in 1865, made Grant the hero of the day, for it also meant the end of the war; and even the most vitriolic opponent of the North had no more stomach for fighting. Grant and Lincoln both treated the enemy with every generosity; and the worst blow the South suffered was the cowardly assassination of Lincoln by a mad Southerner.

Needless to say, just as the lie used to be circulated after Lincoln's death that he was a Christian, so a number of divines took upon themselves to make Grant out as a kind of Christian saint. In his "Six Historic Americans," John E. Remsburg deals with these lies in detail, and he gives all the necessary proofs to show that Grant had very little, if any at all, religious belief.

It is particularly interesting to find that right at the outset of his military career Grant objected to Church Parade. As a cadet, on one occasion he earned eight "demerit" marks because he would not go to church. Instead, he got C.B. for a month; for, in that land of the free, cadets were not only obliged to go to church, but to go there by companies.

And it was not only in the Army that Grant refused to bow to religion. In Thayer's "Life of General Grant" the writer points out that, when living in St. Louis before 1860, he had made a host of friends there, "although not professedly a Christian man," and was respected by all who knew him. Thayer's work used to make an admirable Sunday school prize. I wonder what its readers thought of that sentence.

And here is an extract from Grant's own "Memoirs":—

"No political party can, or ought to, exist when one of its cornerstones is opposition to freedom of thought. . . . If a sect sets up its laws as binding above State laws, whenever the two come in conflict this claim must be resisted and suppressed at whatever cost."

But it is his speech before the Army at Des Moines, in 1875, which gives us a taste of his quality as a great Secularist:—

"The free school is the promoter of that intelligence which is to preserve us as a nation. If we are to have another contest in the near future of our national existence, I predict that the dividing line will be . . . between patriotism and intelligence on the one side and superstition, ambition and ignorance on the other. . . . Let us all labour to add all needful guarantees for the more perfect security of free thought, free speech and free Press, pure morals, unfettered religious sentiments, and of equal rights and privileges to all men irrespective of nationality, colour or religion. Encourage free schools, and resolve that not one dollar of money shall be appropriated to the support of any sectarian school . . . leave the matter of religion to

the family altar, the church and the private schools, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the Church and the State for ever separate."

That was said nearly 70 years ago by a soldier: by a man who made no pretensions to scholarship or even great statesmanship. What a contrast to the blither and blather of our Butlers in the "Mother" of Parliaments in the year 1944! What a lesson yet to be learnt from that brave and modest gentleman, General Ulysses S. Grant!

H. CUTNER.

OBITUARY

The sudden death of Mr. Frank Smithies means the loss to the Edinburgh Branch of a most enthusiastic worker, an uncompromising, competent and humorous exponent of Freethought, but to many others, including myself, it means the loss of a valued friend, for whom we grieve.

It was on Sunday, July 16th, that I last saw my friend. I was pleasure bound, while he was making his way to the meeting place, to mount the platform, and enter into his weekly debate with the clergy. I can see him now, as he was then. His face beaming, his eyes smiling in anticipation of the intellectual triumph which he knew would be his. Almost unbelievable that within a few short hours, on Monday, 17th ult., while conducting a party of students round his beloved university, he should be seized by a heart attack and die.

He was cremated—as was his wish—on Thursday, 20th ult., and, as he also wished, ended his life in action to the last minute, fighting the ugliness of ignorance and superstition around him. He has gone—but not completely. The memory of his presence, his work, his lovable nature, his constructive argument, will live on with all who knew him, and when we pass the mound which was his platform we will stop to remember him and inwardly say: For all you did, and were, and tried to be, thank you, Frank Smithies.

M. I. WHITEFIELD.

The cremation took place at Warriston Road, Edinburgh, where Mr. Gilyan paid a fine tribute to the work and personality of Frank Smithies before a representative gathering of members and friends. To his widow and family we extend our deepest sympathy. Later, on the Mound where he so often spoke, more tributes to his work were paid by the Rev. Gordon Livingstone, so often his Christian opponent, and by Andrew Reilly, the secretary of the N.S.S. Branch.

A. R.

A NEW APPROACH TO LINGUISTICS

(Continued from page 291)

eclipsed the enthusiasms with which former generations espoused proposals for constructed languages."

