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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Christians and Christmas

FROM beginning to end Christianity is a bundle of contradictions. Its doctrines and beliefs are as contradictory to each other as are its precepts to its practice. It has an almighty Creator whose will is always being overcome by his creatures, and whose wisdom is seldom equal to the cunning of man. It preaches love and has been more successful in rousing hatred than any other religion in the world. It prescribes peace and Christians are everywhere foremost in waging war. Young Men's Christian Temperance Associations are evidence that it has, after centuries of rule, failed to make sobriety a habit among Christians. Societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals and to children prove how far Christianity is from making kindness characteristic of its followers. It has sown history thick with falsehood in the service of religious truth. The records of popes, and priests, and of the churches prove that Christian history gives an air of plausibility to but one orthodox doctrine—that of human depravity.

The contradiction that obtains in Christian doctrines and practices dogs it in its festivals. Look at the present festival of Christmas! Traditionally Father Christmas is a jolly red-faced fellow, full of kindness and good nature. But Jesus Christ, whose birth is supposed to have been on Christmas day, is the very reverse of this—a pale, emaciated figure of suffering, as far removed as possible from plum pudding, and turkey, and general jollification. Christians believe in the one, their practice points to the other. If the youngsters saw Father Christmas enter the room they would shriek with delight, and he would reign the unquestioned king of their affections. If they saw the traditional "Man of Sorrows" they would shriek with fear and run to the sides of their mothers. Human nature has been too strong for the Churches. The logic of life has shown itself more powerful than the logic of faith. And as December the 25th was a period of rejoicing long before Christianity was born, so it may remain such when Christianity has taken its place in a museum of anthropology. And about the pre-Christian rejoicing there was reason and logic, even though of a crude kind. Christianity succeeded only in making the festival religiously ridiculous.

Was Jesus born on the 25th of December? Nobody knows. Irenaeus and Tertullian gives the year 3 B.C. as the date of his birth. Luke's account would make it about seven years later. Canon Farrar thought it should be 4 B.C. Some have placed it much earlier, and others a little later. Our accepted chronology really dates from the sixth century. The monk Dionysius decided the exact date. And imagine the trustworthiness of fixing the date of a birth that was believed to have occurred some five centuries and a quarter before, and in a period registry offices were unknown and no records were available. But there is a reason for fixing the 25th of December as the birthday of the Son of God: it was a favourite day for the birthdays of gods, and there is a fashion in these

things. In pre-Christian Syria and Egypt, says Frazer, writing of the annual rebirth of the solar deity, "the celebrants retired into certain inner shrines, from which at midnight they issued with a loud cry, "The Virgin has brought forth. The light is waxing!" In the Mithraic cult, which bore so striking a resemblance to Christianity, the birthday of Mithra was celebrated on December 25. The Egyptians exhibited a new-born god, lying in a manger, on that date. Bacchus and Adonis also had their birthdays on this date, and a Syrian Christian writer, cited by Frazer, says very frankly:—

"It was a custom of the heathen to celebrate on the same 25th of December the birthday of the sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and festivities the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to the festival; they took counsel, and resolved that the true nativity should be solemnized on that day."

The truth is that December 25 does not connote the birthday of a particular historic person; it is the anniversary of an event. And the recognition of this event dates far beyond the time of Christianity, and to a much wider area than is covered by Christian influence. And one cannot even understand the origin and nature of Churches without putting one's self in the mental position of our primitive ancestors, to whom "natural law" was unknown, and who saw in all natural processes the operations of supernatural agents. To these, the decline of the power of the sun and the dying of vegetation were portents full of disaster. Magic is resorted to in order to help the sun regain its lost strength; and, as Frazer suggests, we have in the kindling of the Yule log a survival of the practice of sympathetic magical ceremony which aimed at strengthening the heat of the sun by kindling fires on earth. And as a matter of fact, the African Bushman to-day follows exactly this plan at mid-winter, to the same end. At any rate, there is no doubt whatever that Christmas is the old Pagan solar festival, which in its turn was derived from the savage belief already noted. And with this as a key, all the customs connected with Christmas are explainable. The mistletoe comes to us from the Druids, who saw in it the retreating place of the spirit of vegetation. The rebirth of the infant Sun-God is plainly a symbol of the recovery of the sun after reaching its lowest point in the heavens. The general rejoicings is the delight of a people on receiving assurance of the continuance of the life of vegetation. Even the decoration of houses with evergreens is a practice of Pagan origin, the purpose being, as one authority writes, to provide the sylvan spirits with a shelter, so that they might remain "unnipped with frost and cold winds, until a milder reason had renewed the foliage of their darling abodes." In their origin all these things have a crude logic attaching to them. As survivals, they are interestingly pretty. But Christianity, by the attempt to connect them with an historical event, only ends by making them ridiculous.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## FACT AND THEORY

At the end of his article "Philosophy for Fun," Vernon Carter said he could go on indefinitely. I quite believe it. But he should stop and think sometimes. He wants to know, if science first frames an hypothesis then devises experiments to test it, how do I make it guesswork? Yet, according to his own statement of scientific induction, it begins with "accurate observation of the facts in question" or with "precise observation of the facts." So, science does not *first* frame an hypothesis. And if, as he says, "hypothesis depends on facts," how can it be "the offspring of a well-stocked mind"? And if "there is discrepancy and hypothesis must be modified," it is again clear that hypothesis does not come first. Surely, if it did, there would be no basis in fact.

