

The Freethinker

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FOR THE SECOND TIME in United States political history, the Democratic Party has put its money on, and entrusted its political fortunes to a Roman Catholic candidate, Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts. In the land of the Pilgrim Fathers (not to mention those sturdy Deists, Washington, Jefferson, Paine and Abraham Lincoln), it is a seemingly rash policy to adopt. In fact, it represents a policy which has only been adopted once before during the now near two centuries' existence of the great North American Republic: that occasion was in 1928 when Governor Al Smith of New York, another Roman Catholic, ran on the Democratic ticket. His resulting defeat by the Republican nominee, Herbert

Hoover, was largely ascribed at the time, to his Catholic background. For, at least as recently as 1928, the U.S.A. was still the land of the Pilgrim Fathers who founded the aboriginal U.S.A. as a secure Protestant refuge against Popery, and the persecuting fires of Smithfield.

Can A Catholic President Be A Good American?

How far is it still so? How far is the U.S.A. still an overwhelmingly Protestant country, as it certainly was when the Declaration of Independence was signed (1776) and as it apparently still was in 1928? Has the situation changed? Not only the Catholic Kennedy himself, but also his Protestant running mate (Senator Lyndon Johnson) and his (again mostly Protestant) campaign managers, must obviously think that it has. For party politics in the U.S.A., perhaps more than anywhere else, is both a tough and unsentimental business, a form of Business with a big B. Literally so, since, under the American "spoils for the victors" system, in the administration the U.S. President is, far and away the biggest employer of labour and distributor of jobs in "God's own country". Party conventions are not composed of starry-eyed idealists, and all the charm, plus all the money in America—and Kennedy seems to have plenty of both—would not have secured the adoption of a candidate known to be *persona non grata* to the American electorate on religious (or any other) grounds. Evidently, the leaders of the Party formerly presided over by that shrewdest of American politicians, Franklin D. Roosevelt, must think that the times have substantially altered and that, to be an avowed member of the Roman Catholic Church is no longer any bar to becoming President of what is still officially, the Secular American Republic in which the First Amendment to the Constitution still runs: "Congress shall make no law respecting religion". But nominating Conventions are not, of course, infallible; it is always possible that they may have made a mistake. It is now certain that Mr. Kennedy's Republican opponent in the Presidential Stakes will be Vice-President Nixon, who will no doubt seek to demonstrate that the Democratic nominating convention at Los Angeles, made a grave mistake in evaluating the sentiments of the American electorate with regard to a Catholic President. In what is still a land with

a four to one Protestant majority, Kennedy's membership of a foreign Church, founded upon totalitarian principles that are diametrically opposed to the liberal principles upon which the American Constitution is founded, is almost bound to become an election issue, quite possibly the decisive one. And the precise form in which, if so, it is most likely to be propounded by the Protestant Nixon and his supporters, is in the form of this surely pertinent

question: "Can a Catholic President be a good American?" That such a leading question can hardly fail to present *bona fide* difficulties to a Catholic who, like Senator Kennedy aspires to take the Constitutional Oath of a liberal and secular State like the U.S.A., becomes

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Senator Kennedy and Political Catholicism

By F. A. RIDLEY

apparent even upon the most cursory examination of the first principles of political Catholicism or, more precisely, of the Roman Catholic Church itself.