A language easily acquired has a great advantage over such a difficult language as Russian. It has never been conclusively proved that the most serviceable artificial languages are at all likely to commend themselves to the teeming millions of Asia and Africa. Should a later generation adopt a living language for world employment, Anglo-Saxon is almost certain to be selected. If circumstances bring this about, Dr. Bodmer fears that the language given preference might induce its original possessors to regard themselves as a very superior people if English were made the auxiliary language of Europe. Yet, frictions arising from linguistic causes may vanish if an equality is established that enables peaceful co-operation to replace the evils of unrestricted competition. If the roseate anticipations of the optimists are realised, then, with Dr. Bodmer, we may trust that "a new European order, or a new world order, in which no nation enjoys favoured treatment will be one in which every citizen will be bilingual, as Welsh and South African children are brought up to be bilingual. The common language of European or world citizenship must be the birthright of everyone, because the birthright of no one."

T. F. PALMER.

CORRESPONDENCE

A PROTEST

STR.—I note the footnote to my letter you published in your issue of the 16th ult. As a reader of "The Freethinker" over a period of 45 years, the last 30 years regularly, I am aware that no editorial responsibility is accepted for opinions expressed in a signed article. You say: "So long as there is a point of view that is reasonably worth reading, it is enough."

Du Cann expressed his point of view clearly prior to the words: "The political mountebanks of our day, such as Hitler, Stalin, Roosevelt, Churchill," which do not, in my opinion, represent a point of view but are merely scurrilous and, again in my opinion, "are not reasonably worth reading."

Du Cann has not, however, yet reached the height or depth of scurrility acquired by a certain Alfred Bunting who, rather more than a year ago, in a letter to you, referred to the "cultural level of an Australian Aborigine or a British airman."

He, Du Cann, should persevere; he shows aptitude.—Yours, etc.,

J. R. Wood.

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.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Various Speakers.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., Debate. Rev. GORDON LIVINGSTONE v. Mr. A. REILLY.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market, Memorial Corner).—Saturday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. W. BARKER.

Manchester N.S.S. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Friday, August 4, 8 p.m., Mr. W. A. ATKINSON: A Lecture; (Platt Fields) 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., Mr. W. A. ATKINSON: A Lecture.

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

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Padiham (Lancs.).—Sunday, 2.45 p.m. and 6.45 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Read (Lancs.).—Wednesday, August 9, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Worsthorne (Lancs.).—Friday, August 4, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

THIS WEEK'S OFFER!

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THE RECORD RESURRECTION!

UNTIL June, 1944, the most famous resurrection in history was that of Jesus Christ. But a shadow has now been cast on the record of the New Testament hero, for a rival has beaten him at his own game.

Jesus died on a Friday and rose on the following Sunday, establishing the world's great come-back record in roughly 48 hours. That performance stood unshaken for just over 1,900 years, stamping Jesus as the world-champion resurrectee, or come-back record holder.

But in July this year there died at Otley, Yorkshire, a certain Anglican vicar, the Rev. Charles L. Tweedale, who performed a come-back within 36 hours, thus setting up a new "high," as the sportsmen call it, which beat Jesus by about 12 hours. Our authority? "Bradford Telegraph and Argus" (and other papers) a few days after the vicar's death in July:—

"Less than 36 hours after his death, the Rev. Charles L. Tweedale, who for 43 years was Vicar of Weston, near Otley, returned in spiritual form to the vicarage in one of the most impressive spiritual manifestations ever seen, say his widow and youngest daughter, Dorothy."

The statement is clear and definite, though I confess that the last seven words, putting the blame on the widow and daughter, have a sceptical smack about them which tends to spoil what the Air Force boys would call a "smashing" introduction. Still however, much as our Press may unreservedly accept the traditional come-back story, we cannot expect them to welcome newcomers to the game, or rivals, with the trusting confidence they accord to the old-established champion. After all, we have had Jesus long enough to take him for granted, but one cannot be too sure about newcomers.

For my part, however, I am not suspicious even of newcomers. In these modern times, surely it should be easy to beat the record of one who laboured under the unscientific conditions of two millenniums ago; and if one can swallow the Jesus performance, why should there be difficulty when a modern disciple emulates the junior partner? After all, Mr. Tweedale was a vicar of the true (English) Church, and, as one of the chosen (English) people, it is possible that God selected him for the task of setting up the new record. With Christianity in the parlous state it is, God might well have thought fit to choose the present time to reawaken interest in miracles and metaphysics; and nothing commands public attention, among the British people in particular, so much as the setting up of new records. We are very record-minded in this country.