He does not like his dishes "shallow" or "uncooked," but well garnished with verbiage. Wasting space and time, he says he is not sure about Russell's logic, he thinks Russell says something somewhere, but in any case it does not matter. I can assure him that when I say ridiculous I do not mean unreasonable, any more than when I say funny or comical. Trying to show an anti-metaphysician is a metaphysician, his accuracy does not extend to his logic. He says metaphysics is a method, but what is its subject matter? To Russell, metaphysics concerns the possible and accuracy is only possible in mathematics and logic; another metaphysician, Spinoza, said possibility is only another word for ignorance, so it becomes accurate observation of ignorance or of the possible.

Starting with an hypothesis is the method of metaphysics, science only adopts that method when faced with inadequate observation and is always ready to scrap it when seen to be unnecessary, just as it will always adopt a more workable theory. Here we have the old puzzle of Sir Isaac Newton's *hypothesis non fingo*, I make no hypothesis. It involves the difference between hypothesis and theory as well as between theory and fact. Vernon Carter wants to know how our ideas are different from our experience, and draws the old red herring, of the distinction of qualitative and quantitative differences, across the track. But the question, how, concerns method and is not merely one of definition of terms, though it does concern precision or accuracy.

Isaac Newton gave us a theory, including a mathematical formula, based upon careful observation of facts. Subsequent modification of verbal definition has not altered the formula but hypothetical consideration of "ether" and "magnetic attraction," with confusion in the Fitzgerald contraction and the Michelson-Morley experiments, led up to the Lorenz theory, and if Newton's theory of relativity has been replaced by Einstein's, it is with an improved and more accurate mathematical formula which is also based upon more accurate observation. The hypothetical considerations of ether or magnetic attraction no longer concern us, for as Einstein said "It is so." Whatever hypothesis was implicit has gone, but the theory remains.

Qualitative distinction has gone but quantitative formula, with greater precision, has been developed. This is seen also with Clerk Maxwell's undulatory theory. Just as with Newton's or Einstein's theory, the basis is mathematical formula in Maxwell's equations which were derived from Faraday's careful experiments. And as Maxwell said, "It makes no difference what occupies space, for, given the measurements and methods of calculation, the results follow, and the ether hypothesis does not come into the calculations." Whether or not Clerk Maxwell had a well stuffed mind, he clearly saw

the difference between an unnecessary hypothesis and a useful theory. The hypothesis is discarded as it involves no more than unnecessary assumptions.

The difference between theory and fact involves the purpose for which a theory is designed. If observation is a matter of fact, then, when we see the sun rise and see the sun set, these events are facts. But we have a theory that the earth rotates and revolves round the sun; yet we do see the sun rise and set, we do not feel the earth move. The theory is not to decide whether the sun or the earth moves, but for such purposes as to accurately calculate the different times of the sunrise or sunset at different places or seasons, and the calculations could be made with the old theory of Ptolemy. Whatever the theory the facts remain the same and we use one theory in preference as a matter of convenience or accuracy; and different facts call for different theories.

Why this concern for qualitative differences? Is it because they are incalculable or undefineable? Theory should account for experience. To mistake theory for fact is to stand on one's head and think with one's feet. We have seen that theory enables us to calculate the time of a sunset. Is not the time as qualitative as the beauty of a sunset? It is as transient and as intangible or transcendental; and metaphysicians have seen beauty in mathematical construction. We may observe a sunset and be unaware of the time of the event. Is the sunset an illusion because we are unable to define time? Our concept of time, or any other of the "elementary undefineables," does not affect our experience of the sunset, nor do these qualitative differences affect our theory.

He is in a state if he cannot distinguish his experience from his ideas of it. He wants to know how wholes can be inferred if not from parts. But if these things are matters of inference they are not matters of observation of fact, and come into the same category as pink elephants. He does not ask how we know about parts, because he forgets the initial process of analysis in accurate observation. We analyse our experience into such categories as space and time, matter and motion; but he reverses the process, thinking of these abstractions as facts, and, by playing upon such elementary undefinables as "mind," because somebody said something somewhere, makes accuracy impossible.

H. H. PREECE.

## EGYPTO-ENGLISH

(Concluded from page 513)

Consider this star-proof philosophy of preventive asterisk or dis-aster; by literally "putting your stars together," i.e., think for yourself and illumine the mind.

That learned recorder Hector Boethius, A.D. 1465, states in the "Old Manners Book" that ancient Britishers used Egyptian symbols in the manner of hieroglyphics for trading and names of things. Taliesin, Pen Beirdd, the British Chief Bard and eminent scholar of the sixth century, sang of ancient Beli the Great, in Britain, the Island of Beli Beli was the Welsh GWYDION, also a great scholar similar to the Egyptian THOTH, as Master of Arts and letters. The Cardiac Gwydion equals the illustrious KHET-I-ON or Sun Gate of the Egyptian City ON. These facts are confirmed by Myfyr Morganwy, Arch Druid of Wales, 1872, who asserted that "the ancient bards used words similar to the Egyptians"; and in every part of the British Isles there are proper names, which can be accounted for only by the ancient Egyptian vocabulary, and none other can

give the meanings. *Hertford* is the highest land of the county shires, and *HERT* in Egyptian means high country. *Watling Street* is the old *British*, and not Roman, Great North Road from Dover Sea Coast and *UAT* is water, north and way in Egyptian.

