

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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NO doubt vast multitudes who watched the Coronation Procession, either actually, or on the T.V. or cinema screen, were impressed by the bearing of the visiting Polynesian monarch, Queen Salote of Tonga. In particular, Londoners who turned out in the pouring rain which a kindly Providence sent to grace the occasion, were impressed by the fact that Her Pacific Majesty insisted on continuing her journey in *open* carriage, oblivious of the rain. Here, they thought, is a noble monarch determined at all costs, to play her part of a Polynesian loyally in the royal ceremonial in a far-away land.

Actually, the explanation of Queen Salote's *open* carriage appears to have been rather less simple, and had little to do with the Polynesian Queen's personal heroism, or devotion to duty. The true explanation for the *open* carriage has to be sought in the field of anthropology rather than in that of ethics, for the Tonga Islands represent the last surviving autonomous Polynesian society not directly controlled by Europeans. As such it retains both the old Taboo system of pagan times and the rigid caste distinctions of a feudal society common to both mediæval Europe and to modern Polynesia. In the nominally Christian Tonga Islands, the old pagan taboos still remain associated with the still rigorously preserved feudal social distinctions. Every Tongan who approaches his social superior must wear the ceremonial mat tied round his or her waist, which announces respect for a feudal superior. Above all, it is absolutely *verboten* for any social inferior to put up the ceremonial umbrella in the presence of a member of a superior rank. At home, in Tonga, Queen Salote rigorously exacts such tokens due to her royal rank from her loyal subjects. Nor in far-away London, even in pouring rain, did she forget her own duty towards the still more exalted Queen, who was crowned in Westminster Abbey on that day, namely, Queen Elizabeth, "Head of the Commonwealth," which includes Tonga. To put up the cover of her carriage in the presence of her feudal superior and overlord would have been both a gross breach of social etiquette and a shocking example to her own subjects way back in Tonga. So, a martyr to a Polynesian taboo, the framers of which, presumably, did not foresee London weather, her Tongan Majesty endured the English weather, in suitably indicating her respect for the still more exalted person who rode behind her.

## Divine Right

The above episode seems worth recalling in view of the not dissimilar taboo which appears nowadays to surround the comings and goings of Royalty, *not* in remote Polynesia, but actually in Great Britain, in 1955, in this year of grace, Democracy and the Welfare State. For in present-day Britain it simply "is not done" to denigrate, criticise, or even, it sometimes seems to discuss the monarchy, or the Royal Family at all. A recent correspondent to this journal commented on the indisputable fact that no open criticism of either God or the Church is to-day permitted

on the B.B.C. True enough! The present writer once actually heard a then governor of the B.B.C. declare that "there is going to be no anti-godism" on the radio, whilst he had anything to do with it. This was despite the fact that, only a few minutes before, he had stated that he was himself an agnostic with no religious beliefs. However not only is God carefully shielded from criticism on the radio, so, equally, is his earthy representative, the reigning monarch. One would imagine that two revolutions had never taken place in these islands, precisely in order to get rid of the formerly sacrosanct dogma of "The Divine Right of Kings" to govern wrong.

Nor is the current prohibition of critical discussion confined only to the person of the reigning monarch. It appears to apply equally to the whole royal clan "even to the third and fourth generation." Some journalists, who, to put it mildly, do not rank amongst the major intellects of our age and country, write widely-boosted biographies of royal princesses who in a humbler but, perhaps not less useful sphere of life, probably have the necessary mental equipment for minor parts on the commercial stage, or for the post of shop-assistants in our big stores. But is this ever mentioned in the currently successful biographies of Royal Persons? It is not! The language of adulation is pressed, frequently, to indecent limits. It constitutes a peculiar comment on our alleged Democracy. Not only must "God save the Queen," the overworked Deity has also to look after all her numerous relations!

## A Royal Caste

The fact is that in the world of 1955, there are only two countries left in the British Commonwealth, if not in the entire world, where the caste-system still prevails—the Isles of Tonga and the *British* Isles! Even Hindu India is gradually getting rid of the system. But, where Royalty is concerned, it still flourishes "like a green bay-tree" for the benefit of a nation green enough to fall for it! The Royal Family are forbidden to act like ordinary mortals. The fact is the more surprising in that even in those contemporary European lands, where monarchy still persists, no other royal family is surrounded by such ridiculous restrictions. When King Gustav Adolf of Sweden—one of the finest Sanskrit scholars in Europe, we believe—was over here recently, he travelled back to Sweden by ordinary passenger plane. Can anyone imagine Queen Victoria—or our present Queen—being allowed to do this? Queen Juliana of the Netherlands rides about on a bicycle like a human-being; whilst the Grand Duchess of Luxemburg lives opposite a cinema, with the traffic running past her front window. Of the seven remaining monarchies in Europe—three now represented by women rulers—none, except the British, behaves in this caste-ridden fashion.

## The House of Hanover

The current worship of Royalty is the more peculiar in that, as all students of English constitutional history well

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## Royal Taboos

By F. A. RIDLEY

know, the *hereditary* claim of the present Royal Family to occupy the Throne is of a very feeble character. There are to-day, exiled German princes, often doing menial jobs, who have a much better hereditary claim to the British throne than has Queen Elizabeth. It was precisely because the Stuarts would not give up their claim to absolute monarchy, that "George in pudding-time came o'er" from Hanover, as the anonymous author of *The Vicar of Bray* expressed it at the time. The present Royal Family actually owes its position to a revolution *against* the Divine Right of Kings! When Queen Victoria once asked Sir William Harcourt if he thought that kings could *ever* be deposed by their subjects, his reply was accurate as well as witty: "Madam, I'm too loyal a subject of the House of Hanover to say 'never.'"