The Catholic Theory of Church and State

It is hardly necessary to remind the readers of THE FREETHINKER—though the American electorate may not be so well-informed on this topic—that the basic and fundamental distinction between Rome and non-Roman forms of Christianity, is that the Vatican is always and all the time, a totalitarian institution. As the Protestant scholar Harnack, aptly noted: "It is an empire which this priestly Caesar rules". In Catholic theory, the Church of Rome is a "perfect society" and as such, has the divinely ordained and inalienable right to dominate all other necessarily imperfect societies. In its relations with the Secular State, this theory has, it is true, been somewhat modified in modern times. Since the great Jesuit Canonist, Cardinal Bellarmine (16th century)—he was in another capacity, one of the judges of Bruno and Galileo—the official theory is that the Church has only an "indirect supremacy" over the State. That is, the State is normally autonomous in the political sphere. But all the authorities agree that in the cognate spheres of Faith and Morals in which the Pope is infallible by definition, the Church has the power, as also, the duty, to override the State. In which connection one must always remember that Catholic theology defines "morals" in a very elastic sense, *viz.* issues as widely dissimilar as pacifism, socialism, and birth control, have all at one time or other been defined as "moral" questions, subject as such to the infallibility of the Church. To turn from political philosophy (or rather, theology) to practical politics; it is surely self-evident that an American Catholic President—even one as liberal as Kennedy is stated in some quarters to be—might, and quite possibly would, come up against problems of the above nature which would place him upon the horns of a most awkward and unpleasant dilemma. At least in theory, no two organisations could be founded on more completely incompatible principles than are the Roman Catholic Church and the secular American State. No doubt the American electors realised this in 1928 when they turned down the popular Governor of New York, Al Smith, mainly it

appears, because they then regarded Roman Catholicism as "un-American", as indeed it certainly is, at least in the sense that the term is nowadays generally used. And whatever the ultimate outcome of the 1960 Presidential Election between Kennedy and Nixon, we do not doubt that somehow and somewhere, this basic disharmony will be pointed out during the course of, what everything indicates will be one of the toughest and most hard-fought elections in the chequered annals of the American Presidency.

Adhesion to Rome was decisively judged to be incompatible with the White House in 1928 in the case of Governor Al Smith. Will it be so in the case of Senator Jack Kennedy? This remains (until November) to be seen. But since 1928 a new factor has come to spread in the contemporary political sky. Little larger than the Biblical hand of a man in 1928, the hatred and fear of Communism, by 1960, has come to fill and to dominate

Tercentenary of the Royal Society

By R. W. MORRELL

TO HAVE THE LETTERS F.R.S. after his name is an ambition of many a man in this country. The letters stand for Fellow of the Royal Society and to be elected such is a distinction of the first order, a distinction only rivalled, perhaps, by the award of a Nobel Laureate—and many Fellows have that. The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, to give it its full title, was founded in 1660. It received its first Charter in 1662 and a second a year later. From the first the Society has lived up to the aim contained in its name, though some of its early members were anything but scientists and even today there are a few Fellows who owe their Fellowships to social position rather than merit.

To freethinkers, the Society is of particular interest for, though it had a religious bias in its early days and the official programme for the Tercentenary celebrations includes a service in St. Paul's, the discoveries of many of the Fellows have dealt blow after blow against the bastions of superstition; in particular those of the Christian brand of superstition. Of course few, if any, of the members of the Royal Society have set out to attack religion through their work. On the contrary, many have been devoted religionists, for example, Sir Isaac Newton. A few years ago, a questionnaire was addressed to the Fellows of the Royal Society to which about 200 replied. The questions included the following: "Do you credit the existence of a spiritual domain?" Thirteen answered no; 121 yes; 66 were indefinite. "Do you believe in survival after death?" 41 answered no; 47 yes; 112 indefinite. "Do you think that the recent remarkable developments in scientific thought are favourable to religious beliefs?" 27 replied in the negative; 74 affirmative; 99 indefinite. In 1898 Professor J. H. Gladstone published his impressions of the religious faith of some 71 members of the Royal Society about whom he had reliable information. Of these 33 were Christians, 6 sceptics, 27 were estimated to believe in a Divine revelation, and 5 estimated to be unbelievers.¹ Thus it would appear many members of the Society still cling to the beliefs that their discoveries outmode. But it should not be thought that all Fellows remain Christians, even of a nominal type; many both past and present have held rationalist views. In the past we recall such figures as Tyndall, Darwin—who would be lucky to be elected a Fellow today being but a mere doctor!—and Huxley. Present Fellows of known rationalist views include Lord Russell, O.M., Lord Boyd-Orr, Professor J. B. S. Haldane, Professor J. D. Bernal, Sir Julian

¹ Short, Dr. A. R. *Modern Discovery and the Bible*. 1943. p.11-13.

the American sky. And this may put a new look upon the whole business of electing a Catholic President. For, if the U.S.A. is "anti-Communist number one" the Vatican is, equally certainly "anti-Communist number two"—or should it be the other way round? None of the Protestant Churches is so powerful and reliable an ally of America's present anti-Russian-Chinese-Communist global strategy as is the Vatican. Will this produce what would be a landslide in American politics; one which would incidentally, install Senator Kennedy in the White House?