The Egyptian root *KHET* already given signifies our English word *GATE*, in relation to a harbour, and explains the town name *MAR-GATE*, with *MER* Egyptian for sea, *MER-KHET*, Margate. *The Isle of Thanet* is named by ancient geographers as *RU-IM*; and *Ramsgate* on Thanet is *RUIM-KHET*. The Egyptian hieroglyphic *RU*, as an oval figure, implies the mouth, an inlet, hence the sea-gate of Thanet, *RUIM-KHET*, *Ramsgate*, named also to commemorate the epoch when the Sun entered the gate of the Zodiacal Aries, the Ram constellation.

*The Island of Sark* originally celebrated by its Gallic God, is *Sarkh* in Egyptian and means both a temple and a god.

*HAM*, the terminating syllable of many English town-names, is the Egyptian *HEM*, the home sign, or country-place.

*KHENT* in Egyptian signifies a garden, a guarded place, and south land *KENT* is a county garden in the South of England.

This Anglo-Egyptian glossary is the master key to understanding true meanings which hitherto have been enigmas.

This bountiful and beautiful philosophy elucidates the present ideas of those ancient people, described by Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, as "excelling all others in mighty works," and, Egyptian word-genealogy, root and branch, though intricate, is not so puzzling as hybrid English.

Chaucer's poetry and Doomsday Book contains words which few readers understand, like the monosyllable "box," with 24 distinct meanings, while vital unmistakable words like *IS*, *this*, *hat*, *on*, *her*, *no*, *sir*, *he*, *had*, *that*, *to*, *be*, *in*, *us*, *men*, are pure Egyptian originals, which are not correctly explained either in meaning or derivation by great Oxford Dictionaries.

Near Oxford, on the River *ISIS*, stands *Cricklade*, formerly the site where learned men settled with Brut, mentioned by Prof. Henry Morley in his scholarly work, "Writers Before Chaucer."

The cute antiquarian writers, Drayton and Leland, state the same facts from the old "Proctor's Book," which praises the wise men of *Cricklade* by the *ISIS*, where a sect after the manner of the Egyptian *REKH*, laid college foundation to record the *SUN* crossing zodiacally the sign of Taurus the Bull or *OX*.

*OX* is the important hieroglyphic denoting the sun, *O*, and its astronomical crossing *X*.

*REKH* was depicted by that knowing blackbird, the *ROOK*, as the scholar wearing a black gown; *ROOK* also symbolises the *PARSON*, and *REKH* is the *RECTOR*.

The Egyptian College *REKH-T-ON* always donned his black *UT*, the hat of knowledge. This Egyptian *UT* gives both origin and meaning of, *head*, *hat*, *had* and *hood* of collegiate distinctions as the mortar-board hat of square and circular shape. The Saxon Chronicle tells of the *bis-cop-had* or *bishop-hood*, as *head* and *see* of learning. The English word *HUT* is to cover, protect the college head, both of the man and his dignified position, a sign of scholarship, as was the *hut* or *hood* covering the mysteries of *ISIS*, which goddess of learning *HAD* all what was, is and will be, and to whom the *COW* was consecrated, at the solar crossing or fording of the Taurus constellation. All this English ceremonial

was adopted for Oxford's ancient foundation simultaneously when the Sun entered the Zodiacal Bull sign; and herein are the true explanations why this University City is called *OX-ford*, its river *ISIS*, and its City Armorial, an *OX*, in honour of Egypt's *ISIS*, Queen of all knowledge. Moreover, the Hall of Isis by the Nile was called *KAN-TEB*, a foundation of learning; hence *Can-tab* or *KAN* crossing, giving the town name *Cambridge*, similarly as with Oxford, classically expressed as *OXON* and *CAN-TAB*, whose University Cities both orientate, after the manner of Egyptian temples of learning, so skilfully sited, geographically and astronomically, as proved by Sir J. Norman, Lockyer's mathematical treatise which proves:—

That which has been is now; and

That which is to be, has been already.

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

### MARTIAN BED-TIME STORY (A.D. 2000)

"ONCE upon a time there was another world, called Earth. It took six days to make, but these lasted two billion years. In its long history (now past like a dream) it went through many changes. Once it was all fire, and then all sea, and swamp, and jungle. Out of this chaos emerged huge objects, hardly creatures, having the power of locomotion.

"One of these was the *Diplodocus*. He had a belly as big as a bus, and a brain which would have gone into a thimble. Sometimes he would survey the broad rump of Mrs. *Diplodoca*, and the fruits of his ample loins, the little *Diplodoci*, and would feel (he could hardly be said to think!) that God had never made anything finer than himself, and never would.

"Long afterwards, when *Diplodocus* was embalmed in stone, and seen no more, there dwelt, in a little island kingdom, a king called Charles I. He, too, looked round his world, and saw that it was good. He thought that the absolute monarchy, which was himself, was the goal of creation, and the feudal pattern of old England the finest system for mankind. That King was thrust after the *Diplodocus*—into outer darkness!