It may be objected that we can believe Jesus's resurrection because he was the son of God, but not Mr. Tweedale's because he was not the son of God. If so, I must remind Christians that Christianity itself declares that we are all children of God. That must apply to parsons as well as to ordinary people, for are not the parsons, as it were, our big brothers in this family affair, "called" by God to look after his less faithful children? But let us return to our onions—I mean spirits. In an interview with the daughter of Mr. Tweedale it was stated:—

"Mother and daughter were resting downstairs in the dining-room when the mother said she heard church bells. 'I heard someone singing very loudly, "Joy bells ringing, pilgrims singing," and I heard the clashing of bells—joy bells,' Mrs. Tweedale stated. (Then) . . . Mr. Tweedale's spirit guide, Stradivarius, the famous violin maker, appeared in a cloud of ectoplasm by a photograph on the wall. Then came Mr. Tweedale, followed by a host of relations and friends, (including) Conan Doyle, Robert Blatchford, Chopin, Cardinal Newman and the late Vicar of Denton. Also lined up one after the other were British soldiers with their tin hats and bayonets, as though they had just passed over."

One thing is obvious about this latest come-back. Mr. Tweedale had a much better following than Jesus when he came back. Mr. Tweedale apparently had a host of followers, but poor Jesus, according to Luke, had to do his stuff alone, leaving only a couple of angels behind to explain the stunt to the wondering friends who came for his body.

I am puzzled, however, by the "British" soldiers, and their significance. Stradivarius, Mr. Tweedale's spirit guide, was an Italian, and Chopin, evidently one of Mr. Tweedale's musical heroes, was a Pole. Now, both Italians and Poles are to be found fighting on the Allied side in the war, and if the occasion merited the presence of British soldier-spirits, why should there not have been also some of the soldier-nationals of Stradivarius and Chopin? This nationalism seems rather mean-spirited in a display so generously spirited in spooks. I should have thought, also, that with Stradivarius present a beautiful solo on one of his exquisite instruments would have been more appropriate than the "clashing of bells"—even joy bells. But who are we to question the actions of those who, having died, yet live and set at nought the fundamental biological laws?

The appearance of Mr. Tweedale himself, however, "at several ages," does settle a rather sticky problem. My friend Ronnie Corson used to go around embarrassing religious speakers at their meetings by asking:—

"We are told that the body will be resurrected. We are also told that our body changes every seven years. A man who dies at 70 has had ten bodies. Which will be resurrected?"

The parsons never could answer that one; but I can—now. I will be able to tell Corson, on the testimony of Mr. Tweedale's resurrection, that all the bodies are resurrected because, although Jesus came back with only one body, Mr. Tweedale came back with several—"at several ages."

We are finally told (in the report) that Mr. Tweedale was an authority on Spiritualism, author of several books on the subject, and had a wide experience of psychic happenings in his own vicarage. Well, that may qualify his resurrection as being a proof of the truth of Spiritualism. But I am still puzzled about these people who can contact spirits—in their own vicarages, etc. I tried for two years (as a newspaperman in search of a good story) to contact a spirit. I haunted many Spiritualist halls in the West Riding, and attended scores of seances without ever seeing or meeting one; and all I got in thanks for my efforts was a deputation of Spiritualists to see my Editor and to inform him that a special prayer meeting was to be held for the soul—or should it be "spirit"?—of the "F. J. C. fellow" who was writing critical articles in "The Yorkshire Observer" about their movement. The deputation of real live bodies impressed the Editor much more than the spirits had managed to do. This was about 1929; and although I was often told I would make a good medium, those who said it must have been wrong because, 15 years afterwards, I have still to meet my first spirit.

Perhaps I should have tried in my own "vicarage"; or perhaps I have been calling on the wrong spirits. Next time I will leave the Christian "pass-overs" alone and will try to call up some of our own—say Thomas Paine, Richard Carlile, Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, or even Bruno, for distance and time seem to be no object in the spirit world. In the right mood (receptive) and in the right place (surrounded by a Freethought atmosphere at home, where none can say me "Nay"), I might be able to resurrect some of our departed loved ones. I should be proud to have a word from Bradlaugh, even if he only said: "Good work, Corina; keep it up."

By the way, in these days of restricted transport, I wonder if the Vicar of Weston's journey was really necessary, especially with such an entourage!

F. J. CORINA.