Mr. Nixon has publicly stated that, whilst the American Constitution does not discriminate on religious grounds, it would be quite inconceivable today that a President without a belief in God should lead the Free World against Communism. Evidently God is not an issue in the Presidential election.

Huxley, Sir Macfarlane Burnet, O.M., Professor C. D. Darlington, Professor L. C. Pauling, Professor H. J. Muller. Two of these, the last, are Nobel Laureates.

The discoveries made in all branches of science have revolutionised many branches of thought. Problems that were once thought of as only the concern of theologians and philosophers are now being answered by the scientist. In fact the very secret of life itself is being revealed without leaving any room for god. As Professor H. Shapley has recently written:² "We no longer need appeal to anything beyond nature when confronted by such problems as the origin of life, or the binding forces of nucleons, or the orbits in a star cluster, or the electro-dynamics of a thought. We can assail all such questions rationally". If the foundation members of the Royal Society who had a religious turn of mind could come back, in this the Society's Tercentenary year, and review the progress of science and its impact on religion since the day the Society came into existence, I, for one, am fairly certain that they would regret their action. As it is, freethinkers can at least give them a little credit, even if they would get no pleasure from it.

² *Hibbert Journal*. July, 1960.

"GALILEO" AT THE MERMAID

WE LEARN WITH PLEASURE from Mr. Gerald Frow, the Press Representative, that Bertolt Brecht has brought a boom equalled only by the opening musical *Lock Up Your Daughters* to the Mermaid Theatre at Puddle Dock, London, E.C.4. Since his play *The Life of Galileo* opened there on June 16th, with Bernard Miles in the title role, the theatre has been playing to capacity houses. It has now been decided to extend the run of the show from August 6th to October 1st. The 4.30 p.m. performance on Tuesday will be discontinued during the extension, the last Tuesday matinee being on August 2nd. The 4.30 p.m. performance on Thursday and Saturday will continue to the end of the run. We repeat our exhortation to Freethinkers to make every effort to see this play.

A popular innovation during the run of *Galileo* has been the illustrated lecture given each Wednesday before the play by Colin Ronan, M.Sc., F.R.A.S. Mr. Ronan's first lecture, "Man and the Universe", which is given every Wednesday up to August 6th, gives the historical and scientific background to Galileo and his work. A new lecture, "Man Into Space" is to be given during the extension commencing on Wednesday, August 17th. In this lecture, Mr. Ronan traces man's efforts to probe space, starting with Galileo and his telescope and coming right up to date with recent lunar rockets and earth satellites. Admission to the lectures, which begin at 6 p.m., is 2s.

Chessman's "Greatest Flaw"

AN OPEN LETTER TO George T. Davis, Attorney at Law,
11 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California.

Dear Sir:

You were quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of May 1st of this year as having said on the day that Caryl Chessman died in San Quentin Prison's gas chamber:

Perhaps his greatest flaw, his greatest lack of character, was his unrelenting unwillingness to believe in something greater and bigger than himself. He almost prided himself on the fact that he remained an agnostic to the end.

This statement as to Chessman, whom you served as an attorney for several years, indicates, to say the least, that you have done little or no reading of the kind that enlightens and emancipates the mind as regards religious beliefs and ideas. The incertitude or suspended judgment of the agnostic as to the existence of a God, and even the certitude of the atheist that no God exists, are not flaws or shortcomings of character. Quite the contrary.