### A Rational Monarchy

At the tail-end of a brief article one cannot go into the pros and cons of the case for an hereditary monarch. However, even if we assume that a Commonwealth of as many nations as our own requires an hereditary rather than an elective Head, the institution ought surely to be based on rational grounds. The present semi-religious attitude, not only to the reigning monarch, but to all his, or her, relations as well, is surely nothing but an outmoded combination of social snobbery and of religious superstition. Is England or Polynesia to be the last stronghold of fetishistic feudal Taboos?

### A Den of Stinking Republican Cobblers

During the agitation over the election of Charles Bradlaugh as M.P. for Northampton, one of the Tory papers of the day referred to Northampton as "a den of stinking republican cobblers." When one looks at the present-day sycophantic attitude towards the monarchy and its entourage, nowadays almost universal amongst politicians of all parties (including Bradlaugh's present successors at Northampton!) one might welcome the reappearance, "stinking" or otherwise, of his "republican cobblers."

## Hill's O'er Hill's

By GEORGE MILLER

THE Rev. Victor R. Hill, officiating vicar at the magnificent Service for the Animals at Matfen, managed again later to have some of his dicta and sayings reported in the *Newcastle Journal*. It is certainly good "copy," at a time when Registry Office marriages are on the increase, when a clergyman openly encourages couples who have become hopelessly entangled in love to go to an official with an ordinary collar to bless their confusion.

"When two people present themselves . . . (to quote the *Journal*, which quotes Rev. Hill, who quotes from experience) I shall need to be satisfied that one of them, at least, has been regular in worship at church for at least six months or they will be strongly advised to go to a register office." He naturally has "no intention of allowing God's name to be taken in vain, for the solemn and beautiful prayer-book service to be mocked."

Freethinkers should note that the Rev. Hill only strongly *advises* application to go elsewhere and does not offer to scatter the devoted pair on the pavement, as one irate clergyman once did to the humble coins thrifty churchgoers placed in the offertory. And do we detect a hint that business is business and pooh to God's name anyhow? The Rev. Hill should note that God is love, that Jesus is God, and that his stipulated six months is a waste of six months spent in learning something which two volunteers on the brink of marriage ought surely to be thoroughly familiar with,

We should have thought that people who are not habitual church-attenders, but who nevertheless wish to be married at one, are problems for students of human nature, and not indignant vicars. Perhaps the Rev. Hill combines both characters. Even so, he himself must arouse the interest of students of religious goings-on by his mulish insistence upon the finical rules of the Holy Church concerning baptism which "demand that for every male child there shall be two godfathers and one godmother; for every female child, two godmothers and one godfather." Of all good things there are three? Not just anyone will be accepted as a godparent, but only those fully competent and qualified. The Rev. Hill did not reveal what qualifications he demanded. Unknown to us, godparenthood may have become a highly skilled profession.

If non-churchgoers who insist upon holy marriages engage our interest, even more do those who, though non-churchgoing and secularly-married, nevertheless take along their bewildered offspring to church for christening. They do so because it "is done," and woe betide anyone who ignores, or assails, a respectable superstition. Freethinkers have here a reminder that, because only 10 per cent. of the population belong to the churches, it does not follow that the remaining 90 per cent. are rational in thought and action.

Having particularised about the personalia of marriages and baptisms, the Rev. Hill will doubtless incline to be argumentative about the business of burial. Certainly he will not wish to lose custom of any sort, in this case the customs practised in churchyards, those "last refuges of vulgarity" as the American preacher-writer Frank Crane called them. They are cheerless places, but one at least seems to have provided amusement for one or two sporting types, as the following item from *The People* reveals:—

"Councillor S. W. Nicholas says children in Haydon Bridge, Northumberland, are playing football with the skulls of their grandfathers buried in the old cemetery. . . . He is pressing the parochial church council to have the graveyard cleaned up 'to save the good name of the village'."

Even the Rev. Hill must agree that cremation will ensure that we shall not be free kicked about after we pass on, even if we must be often kicked into touch and continually about while still here.

## Was Shaw an Atheist?

BERNARD SHAW, always unpredictable, always paradoxical, never assailed religious superstitions and absurdities as the staunch Rationalist would have liked. He baffled them as he did the Fundamentalist.\* He was essentially an Atheist, of course, but he never used that term in his essays and speeches. This is why an English clergyman sneaked into his house just before cremation and prayed loudly for Shaw's soul, saying that he was sure Shaw believed in God, whether he was a Christian or not. But Shaw, in death, revenged himself on the pious interloper and meddler. His Will among other heretical utterances, stipulated that no Sermon or Prayer, least of all one invoking God or employing any sympathy with the Cross and the Dogma of redemption by innocent blood and sacrifice, should be uttered at his residence or funeral.

The Cross was his particular aversion—it stood for "divine" savagery, spites and childishness.

Of the several major religions afflicting the world, Christianity is incontestably the most preposterous, purile and offensive to reason and moral decency. Shaw knew this and said it at last.

\* From "*The Critic and Guide*," edited by E. Haldeman Julius, Vol. 5, May, 1951.

