

Is God Mocked?

COSSACKS CHARGE BLACK WORSHIPPERS.

Last Sunday evening outside the Johannesburg Town Hall the Salvation Army were holding their usual service at about 6.30 p.m. with a congregation that included a perfectly orderly group of natives when a couple of mounted police suddenly swooped on the scene and made a baton charge on the natives in question, driving them into the road, on to the pavement and off it again until they were completely scattered and routed.

The scene was a novel one for the Town Hall steps, this breaking up of any native groups, no matter how peaceable or unobstructive, having been practised in the centre of the town for the past fortnight only. In the vicinity of the native churches, however, it has gone on for years. When a native congregation comes out of church on Sunday afternoons it is given ten minutes to disperse, after which the mounted Zarps are given free rein and truncheon to "perwail on" them to dis-kidaddle to their kayas—quite an exhilarating Sunday "police sports." In short, the slaves are allowed their weekly tot of God-stuff (indoors at least), and then it is "Back to your kennels, dogs!" The C.I.D., indeed, blandly inform us that the two troopers must have exceeded their instructions, for "natives are only too welcome to attend divine service, they are thereby kept off drink" (!); but the practice is too old-established for that story to go down. Possibly, however, the Zarps mistook the Salvation Army for the Communist meeting which follows later, for natives, who used to, and ought to, attend our meetings in large numbers, have in recent times apparently been scared away from them by the police.

The Salvationist gossamer raised no protest whatever at this discriminating, segregating outrage against a portion of his flock, and on enquiry we find that the "Army" does not intend to make any fuss because it provides special services for natives in another "class area" of the town, and hence does not mind their being driven off the Town Hall site! Presumably it will also not complain if white worshippers at the native services are likewise dragooned helter-skelter away "into the highways and hedges"!

The native societies and churches, and least of all their white missionary parsons, also seem quite content to see their God mocked in this way by Smuts' Cossacks.

The only indignation we have discovered (except no doubt that of the hunted "boys" themselves) is that of some white workers present, and probably they were not typical. One of the few realistic published photographs of the 1922 Rand strike showed S.A.M.R. galloping through Rissik Street and chasing the astonished and indignant public (just at the hour when office workers were starting off home) into doorways and back alleys. That sort of conduct all along the Reef provoked not only boiling indignation but very practical reprisals from the white workers. Yet how many of them will just snigger and chuckle to see "niggers" similarly treated!

Anyway, the incident throws a flash-light on the increasingly helotising, nigger-baiting, slave-driving, pogrom-loving feature of our "White South Africa" "civilisation," before which, if "His service" shows the slightest sign of giving "perfect freedom," even God must bow the knee!

S.P.B.