Your statement as to Chessman rests on the uneducated assumption that the existence "of something greater and bigger than oneself", that is to say, a God, cannot reasonably be doubted or called in question. The truth is that the existence of a God—any kind of God—is neither demonstrated nor self-evident. As a matter of fact, the word "agnostic" or the word "atheist" must be written after the names of many men and women, living or dead, of high intelligence, particularly the greater scientists. Indeed, agnostics and atheists are everywhere a majority in the higher intellectual and cultural levels of society, the stratas that count the most. Moreover, though there have been many atheists and agnostics in foxholes, there are always exceedingly few behind prison bars.

All but a very few of the greater scientists in all branches of science are either agnostics or atheists, principally the latter. See, for example, the results of the confidential questionnaire which, in 1933, was submitted to many American scientists by the late James H. Leuba, a psychologist. (A full report on that statistical inquiry was made by Leuba in his book entitled *The Reformation of the Churches*, Chapter 3 and 4.)

The word "agnostic" must be written after the following: Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Jane Addams, Luther Burbank and Jawarhalal Nehru, Dr. William Worrall Mayro and Sir James George Frazer, Johannes Brahms and Hector Berlioz, Albert Schweitzer and Jean Henri Dunant (founder of the Red Cross), Hermann Ludwig Helmholtz and Sir Joseph Danton Hooker, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw, Robert Louis Stevenson and Gustav Flaubert, Peter I. Tchaikowsky and Edward Greig, John Tyndall, Thomas G. Masaryk and Thomas A. Edison, William James and James H. Leuba.

The word "atheist" must be written after the following: Clarence Darrow and Arthur Garfield Hays, Charles Bradlaugh and Robert G. Ingersoll, Mark Twain and Henry L. Mencken, Maynard Shipley and Oscar Riddle (the biologist and physiologist), Sir Julian S. Huxley and Lord Bertrand Russell, Mathilde Blind and Olive Schreiner, Harriet Martineau and Vashti Cromwell McCollum (who obtained from the U.S. Supreme Court its historic McCollum Decision of 1948), J. B. S. Haldane and Sir Arthur Keith, Jack London and Sinclair Lewis, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Ernestine L. Rose, Vladimir I. Lenin and Giuseppe Garibaldi, Charles P. Steinmetz and John Burroughs, Anatole France and Henrik Ibsen, Pierre Curie and Marie Curie, Jacques Loeb and Ernest Haeckel,

Sir Charles S. Sherrington (a Nobel Prize winning neuro-physiologist) and Fred Hoyle (an astrophysicist), Georges Clemenceau and Simon Bolivar, Will Durant and John Dewey, Emile Zola and Francisco Ferrer, George Santayana and Albert Camus, Kemal Ataturk and Culbert L. Olson (a former Governor of California), Diego Rivera and Lopez Mateos (President of Mexico).

Clearly, Mr. Davis—Caryl Chessman's persistent agnosticism testified not to a flaw or a lack in his character, but to the superior depth and breadth of his intelligence and the high quality and extensiveness of his learning. It is one of the ironies of human relations that such persons frequently are measured by the gauge of intellectual and cultural inferiority.

Speaking for myself, I take pride in the facts that, in 1946, partly in the interest of equal freedom of speech, I made the first atheistic radio broadcast in the United States, and that, at the age of 70, I remain an atheist. (*Newsweek* magazine, in its issue of December 2, 1946, contains a wriup of that broadcast, which was made over Station KQW—now KCBS—in San Francisco, California).

I would not deny that Caryl Chessman's character, like that of every adult human being now living, had imperfections, but as you know, he went to his death with courage, with dignity, and with a repeated denial that he was the infamous "Redlight Bandit". His death in the gas chamber after 12 torturesome years in the dreadful domicile of San Quentin Prison's Condemned Row was, as you know, "a senseless execution" that put an end to a positive achievement in literature, sociology, and personal rehabilitation by which Chessman had lifted himself to world attention and applause. It was, as you know, a disgraceful and distressing taking of a life which Governor Edmund G. Brown and four justices of California's Supreme Court, closing their hearts to mercy, allowed despite the appeals of an impressive national and international body of intelligent and informed opinion in behalf of Chessman and notwithstanding the wishes of a very substantial majority of responsible opinion in California itself.