# A Freethinker Anthology for 1954

(Culled from the pages of "The Freethinker," 1954, by G. H. Taylor)

**GEORGE MILLER:** If you marooned a priest in the Arctic wastes he would, in less than a twelvemonth, raise £10,000 to build and equip a tiny chapel. For his own use, of course. (*September 17.*)

**C. BRADLAUGH BONNER:** The churches are fearful of the day when they and all their teaching will be just another chapter in a future edition of *The Golden Bough*. (*January 8.*)

**ALEX. COMFORT:** It is, after all, your capacity for clear thought which comes between the bomb-release button and the finger of a small minority of mental patients in many countries. (*August 6.*)

**ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON:** The attempt to make the Bible stand to reason has been tacitly abandoned. Instead, apologists seek to bludgeon us into belief by dwelling on the practical consequences of unbelief. (*October 29.*)

**FRANK VINEY:** Let us not rail against science, but realise that, as in the past, our primary hope lies in the humane application of scientific principles. (*July 16.*)

**JOSEPH MCCABE:** Labour, which at the beginning of the century demanded at every Annual Congress that religious lessons should cease in our schools, now rejoices in the patronage of bishops. (*June 25.*)

**E. H. GROUT:** On entering into dark chambers, Ignatius Loyola was able to light them up by his mere presence. Such economic advantages are extremely touching, and I readily admit that I should modify my attitude towards miracles if I found them eliminating my bills for electricity. (*October 8.*)

**ALEC CRAIG:** The application of a law, intended to deal with pornography, against works of literature, science and education by reputable authors, is a danger to individual liberty and freedom of thought. (*September 3.*)

**A. YATES:** Christian apologetics is mainly the art of ignoring or denying what cannot be defended. (*November 19.*)

**REV. JOHN R. BROOM:** The cruelty and stupidity of the laws governing homosexuality almost pass belief. (*May 14.*)

**R. READER:** In Christianity the primary condition for neurosis is present: fear of death. (*August 6.*)

**W. GLANVILLE COOK:** Many people who are not sadists can be induced to support the persecutor, because there is a strain of cruelty in every human being, part of our inheritance from our animal and savage ancestry. (*September 24.*)

**COLIN MCCALL:** Beware of the man with a divine mission. (*July 9.*)

**G. I. BENNETT:** Life demands an attitude of fundamental stoicism to enable us, come what may, to carry ourselves with becoming dignity, so that even if in the labours of life we are broken in body, yet we shall remain unbroken in spirit. (*July 9.*)

**H. DAY:** The Bible still wields great influence, especially among those who don't read it. (*July 2.*)

**ADRIAN BRUNEL:** If Paine could have curbed his courage sometimes, if he had been less outspoken, tempering his views with what is termed political wisdom, he might have become President of those United States of America which he named and did so much to create. But I prefer him as he was. (*September 3.*)

**RUBY TA'BOIS:** Genesis tells us the purpose of our moon is to "rule" the night. Yet it is as often in the daytime sky where it is useless as a light-giver. Further, our earth gives more light to the uninhabited moon than does the moon to the inhabited earth. (*July 16.*)

**JOSHUA C. GREGORY:** Spectacle can be a subtle solvent of poetry. (*August 6.*)

**F. C. EDWARDS:** I am sorry to say that my country [Ireland] lives still in this twentieth century under a grim medieval outlook, and Rationalists and Freethinkers lead a very hard existence in such an environment. (*September 10.*)

**MIMNERMUS SECUNDUS:** Bishops follow Christ on four and five figure salaries, and presumably water their dry crusts with their tears. They must be the Christian martyrs, which generations of artists have painted, and which generations of soft-hearted and soft-headed Christians have wept for. (*November 12.*)

**C. G. L. DUCANN:** Nature is unjust and unbrotherly in hereditary gifts and disabilities beyond words, and certainly beyond human remedy. (*April 2.*)

**F. A. RIDLEY:** The Vatican is a chameleon with an unrivalled ability for changing colour as circumstances demand. What will be her next colour? Red? (*April 23.*)

**P. V. MORRIS:** The normal healthy reaction of modern men and women, who are not particularly interested in religion one way or the other, is the rock upon which Billy Graham's ambitious enterprise in revivalism will come to grief. (*March 19.*)

**H. CUTNER:** The wonderful thing about Reincarnation is that the people who consider that they are reincarnations are always certain that they were Princes or Kings or High Priests or some very notable person. (*January 1.*)

**F. A. HORNIBROOK:** No matter how poor a town may be, and no matter how wretched the dwellings of the workers are, the one costly building dominating the place is the church. (*September 3.*)

**BAYARD SIMMONS:** Men in all ages worshipped gods in groves. The pillared church is but the grove's tall trees repeated in dead stone: timber turned stone by some fell gorgon head: a lifeless shell, sheltering lifeless faith. (*October 29.*)

**G. H. TAYLOR:** Christ, we are told, was once nailed to the Cross. He is now fitted to the Bed of Procrustes. (*September 3.*)

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## Relativity

Not Egypt's tombs, nor Babylon,

Nor Maya cult, nor Chinese wit

Have shed one single ray upon

What lies beyond; who fashioned it.

Though Science says, "Behold the light,

"Come walk with me, your answer get,

"And bring the Mind's myopic sight

"To focus Light and Darkness met."

If true that Time and Space are one,

The Universe a finite whole,

Whose far-flung limits truly run

Through aeons to a final goal.

The problem that remains for me

Unsolvable and plainly set—

Beyond the Finite there must be

A still beyond, a farther yet.