"The world then teemed with a race of capitalists. These made strange and wonderful hells for others to work and live in. But they, too, could not see far beyond themselves. Their brains, however, were much larger than that of the *Diplodocus*. These made them unhappy, for they knew thereby that they must pass, and that a new society would come after the one which had enriched them. They therefore resolved not to go quietly into their destined limbo, but wickedly plotted to destroy the fair world with atomic and hydrogen bombs, and other inventions. . . ."

Only a fairy tale? The answer rests with us.

A. SLATER.

### PAMPHLETS for the PEOPLE

By CHAPMAN COHEN

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## ACID DROPS

Readers of the two Catholic journals, the *Catholic Times* and the *Universe* will not be a little puzzled at two items which obviously contradict each other. We commented the other week on the very pathetic plaint of Mgr. Rogers at a Catholic Truth Society rally that "Atheists get away with arguments" when opposed by Catholics. This was in the *Universe*. But in the *Catholic Times*, we are assured that Fr. Ripley had not the slightest difficulty in "easily answering" 30 questions asked him when he addressed the Merseyside Branch of the N.S.S. "There was not one question which he had not heard before," he told his audience. Fr. Ripley, in fact, knew "all the answers." We feel that he and Mgr. Rogers should have a heart-to-heart talk and settle the problem. Perhaps a prayer or two might help.

A gentleman (or lady) called Noel Broomhall wants all good Christians completely to boycott the Festival of Britain so to "preserve our Sundays." This weapon of boycott is, and has always been, a very favourite one with the pious—in fact, most of us remember how they boycotted the theatre, playing-cards, whisky, cycling, motoring, mixed bathing, and many other gentle amusements, and somehow or other these all happily flourished in spite of prayers to God Almighty and curses to the Devil. We are quite sure that, unless we are at war, the Festival of Britain will survive all the groans of religious idiots.

But all over England, Christian writers in newspapers and other journals, while always protesting that they are not Puritans, that they are all out for freedom, are like a writer in the *Eastern Daily Press* "who is glad that the Battersea fun-fair will not be open" on Sunday, as it is a "holy" day, a day when a man wants God, and an "opportunity to repossess his soul." No doubt this kind of religious twaddle will have its supporters, but fortunately for the mass, it won't have the slightest effect. The people who want fun on a Sunday will get it, and there is nothing that the Church, even if backed up by the Lord, can do about it.

In a recent broadcast, Professor J. Z. Young pointed out that a person born blind but who was made to see after a few years, would find the outside world difficult to understand, and it would take years to educate him. Whether this is so, it is difficult to say, for we note that a musical "genius" who has broadcast, eighteen-year-old Bernard Gifford, was blind almost from birth but at eighteen recovered his sight through prayers and "a healing hand." The point to note is that he was almost at once able to read, and is now studying for his F.R.C.O. degree—which proves, if true, that he at least has not had to wait for years before being educated to understand the world around him. We wonder what Prof. Young has to say.

We are not quite sure whether the Roman Catholic hierarchy would like to take over the B.B.C.'s religious broadcasting, but there is no doubt that the Free Church of Scotland would just love to. In spite of the spate of programmes and services which are assigned to religion every day, the F.C.S. is horrified that such a series of lectures like the harmless "Man Without God" ones should have been allowed, and that Catholic speakers are permitted a time or two on the air. We are ready to bet a copy of our *Bible Handbook* to any religious volume,

that if the F.C.S. had its way, no one would be allowed to laugh on a Sunday, let alone kiss his wife. Why doesn't Mr. "Misery" Martin operate from Glasgow?

Two things, if attacked, will always bring a flood of letters in protest—they are Christianity and Communism, the supporters of which invariably insist that they stand for love, truth, and justice, but particularly truth. When a correspondent in *Picture Post* claimed that "Christianity has done its job," meaning that it was no longer required, "readers reacted with a flood of letters," very much like the dozens we get if anybody ventures to criticise Communism. Both are absolutely needed to save the world, and either set of letters would do for the other if one word was changed. Religion is religion whatever you call it.

Is the Bible wrong anywhere? If a correspondent to the *Portsmouth Evening News* is to be believed, there is not an erroneous line or word in it. He challenges anybody to show where archæology has shown the Bible untrue—which is very disingenuous. The real facts are that archæology has been unable to show any Bible story at all as true, for the excellent reason that Bible personages and incidents are just pleasant fictions. Not a scrap of information has ever been unearthed about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses or Joshua—or, for that matter, David or Solomon. And goodness knows, they have been digging up everywhere long enough.

Most Communists, we believe, would like to shed the Dean of Canterbury, who is a good Christian. We wonder how they feel about their other great recruit, Sir Hugh Rankin, who is "a blood-red militant Communist," and also a "practising Buddhist." Before he went over to Buddha, he was a confirmed Moslem, for he "hated and loathed the Christian religion." We wonder what he thinks of the Red Dean?

Our contemporary the *Christian* is very, very sad. After 150 years of "expanding evangelism," it puts on record that "there are still people to whom the name of Christ is absolutely unknown." There are actually more non-Christians in India than when the Gospel was first preached, and there are villages in Madagascar which are completely pagan. This is a terrible burden for Christians to bear, and we can only suggest that all who are overcome with shame, to hand over as much hard cash as possible to the London Missionary Society. They will spend it quite easily and a lost soul from the depths of a Brazilian forest is a prize worth much more than one's annual income. Only hurry up with that cash, please.