ROBERT H. SCOTT, Saratoga, California.

From *Progressive World* (U.S.A.) July, 1960.

BISHOP ON BEVAN

IN HIS TRIBUTE TO Aneurin Bevan in Westminster Abbey at noon on July 26th, Dr. Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark, spoke frankly on the subject of religion (*The Guardian*, 27/7/60).

"What would Aneurin Bevan have thought of this ceremony today?" he asked. "He would have viewed it with a mixture of suspicion and respect. Suspicion of the context, but respect because he would honour the intention of sincere men."

"Aneurin Bevan hated humbug and would not wish me to pretend he was other than he was, a humanist and an agnostic. He was not an atheist, because he felt a sincere reverence for the mystery of life. But, whenever a parson appeared, the battle raged and no holds were barred."

NEXT WEEK

THE CASE OF GALILEO

By F. A. RIDLEY

This Believing World

The 82-year-old Recorder of Carlisle Quarter Sessions had the shock of his life when one of the probation officers refused to take the usual oath and instead, affirmed. The Recorder, Mr. E. Wooll, Q.C., appears never to have heard of Bradlaugh's famous Oaths Act passed as far back as 1888, and almost expressed his horror that a probation officer could actually be an *Atheist*. Having no religion surely "diluted the value attached to a probation officer", claimed Mr. Wooll, and it is a pity that the "guilty" man was unable to retort that for a Recorder to *have* a religion certainly diluted *his* value to the community.

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Mr. Wooll should read the record of Mr. Justice North, a staunch Roman Catholic, who sentenced G. W. Foote to twelve months in goal for laughing a little at the "undiluted" absurdities found in his religion—a savage sentence inflicted on Foote not because he had done harm to anybody, but because North was a religious bigot of the worst kind. But perhaps Mr. Wooll has never heard of G. W. Foote?

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One of the absurdities with which the Bible is filled is the story of Cain who, after he had killed Abel, went to the Land of Nod and got *married*. Considering that the only female then living was his more than famous mother, Eve, the question which has puzzled most believers is, whom did he marry? This was the poser put to that great paper for intellectuals, *Reveille*, in its number for July 14th, and as its expert didn't know, he got the Church Information Board to reply. It must have come as a shock to him that its expert immediately adopted the Freethought point of view, utterly ignoring not only the Bible itself, but also the considered views of hundreds of notable Christians.

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The C.I.B. confirmed what many Freethinkers have maintained, that the Bible contains some "history, some fiction, some biography", as well as "folklore, myth, or allegory", which have (of course) a "true meaning" but "are not to be taken literally". The story of Adam is that "of the human race", "concentrated into one human family". And the C.I.B. expert added that the writer of Genesis "knew that there were other people on the earth at that time". This explanation of the nonsense of the story of Adam in Genesis ought to come to the notice of Mr. Wooll, Q.C. For if it is true and there really never was an Adam—what becomes of the Fall of Man? Is that also "fiction, myth, or allegory?" If so, how can "our Lord" be a "Saviour"? And why?

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The C.I.B. expert was also asked why is the Devil represented with horns and cloven hoofs? And the "scholarly" reply is because the Hebrew word for Devil really means "a goat". Thus (only the expert doesn't say so) when Jesus was expelling "Devils" from human beings, what he really expelled were "goats"! Get a good Christian in a corner, and it will be found that he almost always "explains" some Bible absurdity with an even greater one.

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Although it is distinctly laid down in the U.S. Constitution that "Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion"—it is a law immediately thrown overboard by the religionists who are supposed to follow it. In fact, only eight States in the U.S.A. conform—the others make wherever possible "Bible reading" at least compulsory in their schools. So parents who object to the whole Bible—like Jews—are angrily attacked by the followers of gentle Jesus.