W. H. HORNIBROOK.

## This Believing World

We need not be surprised that a Bishop—the Bishop of Leicester—was asked to “sum up” the hot discussion on the Bible which filled a few columns in the *Leicester Mercury* recently. It would never have done to allow a Freethinker to do so. Still, Dr. Williams’ article could have been of little comfort to some of the Bible defenders. “The Bible is not an infallible authority,” he pointed out, “in matters of biology, geology, or even of history.” The Bishop is lucky. Had he made a similar declaration in the Golden Ages of the Church, we shudder to think of the fate his fellow Bishops would have meted out to him.

“The Bible contains,” went on the Bishop, “a spiritual message,” and to discover this you must have Faith; you must be a Christian; you must, in short, be interested in “its Central Figure.” And you must believe that God *does* “speak through the Bible.” And that is about all the comfort that Leicester’s Bible believers could get from a real, live Bishop. For he very emphatically told them that he could *not* “subscribe in detail to all that they say.” Perhaps he, too, has been reading our *Bible Handbook!*

We often wonder who is right about America—the people who hotly declare that all Americans are “materialists” and think of nothing but big business and making money, or “idealists”—that they all or nearly all believe in religion and go regularly to Church. “General” Kitching, chief of the Salvation Army, insists that they have combined the two, that is they have made religion “big business.” Six out of ten people there were “definitely associated with some place of worship,” while in London “it was about one in ten.” Perhaps Americans do—like Freemasons—find it helps big business to belong to a Church, while in London it may be a handicap. The point the “General” appears to miss is—do big business Americans *believe* in Christianity, in what Christianity stands for? For nothing else matters.

But the cream of the pudding came with his admission of what happened on a TV programme in the U.S.A. It was *very* religious, with hymns and psalms and the rest—and then was “interrupted by an announcement about motor car oil.” This was surely a brilliant idea on the part of the advertisers, and proves what a great “Business Man” Jesus Christ must have been. Perhaps our own “big business” in the forthcoming commercial TV will follow suit. Mix ’em is a capital idea.

What a pity that so many religious correspondents to newspapers follow Jesus in a complete absence of humour. One of them angrily asks unbelievers to whom we turn at a “crisis”? Is it Socrates or Voltaire? And “what would they search for in their pockets? The works of Tom Payne?” He himself, of course, turns to Christ Jesus; and we fully agree with him that he would find the works of “Tom Payne” rather a big pocketful to go about with even in times of crisis. A little penny Testament would be far more comfy. But apart from all this, would an out-and-out believer understand the works of “Tom Payne”? A little humour combined with some intelligence do not appear together often in our Fundamentalists.

One of the stock arguments used by the faithful to prove that the Bible is God’s Precious Word, and that Jesus Christ was both God himself and his own Son, gives us a list of the great men and women who believed in it. They include Queen Victoria, Mr. Gladstone, Alfred the Great, General Booth, Theodore Roosevelt, Sir Isaac Newton and, of course,

many others. But we rarely get in the same list monsters like Henry VIII., James II., Judge Jeffries, Torquemada, Hitler, Alexander VI., and Charles Peace—all Bible believers; and the thousands of child and animal torturers regularly prosecuted by the N.S.P.C.C. who always take the oath and swear to God they never did it. Strange how all *these* Bible lovers are so sadly neglected.

## REVIEW

### The Assassins

[We greatly regret that owing to the book being printed in India the text is marred by misprints and misspellings.—EDITOR.]

THERE is to-day obtainable in London an excellent book. It is called *The Assassins* and the author of it is F. A. Ridley.

*The Assassins* is a study of the fantastic Islamic Sect that did much to shape history and to dye it red, and added a sinister epithet to language. This is the first book in English exclusively devoted to the Assassins to appear for more than a century. To its writing Mr. Ridley has brought his great scholarship and grasp of world history, with the pungent comment and ironic aside of which he is a master.

Here is recreated that blazing world at the end of the Mediterranean when West struggled with East for the leadership of civilisation, while “The Old Man of the Mountain,” the head of the Assassins, worked his mischief with a secret service organisation: the world of Christian and Infidel, Crusader and Saracen, and the secret knife.

From its stealthy beginning to its tumultuous end, through all its dark spots and lurid patches, Mr. Ridley traces the story of the idealistic murderers. He illustrates their affinity with the Templars, the Jesuits, and the Thugs; he lets us see the Persian world of Omar Khayyám with the terrifying hordes of Jenghis Khan like doom in the distance; he takes us into “The Eagle’s Nest,” the fortress pinnacle of “The Old Man,” and puts us alongside Marco Polo to watch the fanatical servants of the Assassin leader jump gladly to their death on the rocks below at a wave of the hand.

If this be not enough to set the mind astir, then there is a sudden view of the Aga Khan leading in a Derby winner—the Aga Khan, direct descendant of the terrible “Old Man.”

As an adventure story alone this book is great reading; as an addition to historical learning it is valuable; as a book to possess, for its uniqueness, and the quality of mind shown, it is an item that any collector with an eye for first editions will wish to acquire.

*The Assassins* is published by the author in London and can be obtained from the Pioneer Press, Ltd., at 41, Gray’s Inn Road, W.C.1, for 8s. 9d. post free.

“J. O’H.”

As one reads history . . . one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked have committed, but by the punishments that the good have inflicted; and a community is infinitely more brutalised by the habitual employment of punishment than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime.—OSCAR WILDE.