The R.C. Bishop Murphy is very down on any Catholic who wants to be his own Pope—which really means, who may be so unhappy as to want to think for himself. To be one's own Pope also means to dispense with priests and bishops and to take away their livelihood, and that would be the limit. Bishop Murphy sternly rebukes everybody who thinks for himself and just as sternly insists that they must "follow minutely the directions of their confessor." They must, in fact, be "scrupulously obedient," and then all will be well. If not, then a little prodding from the Devil's red-hot, three-pronged weapon might help to inculcate some heavenly obedience. It's all too good to be true.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

The General Secretary, N.S.S., gratefully acknowledges 10s. from Mr. A. Addison for the N.S.S. Benevolent Fund. For *The Freethinker* Fund, A. Addison, 10s.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, 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.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FRIEDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

## SUGAR PLUMS

This is the last opportunity for reminding those who have not yet applied for tickets for the Annual Dinner on Saturday, January 13, celebrating the centenary of the birth of G. W. Foote. Besides the Dinner, at which Mr. Sydney Silverman, M.P., will be present as a guest of honour, there will be a first-rate musical programme, speeches from well known Freethinkers, and an excellent opportunity for meeting visitors from different parts of the country. The last few remaining seats will of course go to the first applicants for tickets, 15s. each with order, stating if any vegetarians, and any hotel accommodation required. Applications to N.S.S. Offices, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1

Why not begin the new year by taking up membership in the National Secular Society? We cannot expect Christians to keep the organisation going, but there is a large number of unattached Freethinkers in the country and on January 1 each one of them should ask himself: Why am I not a member of The National Secular Society, the Society that has been serving the cause of Freethought since 1866? Write for details to the Secretary, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, without further delay.

The President, Norman Birkett, and the Chairman, Robert Lusty, of the National Book League, are appealing for funds to enable them to send books for our soldiers in Korea. We are heartily in sympathy and readers who would like to contribute should send cheques, postal orders, etc., to Messrs Coutts & Co., 440, Strand, London, W.C.2. They should be made out to Messrs Coutts and crossed "N.B.L. Forces Book Fund." All contributions will be most gratefully acknowledged.

## TO CHAPMAN COHEN

Now in the quiet of your restful days,  
When Age on you has laid restraining hand,  
We bring our homage to your gathered bays,  
The salutation of a loyal band  
To their great leader in our happy fight  
In darkest Christendom to shed the light.  
New Year, 1951. B.S.

## AN ENGLISH MESSIAH

(Concluded from page 516)

How long "Sir William Courtenay" would have continued to tell his peculiar version of "The Canterbury Tales," cannot be imagined, had he not gratuitously ruined his prospects by a piece of bluff that failed to come off. At a local trial of some smugglers caught in the act, and presumably to enhance his popularity, the "Knight" committed the astonishing folly of going into the witness box and swearing on oath that he had been present, and that no smuggled goods were to be seen. The Court, however, was not so easily impressed as the electors of Canterbury. It was proved at his subsequent trial for perjury that he had actually been at church whilst the arrests were being made. He got a long term of transportation for perjury. The Government, however, took, as the sequel proved, a more realistic view of his actions and sent him to a lunatic asylum.

This ended the first act in the tragi-comedy of John Nichols Tom, alias "Sir William Courtenay," "Count Moses Rothschild," etc. The second act, in which, unlike the first, tragedy predominated over comedy, was brief, sombre, and ultimately bloody.

This second act began in December, 1837, when "Sir William" got the benefit of the Act of amnesty issued to mark the accession of Queen Victoria. The liberated lunatic returned, not to Canterbury itself, but to the surrounding countryside, where he began a violent and extraordinarily successful campaign in the neighbouring villages. "The Hungry Forties" were drawing near, times were hard, and the new "poor law" (1834), with its avowedly penal workhouse system, was causing bitter hatred amongst the English labourers. The liberated "Sir William" denounced these abuses with measureless violence and soon gathered round him a band of fanatic enthusiasts, at the head of whom he toured the country lanes on a white horse which his followers visioned in the Apocalypse. The language of its rider became more and more violent, as did his appearance armed with cutlass and pistols. Increasingly, religious ecstasy characterised both his utterances and those of his followers. The former "Knight of Malta" now began to hint, not obscurely, that he was the Messiah and to exact open adoration from his followers of both sexes.

In the England of 1838, when the "Victorian Age" was now under way, such goings-on could not continue any longer than, perhaps, did their prototype in ancient Palestine. A magistrate's warrant for sedition was issued for the arrest of the vagrant "Knight." But "Courtenay"—aiming more accurately than did Peter in the garden of Gethsemane!—killed the constable who bore it. Then he led his faithful band out into a wood near Canterbury and, in response to their frenzied inquiries whether he was, indeed, the Christ, solemnly replied, "I am He," and showed his hands upon which the point of nails was visible. Then he blessed his

followers and laid his hands in blessing upon their children.

The arrival of two companies of infantry, hastily sent for by the terrified magistrates, put an end to the Pentecostal scene. At three o'clock in the afternoon upon May 31, 1838, amid the appropriate rumblings of a mounting storm, the final act in the tragi-comic career of the English Messiah was staged amid thunder and lightning against the green background of an English wood in springtime.