The "Daily Express" (23/6/60) gives particulars of the way a Jewish schoolgirl in Miami who doesn't want Jesus as her God—she says so—has been continuously "assailed" with the telephone bell ringing, and "at the other end of the wire, threats, hate, obscenities". As Unitarians and Agnostics agree with her, they have brought a law-suit "against the Miami schoolboard". And we are not surprised to find that the "atmosphere of the town now is bitter intolerance"—"something only a religious issue could stir up". Will some good earnest Christian tell us—has true religion in its long history ever done anything else?

Buddhist Cosmology

By A. T. KOVOOR (Ceylon)

EGERTON C. BAPTIST has been known in this country for many years as a leading exponent of Buddhism, and a regular broadcaster over Radio Ceylon on Buddhist doctrines. He has published some of his Radio Talks in a book entitled *Buddhism and Science*. On November 2nd, 1958, I wrote a letter to Mr. Baptist thus:—

Dear Mr. Baptist,

On page 2 of the book *Buddhism and Science* you have given the following quotations which you say are *what Buddhist sacred books say*:—

"A single universe is composed of many worlds. And there are many universes. Each solar system has its own family of planets, and many such solar systems form what might be called a cosmic system. Numerous cosmic systems form still greater systems, each having its central sun, and its planetary worlds with their corresponding inhabitants."

I am writing to request you kindly let me know the name of the book with chapter and page from where you have extracted this quotation. I am interested to check up the accuracy of your quotation because of the importance of its contribution—viz., the heliocentric nature of the solar system—Buddha or some of his disciples made some 2,500 years ago, long before Galileo invented the telescope. I have never read in any book on Astronomy about India's contribution towards the advancement of astronomical studies in ancient times. No doubt, Indians were, and still are, ardent believers in Astrology which is based on the pre-Copernican geocentric conception now regarded to be utterly wrong.

It is regarded by astronomers all over the world that Copernicus (1473-1543 A.D.) and Galileo after him were the pioneers who postulated the heliocentric nature of the solar system. But if, as you say, the same theory was mentioned some 2,000 years before Copernicus and Galileo in the "sacred Buddhist book" from which you claim to have extracted the above quotation, we have every reason to be proud of it, and to claim a place for India along with Egypt, Babylon, Greece, China and Arabia as countries which have contributed towards the early development of astronomy.

Hope you will favour me with an early reply giving the necessary information.

Yours truly,

(Signed) A. T. KOVOOR.

Failing to get a reply to this letter I sent him the following reminder on February 5th, 1959:—

Dear Mr. Baptist,

I am writing to call your attention to my letter dated November 2nd, 1958, requesting you to help me in my studies by giving the name of the book with chapter and page from which you have extracted the quotation on astronomy given in your book *Buddhism and Science*.

In the absence of any information forthcoming from you I will be compelled to come to the conclusion that the quotation you have given within inverted commas is a fictitious one. If it happens to be so, I am of opinion that it must be given due publicity so that the public may know the real truth about your writings and Radio Talks.

Kindly let me know whether you have any objection to my giving publicity to this matter.

Yours truly,

(Signed) A. T. KOVOOR.

I regret to state that I am still waiting, without much hope, for a reply from this ardent Buddhist propagandist.

THE FREETHINKER

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TO CORRESPONDENTS. We thank the many readers who send us press cuttings, which are always useful. But we do ask that the name and date of the paper be clearly indicated.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

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Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Sussex Branch N.S.S. (Peace Statue, opposite Embassy Court, Brighton), Sunday, 3p.m.; E. MILLS.

Notes and News

“WHILE PROVIDING the best of secondary schools”, said the Bishop of Nottingham, the Roman Catholic Church “would be failing in its duty if it did not equip them for their final destiny”. “Children were made for something far more than this world—Heaven”. He was speaking at a Leicester school prize-giving (*Leicester Mercury*, 21/7/60), and he made it clear that the best secondary education of a child was subservient to “the complete and full development as God’s son or daughter leading his or her way to Heaven”.

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WE REFER, in This Believing World, to the quite improper remark of the Recorder of Carlisle Mr. Edward Wooll, Q.C., to an atheist probation officer who gave evidence at the Quarter Sessions. The National Secular Society has sent a letter of protest to Mr. Wooll.