There is no mode of action, no form of emotion, that we do not share with the lower animals. It is only by language that we do rise above them—by language, which is the parent not the child of thought.—OSCAR WILDE.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE RETREAT FROM THE BIBLE

By C. G. L. DU CANN

## THE FREETHINKER

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Telephone: Holborn 2601.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

### To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

### Lecture Notices, Etc.

#### OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.  
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.  
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, January 2, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.  
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

#### INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 4, 7 p.m.: Richard Clements, O.B.E., "Adding Life to the Added Years."  
Junior Debating Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, January 7, 7-15 p.m.: J. HOYLAND, "Improved Human Relations."  
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, January 2, 6-30 p.m.: New Year's Party.  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, January 2, 11 a.m.: S. K. Ratcliffe, "Hopes and Fears for 1955."  
West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, January 2, 7-15 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

## These Portraits of Jesus

By H. CUTNER

NOT for worlds do we want to attack those splendid air-men whose courage, skill and devotion saved, not only this country from the German Nazi monsters, but also, in the ultimate, the world. Among them was Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, V.C., who is still happily with us, and whose one ambition is, we understand, to devote his life to help the suffering and the sick. A notable ambition, and even if he had to join the Roman Catholic Church to achieve it, that is his business. He has every right to do what he thinks will help him, and I am not going to discuss that.

But a pamphlet written by Captain Cheshire has reached me entitled *The Holy Face, An Account of the Oldest Photograph in the World*. This is on some linen, and called by the Church the "Holy Shroud." It has just as much right to the word "Holy" as the Bible. This linen, we are told, covered "the body of Christ as it lay in the darkness of the tomb." And what happened? Why, not only the face of Jesus, complete with the Crown of Thorns, was "photographically" impressed upon the linen, but also his whole body, back and front, scourgings and all. As Captain Cheshire insists, in every respect "the Shroud corresponds exactly with the Christ whom we know from the Gospels and the Church."

I have not, of course, seen the Shroud but I have seen reproductions from photographs, and it would be impos-

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £667 10s. 9d.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.: T. Benton, £1; R. C. Mason, £1; Dr. Wm. Schmidt (U.S.A.), £4 1s. 8d.; G. Bilk (South Africa), 10s.; J. Molyneux, 5s.; B. Ferrando (South Africa), £1 1s.; B. M. Heckford (New South Wales), £1 1s.; A. Hancock, 1s. Total to date, £676 12s. 11d.

Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

sible to come across a bigger fake or hoax. In the first place, how in the world could a shroud be in such complete "focus" as to show all the details of a body wrapped in it "photographically"? Any photographer would know what I mean. A plate or film has to be absolutely flat to receive an image from a lens, and it has to be developed and fixed. If the lens is not accurately focused, we get an image which is "fuzzy" and in most cases the negative has to be thrown away. Moreover, we get a negative, and a chemical process has to be resorted to to make it a positive; otherwise, to obtain positives, the negative has to be printed on suitable material. For any photographer all this is "elementary" as Sherlock Holmes used to say.

The only way in which a perfect image of a dead person can be photographically printed on a shroud without photographic apparatus is by a *miracle*, and if Captain Cheshire calls this Shroud a Miracle, there is no need to discuss it. We on this journal do not believe in miracles, and the fact that Captain Cheshire was a very distinguished airman who has joined the Roman Catholic Church has literally nothing to do with such miracles.

It appears, however, that the image on the Shroud is a negative and, when it was photographed, we got the positive. And therefore, says Captain Cheshire, "it could be nothing else than a true and faithful picture of the body it had once covered." For sheer nonsense this would take some beating. There is not a scrap of proof that there ever was a "body." There is no evidence, even if this were granted, that this was the linen which covered the body. It was almost unknown before the 14th century—"little" known, says the pamphlet—but in any case, knowing how the Roman Church has lied and forged throughout its history, what reliance can be put on any of its statements?

Captain Cheshire actually says that when the Shroud was thus photographed—in 1898—the news "caused an upheaval in the world of science." What rot! "It also caused an upheaval," he says, "in the world of scholarship." Somebody must have been pulling his leg.

How the "negative" was painted on the cloth might well be a mystery—just as, exactly what sort of colours were used by the first oil painters is a question most difficult to answer. The opinion of a biologist like Yves Delage, who believed the Shroud to be genuine, is of no more account than the opinion of Bertholet, who called it a fake.

The Shroud was examined again in 1931, and nobody is a whit the wiser. Only people like our converts (so much more *plus royaliste que le roi*) are ready to swallow any superstition. A number of books have been written about it for the faithful, and there the matter rests. All that one need say is that some artist, following the Gospels, painted a picture on the linen, and the colours became "reversed." The Catholic "experts" who have written books or given opinions on the Shroud are of no more account than Captain Cheshire.

And this brings me to another "portrait"—this time a verbal one. On occasions, readers have written to me in a way that suggested they were really believers but pretending to ask for information which it was evident they hoped I could not give them. In other words, they tried

to "catch me out." I mentioned in an article some time ago the famous description of Jesus, believed in by pretty nearly all Christians as Gospel truth, and even given by that well-known broadcaster, W. J. Brown, in the *Sunday Dispatch* as if it were absolutely genuine. It was written by Lentulus, the predecessor of Pontius Pilate, as Governor of Judea, to the Roman Senate, ending with the words: "He is the most beautiful of the sons of men." A reader wants more particulars—and I hope he will not mind if I suggest that on this and similar subjects, he does a little research of his own. I distinctly said that Lentulus and his Report on Jesus were dealt with in the Catholic Encyclopedia and that work should have been consulted.