Two soldiers advanced to seize the Messiah, who shot both dead with his own hand. Whereupon his enraged following of frenzied rustics charged the soldiers and began to belabour them with their bludgeons. The order to fire was given and "Courtenay" reeled back against a tree gasping, "I have Jesus in my heart."

The soldiers fixed bayonets and charged. When the smoke cleared, the Messiah and eight of his followers lay dead or dying. A jug of cold water was poured over the dead Messiah by a female disciple, an English "Mary Magdalen." But no resurrection followed, as he appears to have predicted would be the case.

The affray with its tragic conclusion naturally made a tremendous sensation. At the resulting trial, at which several of the short-lived Messianic movement received lengthy prison sentences, it was revealed that "Sir William Courtenay" in real life was John Nichols Tom, son of the publican at "The Joiners' Arms," St. Columb Major, Cornwall, where he had originated in 1799.

Tom's own former followers, however, continued to entertain other ideas as to their Master's identity. A traveller, who chanced to traverse Bossenden Wood in Kent, where the final encounter had transpired, during the summer of 1838, would have, belike, stumbled upon the tree against which the Messiah breathed his last, decorated with a white board affixed by innumerable tenterhooks to the tree and bearing the inscription in black letters:—

"Our real true Messiah, King of the Jews."

Who, indeed, could prove that he was not?

F. A. RIDLEY.

## MAPPING OUT THE ANCIENT ORIENT

WHEN last year scholars of Oriental studies in Europe assembled in Prague for the Oriental Conference, the most famous of them all, the Czech Professor B. Hrozný—who first deciphered the ancient Hittite, proto-Indian and Cretan languages—was nowhere to be found. A genuinely shy man, he shuns the public light, dislikes interviews and publicity, so as not to be distracted from his work. In that same year, he celebrated his 70th birthday, and on this occasion, "Orbis," Prague, published a booklet to review the greatness of his unceasing labour.\*

The epoch-making work of his last years revolutionised our ideas of the cultural life of the Near East and cast fresh light on all aspects of the languages and history of the ancient Oriental races.

At the age of ten, in the Classical Grammar School in Prague, he was fascinated by Latin because of "the simplicity of its grammatical structure." After Greek, he began the study of Hebrew and Arabic; at the University of Vienna he added Sumerian, Assyrian, Persian, Aramaic, Egyptian and Sabeian. However, he never hankered after the study of pure languages, of philology for its own sake; this was merely the means

whereby to find the key to the long-forgotten stories and historical settings of the Ancient Orient.

In 1901, immediately after graduating, he left for Berlin to study Assyriology under Fr. Delitzsch and Hugo Winckler, and published his first paper on the Babylonian money system. Winckler was a leading member of the "Pan-Babylonist" school of thought, assuming that all ancient culture stemmed from that of Mesopotamia. When working in the Vienna University Library, Hrozný published his book on "Wheat in Ancient Babylon" (1913), he indicated that the agricultural terminology was the same in Mesopotamia and Egypt and assumed that the economic life of Egypt was dependent upon Babylonian culture. These close relations on the one hand, as well as the undeniable similarity of the Semitic-Hamitic languages to the Indo-European group, gave Hrozný a conviction—formulated many years later in his book "The Ancient History of the Near East"—that the Indo-Europeans as well as the Hamites and Semites originally came from a common home, somewhere in the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, in the mountains of the Caucasus. (As far as the common origin of Semites and "Aryans" is concerned, there is hardly any dissent to-day among serious scientists.)

But Hrozný knew that more urgent tasks were calling him in other fields, that a whole complex of problems demanded elucidation, without the solution of which he would not be able to achieve the final synthesis he had in mind. There were, first of all, the cuneiform tablets in the Hittite language; in view of the absence of contextual material, these letters continued to prove undecipherable. The technique he used to "break" the puzzle is fascinating, but we have no space to go into it here. He at once detected close affinities in Hittite words such as *ezza-teni* (eat, Old German "ezzan"), *vádar* (water, Slav. voda), *ug* (I, Lat. "ego"), etc., with roots of the Indo-European group. When Hrozný announced his conclusion that the Hittite language—a grammar of which he compiled—was akin with Greek, Latin and the Germanic languages, he was ferociously opposed by Bible-banging professors and attacked on pettyfogging grounds. However, after the publication of his systematic translations (with transcription) of the Boghazkői inscriptions, the number of his followers grew steadily, and to-day there is not one among serious Indo-European scholars to doubt the correctness of his interpretation; henceforth, Hittitology quickly grew into an independent branch of philology.