The article will be found in Volume 9, page 154, and a more damning attack on Lentulus and his Report (or

Letter) could hardly be imagined. Lentulus was never Governor of Judea, he is "a fictitious person," and his Letter is "apocryphal." Here "apocryphal" simply means a blatant forgery. "The Letter shows us," says the C.E., "a description of our Lord such as Christian piety conceived him." Will this frank admission of its fraudulent character stop it being received as genuine by most Christians? Of course not.

The Letter is even too much for the Protestant *Schaff-Hertzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. It concludes its article with "The unauthentic character of this letter is admitted by all." Note the *all*. What the writer meant was the "intellectuals" in the Churches only. But most Christians can take heart. They will still quote the fictitious Lentulus as genuine, and few will tell them nay.

## Mexico Sets a Good Example

By ROBERT H. SCOTT

IN July of this year my wife and I visited that part of Mexico called Baja California. This was our first trip South of the Border, and the experience was for us enjoyable and rewarding.

While we were in Tia Juana I took the opportunity to call upon a newspaper editor, a radio station manager, and a public school official in order to obtain on-the-spot information as to the present status in Mexico of institutional religion, the churches, the clergy, and public and private schools. I knew that the Mexican Constitution of 1917, which supersedes the Constitution of 1857, is a completely secular document which contains several drastic provisions as to public education, religious practices, and priests and other clergymen; but I also knew that there is often a wide discrepancy between law and practice. I knew that the conduct of a nation's internal affairs is frequently more or less a modification of one or more of its basic acts.

Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 specifically provides that all instruction given in public institutions of learning be secular; that all primary instruction (elementary and grammar school) given in private institutions of learning shall likewise be secular; and that private primary schools shall be subject to official supervision. Article 24 specifically provides that every religious act of public worship shall be performed strictly within places of public worship, which shall at all times be under governmental supervision. Article 27 specifically provides that no religious institution, whatever its character or purpose, shall have legal capacity to acquire, hold, or administer real property, but that all such property shall vest in the Nation. Article 87 specifically provides that the President of Mexico, before entering upon the duties of his office, shall make affirmation (he shall not take an oath) to defend and enforce his country's Constitution. Article 130 specifically provides that the Congress of Mexico "shall not enact any law establishing or forbidding any religion whatsoever"; that the several state legislatures shall have the exclusive power of determining the maximum number of priests and other ministers of religious creeds, "according to the needs of each locality"; that no priest or other clergyman shall, either in public or private meetings or in acts of religious worship or propaganda, criticise the fundamental laws of Mexico; that no priest or other clergyman shall have a vote or be eligible to public office; that permission must first be obtained from the Department of the Interior (Gobernacion) for the erection and dedication of new churches.

Moreover, the Mexican Constitution of 1917 omits the Preamble of the Constitution of 1857, which began with the pious words: "In the name of God. . ."

The newspaper editor, the radio station manager, and the public school official with whom I talked had a command of English that made it unnecessary for me to draw upon my rather meagre knowledge of Spanish, and each of them willingly answered my several questions. I learned from them that the Federal Government of Mexico has made moderate concessions as to certain of the provisions of the Constitution of 1917 as hereinbefore enumerated, but that those provisions remain in force. For example: while Roman Catholic parochial schools and other church primary schools have been, since 1924, permitted to indoctrinate their pupils with religious tenets, the instruction in such schools is strictly required, in accordance with Article 3 of the Constitution, to be secular and identical with the primary instruction given in Mexico's public schools.

I further learned that, under Government order, priests and other clergymen in Mexico, both citizens and non-citizens, are still forbidden to appear in public in attire that designates their calling, the clerical collar in particular being prohibited; that no programmes containing religious material (and, in the interest of equal freedom of speech, no programmes containing anti-religious material) may be broadcast over Mexican radio or television stations; and that the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico does not have, and is not permitted to obtain, any substantial political strength or influence.

Needless to say, this existing status of law and practice in Mexico with respect to religion, the churches, the clergy, and the schools, a position of affairs which, in answer to my question, one of the three gentlemen whom I interviewed declared had been and is good for the people of Mexico as a whole, is diametrically opposite to that prevailing in the United States. In the United States the several specific provisions in its Federal Constitution as to complete separation of religion and government and as to personal freedom of conscience and conduct in matters of religious belief have been to a great extent made null and void in fact.

Indeed, so great to-day is the intimidative and coercive power of organised religion in the United States, particularly that of the Roman Catholic Church, a coercive and intimidative pressure which, for obvious reasons, is aided and abetted by Big Business, that even the Federal Communications Commission, which Congress established to safeguard the public interest in the use of radio and television, is servilely and cravenly obedient to the demands of church and lay interests not to enforce the F.C.C.'s own unanimous ruling of 1946 that broadcasting (and hence telecasting) station licensees who accept religious pro-

grammes shall not exclude atheism and other dissenting views in matters of religious belief, an F.C.C. decision which, moreover, expressly states that when the public domain of radio (and therefore television) is used for an attack upon atheism or against atheists, opportunity must not be denied for rebuttal on equal terms. The fainthearted F.C.C. members in their Coward's Castle, placing selfish self-interest above the public interest, have allowed the Big Church-Big Business combine that rules this Republic to obtain a virtually monopolistic control and use of American radio and television for its respective brands of propaganda.

The Mexican people know from bitter experience in their own country the tragic and disastrous effects of Roman Catholic domination of a nation's political, social, and educational institutions. It is a domination in which political freedom and intellectual liberty are ruthlessly denied. This is an evil, a social cancer, which the United States already experiences to no little extent, and which, if our people should fail to take the necessary and obvious steps to eradicate, will in time destroy American democracy and American basic civil rights and liberties.