In studying these inscriptions, however, he simultaneously with the English Hittitologist, Forrer, discovered that they also contained examples of another language which differed fundamentally from Indo-European Hittite; this language which seemed to be of Caucasian origin, was called "Khattili," i.e., Khattish, or proto-Hittite, and was the older, indigenous tongue spoken by the original population of Asia Minor in the first half of the second millennium B.C. Hrozný showed the "Aryan" Hittites called themselves *Nesites* (from their ancient city *Neshash*), and that therefore their language ought to be called *Nesitic*, and not Hittite, as had always been taken for granted. In addition, he discovered and identified in the inscriptions of Boghazkői further tongues, that of the *Lúites*, and *Khurili*, spoken by the "Armenoid" Khurri people, or Subarians. Then he turned to the most difficult of all philological tasks: Hittite "hieroglyphic" inscriptions (differing fundamentally from Egyptian hieroglyphs), for which all customary aids were absolutely lacking. By 1937 he had substantially

\* Readers may have it sent on application to the Editor of the periodical *Czechoslovak Life*, Prague XII.

mastered this tongue and published his results, showing that it, like Indo-European Hittite, essentially belonged to the "Kentum group."† The nation which had used that language, however, and which, after the downfall of the "cuneiform" Hittite Empire in the 13th century B.C., became heir to its culture for some 1,500 years, has not so far been identified.

Two more problems remained to be cleared up before he could write his projected standard work on ancient oriental history. These were the questions of Proto-Indian and Cretain. At that time, the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, the Universities were closed and Hrozny was ejected from his position as Rector of the University. Despite this, he was able to announce progress in his Proto-Indian researches at a famous lecture late in 1940, which was in the nature of silent students' demonstration against Fascism; and subsequently he also announced that he had succeeded in "breaking" the mysterious Cretain inscriptions.

Hrozny's great synthesis, "The Ancient History of the Near East and India," was published in 1940. By this book he leaves his mark on all fields of oriental scholarship. History is treated dynamically, cultures are seen not in isolation but in inter-action.

If it is borne in mind that in the majority of cases Hrozny was faced with the task of solving an equation of two unknown factors—writing and language—the task of the great Champollion who deciphered the hieroglyphs of the trilingual Rosetta Stone was much easier than that of Hrozny in elucidating inscriptions with no contextual aid whatever. He wrote a summary of the Hittite problem for the 14th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; he is a member of the French Académie, and when it was announced that a commemoration volume was to be published to mark Hrozny's 70th birthday, so many contributions began to pour in, that the number of volumes is expanding. The two volumes already published contain essays from some of the greatest scholars of 23 countries, among them twelve contributions from France, five from the U.S.A. and four from Great Britain. Whilst this gives some idea of the international reputation of Professor Hrozny, we Freethinkers accept him as one of the great demolishers of the Biblical edifice.

P. G. ROY.

† There are two groups of Indo-European languages: the (recent) tongues with palatalisation, and the (ancient) ones without. According to their word for "hundred," they are termed "Kentum" and "Catom" groups. The Hittites and Luwians (Luvianē in Northern Cilicia = Khilakku) spoke Kentum, whilst Khattish, Phrygian, Armenian, Scythian, the tongues of Troy, etc., belonged to the "Catom" group.

‡ Marshall's successful excavations at Mohendjo-Daro and Harrappa in North-East India revealed the remnants of a hitherto unknown culture preceding that of the Vedic Indians. By 1939, not one character of this mysterious writing had been deciphered. Hrozny found that pro-Indian was akin to "hieroglyphic" Hittite, hence an Indo-European language.

### THE FAIRY TALE

The latest for consumption  
Is the yarn of the assumption.  
It is the Pope's Injunction  
And it seems to me like this—

From Rome to Clapham Junction  
For those who have no gumption  
No doubt the thing will function—  
Where ignorance is bliss.

E. W. JAMES.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FREETHOUGHT AND "THE JUNGLE GIRL"

SIR,—Is there a connection between the first and the second and between Freethought and brutal intolerance? We were all young once and love and deep tragedy are not confined to any age. Has any authority of any State any right to use its despotic power of Church or State to crush an individual, violate his or her mind, and physically separate him or her from those loved, when such person has done no crime? I was about 13 when I threw the religion of my people to the winds. If, at that time I had been thrown, by war, into the jungle and been helped and protected by one of them and had renounced my religion and nationality and married one of them, would it be just or human for my parents to use the temporal power of a "superior" nation to rape my mind and tear me from friends I love and the woman I had chosen? That my friends were of a different colour and that my new religion was neither a Christian sect nor Atheism makes no difference. If despotism and arbitrary authority can "get away" with this kind of prohibition, then it will become unsafe to depart from any religion and become Atheist or Freethinker. Once the wedge is driven in the door is the easier opened—to tyranny.

That in any land there should be different laws for men and women and white and coloured or believers and non-believers, is a vile abomination. In such case it is the opposite to what others, and myself, received bullets for—freedom amongst ourselves and its extension to others. What we had in mind, and sang about, was: "Land of hope and glory. Mother of the Free . . ." and its extension to mankind in all lands and of all colours.—Yours, etc.,

RUPERT L. HUMPHRIS.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBBRY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Sati's Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. EDWARD TAYLOR (Vice-Chairman, Notts. Debating Society), "The Moorish Contribution to Science."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Rev. KENNETH WATTS, "The Final Issue."

South London Branch N.S.S. (The London and Brighton Hotel, 139, Queens Road, Peckham, S.E. 15).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: D. KEPPEL, I.L.P., "Rabbinical Fictions and Frauds."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Annual General Meeting."