As regards public education, the churches, the clergy, and radio and television, the people of Mexico are (with the exception of such relatively minor abuses of power as the denial to priests and other ministers of religion of the right to vote and to wear in public a distinctive garb) setting an example which the people of the United States can continue to fail to follow only at their peril.

—From *Progressive World*, Chicago, U.S.A.

## The God-fearing Man

By BAYARD SIMMONS

FEAR is the greatest vice: from it spring all the others. It is omnipresent and ever present. All men in all ages have been actuated by fear. The overcoming of fear is the achieving of salvation. The task of man, individually and collectively, is the transcending of fear, and the aim of all true education is to equip man for this task.

Fear is one of the greatest, the most fundamental of emotions. Not the greatest be it remarked. Were that so, life would be insupportable. And because fear is so painful an emotion, the greatest resistance is offered by the mind to its recognition. The most vile insult is to call a man a coward, in other words, to suggest that he knows fear and is actuated by it. A man will face death itself to prove that the accusation is groundless. The emotion of resentment to this charge is probably proportionate to the validity of the indictment.

Let us examine together this emotion of fear. Not a pretty subject, to be sure! But one, nevertheless, worthy of our attention. For it is a well-established psychological truth that the intensity of an emotion is lessened by its study. This is particularly true of fear, for a large element in fear is ignorance. Dispel ignorance and fear tends to subside.

Let us, further, give an example of this method of attacking fear by the study of the thing feared. Let us suppose that a man, or a woman, is afflicted by one of those small, irrational fears that trouble so many. The fear of spiders will do for example. It is a fear that cannot be reasoned away, and, since the sufferer is often a cultured, rational person, to the discomfort of fear is added a sense of shame. As, further, many persons feel that to feel shame is shameful, Pelion is piled on the Ossa of their distress.

We have all heard that the cure for one love affair is to have another, while "the hair of the dog that bit you" is the toper's cure for the "morning after" malaise. In the

same way, to drive out the emotion of fear we must employ and promote another emotion—curiosity. Instead of shouting to your husband to come and kill the tiny beast, make an effort to study it. It will be a great effort at first: but "*c'est le premier pas qui coûte*."

How many of us can say off-hand the number of legs a spider has? The spider-fearing person says he does not want to know, his one desire is to get away from it, or to make away with it. But if by any means his curiosity can be aroused, so that he will study the spider, then the victim of this fear is on the way to its transcendence. And surely it is not too difficult to rouse an interest in the Archnida, of the order Araneæ, which resemble the Pedipalps in many structural points. One can learn, for instance, that spiders are found all over the world. That they existed millions of years ago, in the Carboniferous Period. That they occur up mountain slopes; in tropical valleys and forest; in open, grassy plains; in sandy deserts; and even fresh-water ponds and between tidemarks on the seashore. A study progressed one would learn of spiders other than the domestic or garden variety; of trap-door spiders, and water-spiders, and those fearsome wildfowl, tarantulas and scorpions. Knowledge would grow of the insects' habits; how some are nocturnal, some diurnal; how some catch their prey by speed of foot, some by cunningly lying hidden, some, again, by silken nets. How, further—this is important—the spider is a benefactor of mankind, keeping down the noxious, disease-spreading fly, and weaving silk which has a commercial value, the latter being equal to, if not superior to, the best spun silk by lepidopterous larvæ. By the time all this, and much more, had been absorbed, instead of making a nasty messy spot on a wall by a slipper, the one-time spider-fearer will run to see of what species, genus, and order the visitant belongs. Fear will have been driven out by curiosity; one emotion will have triumphed over the other. All of which is no argument for not sweeping away cobwebs!

The worst of all fears are those for things which do not exist. After all, the spider is a reality, and as our *Britannica* tells us, all spiders possess, not one, but a pair of poison glands. A tarantula's or scorpion's bite or sting is not to be despised. But on every side the reflective may see persons going in fear of that which has no objective reality. Grown men fear ghosts and gods, witches and devils, and to Freethinkers, other such figments. More curious still, they even glory in their fear. The Christian delights in the title "a God-fearing man." In extolling this fearfulness, the Christians stand athwart the path of progress and civilisation. But he, too, if he be willing, can be released from his bondage of fear. Some are a little ashamed of their fear of the Lord. They doubt if it truly is "the beginning of wisdom." For such there is hope of deliverance. To help these the method to be employed can be precisely that in the case of the spider, the arousing of curiosity.

Although the gods have no objective reality, it is possible to study man's inner creations. The gods are as widespread as the spiders—would they were as harmless to man! In their name have been practised the most loathsome tyrannies, for fear breeds cruelty. The history of man's Gods is being more and more established. Anthropology, and psychology, and archæology, and history, all these make their contribution to our knowledge of the gods.

If a man only knows of Jehovah from the Bible, he knows him badly. "What do they know of England, who only England know?" sings Kipling. A study of the Moabite Stone will throw a new light on the god of the Hebrews. It records how Chemosh, god of Moab, triumphed over Jehovah. How Jehovah "took the count," and how the priests of Chemosh bore away the holy vessels

of Jehovah. Things begin with further study to take their proper perspective. The god of the Hebrews is seen to be a small tribal god, competing with Baal, and Moloch and Ishtar, the gods of other Semitic tribes, for a precarious foothold. In short, a barbaric creation, but quite interesting.

Comparative religion will never be a popular study and all the priesthoods of man's numerous deities will combine to put obstacles in its way. Comparisons they will say are odious. They are to priesthoods, for to compare is to think, and to think is to pause in the panic flight from the unknown.

There are other ways to be employed in banishing fear, including that "perfect love," which, strangely enough, the God-fearing man's Bible says "casteth out fear." Few of us, however, are capable of that, but as a workable substitute the curiosity cure is well worth trying.

## On Kidding Oneself

By E. H. GROUT

MAN'S capacity for kidding himself is profound and widespread. Some people are still asking, with starry eyes, "I wonder whether Hitler is really dead?" The same doubt was spread with regard to Lord Kitchener when his ship was torpedoed in the North Sea: and it has existed for centuries in relation to the legendary King Arthur.

Vanity, greed, love of the sensational are some of the ingredients of this mystic-loving quality. It is frequently exhibited by those beloved of Mr. Cutner—the reverent Rationalists: that is why so many of them sheer off into Spiritualism or Christian-Science. (I wonder who was the beauty who first coupled those contradictory terms, *Christ* and *Science*). A scientific training is no sure antidote against it, as witness the pathetic case of Professor William McDougall, whose eminence as a psychologist procured him a call to a Chair in the U.S.A. While over there, despite his knowledge of the science of human behaviour, he was swindled by some confidence tricksters.

Nor is training in "Divinity" any safeguard against canting humbug and pietistic nonsense. Witness the correspondent to the *Church Times*, who recently wrote to say that he was anxious to select for his holiday abode a place within easy reach of a church where he could take part in the Mass! How long, "a' God's name," was he going away for? Is his hold on eternal salvation so feeble that it would be endangered by a fortnight without a Mass? He "doth protest too much, methinks." It's a pity he hasn't got something worth while to worry about.

Then there was the Bishop of London, who runs down the world that he knows in favour of one that he doesn't know. Speaking at Halifax last March, he said, according to the *Church Times*:—

"Christians are often criticised for their concern with the next world, instead of this one. But unless this world is considered as an entrance to an even better world, it makes man's existence of no consequence."

I like that, don't you? The serene impudence of it, from one who has such a jolly good share of this world's goods—a palatial residence and ten or twelve thousand pounds a year. This connotes a very lively concern in the affairs of this world, but he hopes to do still better hereafter. Well, "Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast is a better." When he mentions the possibility of man's existence being of no consequence, I feel sure that he is not thinking of himself. When, arrayed in his canonicals, and full of the spirit of consecration, he steps out reverently at the head of the procession, with blaring choristers, he looks at the bowing mobs on each side with a bland smile and upraised fingers, and in the language of the Swan of

Avon he says to himself: "These are counsellors that feelingly persuade me what I am."

No doubt the Bishop of London was submitted to a good education: but logic doesn't seem to be a favourite subject with him. For surely this world, and the existence of man in it, have values of their own quite irrespective of whether there is any other world.

Best we should mistake his extraordinary argument, the Bishop went on to say:—

"If this world is an end in itself, then man is only of as much transitory value as a fly on a window-pane, even though he enjoys greater sensations and emotions. It is only the Christian revelation that shows us where we are going."

Then it is a poor look-out for the hundreds of millions of Confucians, Buddhists, and others who have died without ever hearing of the "Christian revelation." And what is this "Christian revelation?" It is this curious collection of myths (mostly foreign), folk-lore, garbled history, psalms, proverbs, apocalypses, sales-promotion letters, miracles and dramas that is called the Bible.

His Grace seems to be no better in Ethics than in Logic. Apparently, he has never heard of the sovereignty of ethics. The Freethinker believes that good conduct is his duty, without putting forward any claim for reward either here or hereafter. Whether there is another life or not, it is incumbent upon the individual to make the best use that he can of the opportunities that he has now. He is a member of a nation that has out of its experience in the course of ages compiled codes of conduct, customs and laws, which (whilst not perfect) accord to its citizens protection for life and limb, sanctity of contract, equality before the laws, honouring right rather than might. These rights do not depend upon whether there is a heaven or not, or upon whether the citizen believes in a heaven or not. A Jew who rejects the so-called Christian revelation can bring an action to enforce a debt, and the law will be put in motion to punish any person who robs, assaults, defrauds, or murders him.

These are not matters of "no consequence." Even the Mosaic laws were not made contingent upon any after-life. They were compiled in order to guide the Jewish tribes in the life they had to live there and then. If the Parable of the Talents has any earthly meaning, it is surely that the possession of a talent is correlative with the duty to use it.

His Grace would do well to ponder the words of that earnest Deist, William R. Greg (*The Creed of Christendom*, Vol. ii, p. 225):—

"What effect would be produced upon him, were the conviction once fixedly imbedded in his soul, that everything done is done irrevocably—that even the Omnipotence of God cannot *uncommit* a deed—cannot make that undone which has been done; that every act *must* bear its allotted fruit according to the everlasting laws—must remain for ever ineffaceably inscribed on the tablets of universal Nature."

So it is with the Bishop of London. Nothing that he can do can alter the fact that he made that ill-considered speech.

"The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a word of it."

How much better this ecclesiastic might have used the opportunity. He might have used it to rebuke this "materialistic" age for its vices and crimes—the roll of crime and slime calls aloud for denunciation. But no, he deflected man's gaze away from the work that needs doing to the hypothetical world of which he cannot give us the faintest description. Was this well done?