### G. W. FOOTE CENTENARY

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SATURDAY, 13th JANUARY, 1951

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## THE HEART AND THE MIND

I FEEL that I must make some reply to H. H. Preece's article, "Good and Evil" (published in *The Freethinker* for December 10), more because I feel that he tends to misrepresent a position growing increasingly general in our day than because I have any direct axe of my own to grind in this matter. For, unpalatable though the fact may be to the majority of readers of these columns, I think that it is indisputable that, in our day, there is a greater traffic from indifference and Freethought to some religious attitude than the reverse.

Mr. Preece takes the line, as far as I understand him, that he has been subject to moods and to almost uncontrollable emotions, but that he would not describe this as being in any way a conflict of good and evil tendencies within his own heart or mind. Now, I do not think that I am in any way an exceptional person in this matter, but I would say that I have been conscious (and in these latter days, increasingly conscious) of a kind of internal conflict of motives. I suppose that those who assert the irrationality of all religious ideas and attitudes will say that such a feeling can be explained by the idea of a social conscience, or something of that kind. All that I can say is that I am only too well aware of my own weaknesses, and that if I am able to get any kind of support to fight against such temptations as come the way of every human being I am only too glad of that support.

I fear that many of my old readers will feel that I am falling sadly away from the attitude of a genuine Freethinker; at the same time I think that they neglect the idea of Pascal, who once wrote that the heart has reasons of which the mind knows nothing. For instance, there is the matter of art. As a friend said to me the other day, we have no way of *proving* that Beethoven is a greater musician than Irving Berlin, or that Botticelli is a greater artist than the man who draws the pictures in the "comic" over which my son chuckles each week. These things cannot be proved, but that they are true seems to me to be as certain as that I have two eyes and one nose.

There are, then, spheres of life in which the idea of scientific proof does not necessarily apply. This seems to me to be where Freethought has gone badly off the lines; and this is what in long years of Freethought and Rationalist journalism I did not allow myself to see. For, after all, it is the man who assumes that Beethoven is a greater musician than Irving Berlin who gets most out of his music. Similarly, perhaps, in this matter of atheistic interpretation of the universe.

The old proofs (so-called) of God's existence have been blown sky-high, many a time, by Freethinkers and Rationalists, who have usually gone on (like Mr. Cutner) to express considerable surprise that men have continued to act as if such disproofs have not been formulated. A typical example is Mr. Archibald Robertson's article in the current *Rationalist Annual*. The point I have tried to make is that I know the existence of God cannot be proved by a rational and logical process such as is used (say) by the atomic physicists to prove the existence of electrons. But if one says, quite deliberately, "The world would be a better place if all men believed that there was a God, and that the Brotherhood of Man depends on the Fatherhood of that God," then one finds (as I am finding) that it works surprisingly in one's own everyday life. And with that avowal I

am sure that Mr. Preece will indeed regard me as a totally lost soul!

From my point of view, however, I think that the fact that international conditions in this world have grown steadily worse with a decline in religious belief in something which the average Freethinker should think about. It may even be that the fact that there is (as I said at the beginning of this article) a fairly considerable traffic in a generally religious direction is one of the few genuinely optimistic signs of our day.

JOHN ROWLAND.

## THE SOUL

SOME words are very interesting to study and examine. Especially after a striking event that purports to illustrate them. The term "Soul" is one of them. The soul can be considered in three forms. There is the "anima" or the principle of life—infant, life, itself. That is the only "soul" a Freethinker has any regard for. There is "animus," or emotion, and "spiritus." In a sense spiritus is the same as anima since it is the breath. When we cease breathing, the "anima," or life, ceases also.

Now this can be glanced at as an illustration. A group of pious Quebec pilgrims went to Rome to see the Pope and obtain his blessing. This blessing they got. And departed, 88 of them, on a plane.

This plane of blessed pilgrims crashes on an Alpine slope in a snowstorm. No survivors. Here comes in the world "Soul." Cardinal McGurgan said he would say Mass for their souls, as "I know they left Rome spiritualised by the religious exercises."

So be it; because "spirit" is the base of the term the Cardinal made use of. (But that is "breath" or "soul.")

The Pope offered special prayers at a Mass. Well, that is considerate, and means well. But what use or benefit do departed souls, lives, get from prayers of the living?

As the Latin poet Seneca queried, "*Verum est an timidus fabula decipit. . . .*" "Is it true, or does a fable deceive the timid, that the soul lives on when the body is buried?" Further on in the Chorus he makes the Trojans ask the question: "But do we die completely, entirely, when the spirit has ascended into space?" A stanza or two considers this point, but the ancient matrons were mundane as they declared emphatically: "After death there is nothing, and death itself is nothing, the last goal of a swift race! And greedy Time and chaos devour us!"

To accentuate this condition, Seneca has the woman as author, it is true—soulless, enunciating with force: "Death is indivisible, destructive to the body, not sparing the Soul!" We can accept their opinion. But the vast majority of mortals do not. Why? Well, for sooth, getting something in exchange for nothing is a prevalent desire everywhere. So, the Soul being immortal, or rather, so designated, made so distinctive, mankind pleasantly deceives itself. Yes, indeed! A fable does deceive, not only the "timid," but also the holy and unscrupulous. Not only so, but such resent vehemently any revelation of reality. Is there not the assurance "Dust thou art, to dust returnest, was not spoken of the Soul." Well, one can accept the knowledge that the soul, anima, is life, but not the religious conception of this word.

GEORGE F. LAWS.