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“IS IT SPELL-BINDING SINCERITY, or commercialised sacrilege?” asked the *Scottish Daily Record* (9/7/60) about the film of the jazz rendering of the Lord’s Prayer by an American coloured singer, Mahalia Jackson. Opinions differ. Dr. John Grierson of Scottish TV describes it as one of the most moving screen experiences of his life, but Mrs. Stewart, a *Record* reader from Renfrew says: “It makes a fool of a beautiful piece of sacred music. I hope never to hear it sung in that disgusting way again”.

Wake Up Ladies!

EVERY SUNDAY IN GLASGOW one can still see well-groomed ladies, proud and free, wending their way to the various kirks. And in smaller Scottish towns and villages the picture is the same. Indeed, the smaller the village, probably the larger the proportion who go to the kirk. I wonder if these ladies realise how they have been treated in the past?

Let us transport them to the 16th Century.

In 1588 there were no seats in the kirk. Everyone sat or knelt—or laid on the floor. But a little common sense was beginning to sap the inspired stupidity. We read in the Session records in that year, that some ash trees in the High Church Yard were to be cut down “to make forms for the folk to sit down in the kirk”.

This refinement, however, was for men only. The women were suffered to lie down or squat on the floor.

Apparently the ladies did not play the game exactly according to the rules, for the Session records for July 10th, 1589, found it necessary to state that “no woman sit upon, or occupy, the forms men should sit on, but either sit, lie [on the floor] or else bring stools with them”.

The women must have continued to cause trouble to the elders—inspired, no doubt, by Auld Nick, for whom they were agents—for a Minute of May 3rd, 1604, ordains that “no woman, married or unmarried, come within the kirk doors to preaching or prayer with their plaids about their heads, neither lie down in the kirk on their face in time of prayer, sleeping that way . . .”

The possibility that the enforced ignominy of lying on the floor was being turned to useful effect during the sermon, understandably enraged the privileged men who had perforce to stay awake. They therefore hired a beadle and gave him “ane whyte stick” to prod the sinful creatures into pious wakefulness like themselves, though still on the floor.

Today, the women are still causing trouble. The proposal to permit women elders and preachers has raised an unholy row in the kirk. Yet the women still form the bulk of the congregation. When will they wake up?

L. MURRAY.

CHRISTIANITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

THE *Sheffield Telegraph* (25/7/60) printed the following letter on Mental Health which we reproduce for the benefit of readers:

SIR,—I am writing to disagree with a letter published in last Monday’s *Sheffield Telegraph* in which it was suggested that Christianity was the answer to mental health problems.

I once had this view, until (to my utter bewilderment) I was ill myself.

I later counted all the people that I knew who had been mentally ill. There were 14 in all, and with the exception of one, they had all been practising Christians, who attended church and prayer meetings, read the Bible regularly, and were church workers.

I have since realised that Christianity, especially Fundamentalism, can contribute to mental ill-health.

Apart from making unnecessary demands resulting in all kinds of inhibitions, it can also encourage mental dishonesty.

I once heard a talk by an official of the World Health Organisation in which he said that many people still cling emotionally to religious beliefs which they no longer accepted intellectually, and that this caused inner conflicts.

It is unfortunate that many people still have the superstitious idea that the Bible is infallible, and are thus prevented from ridding themselves of beliefs which they have long since outgrown.

(Miss) E.C.
Sheffield, 10.

WITHOUT COMMENT

Lourdes pilgrims hurt in bus crash—*The Guardian* headline (21/7/60).

What is The Logos?

By H. CUTNER

AS THOSE READERS who have followed my discussion with Mr. Geoffrey Ashe no doubt suspect, my recent criticism of Mr. F. F. Bruce's work *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?* brought a reply from him. He insists that I did not answer this or that, but naturally he completely ignores what I actually wrote, and takes good care to provide no answer himself. It is a pity that Mr. Bruce has attempted no reply either.

However, here is one of Mr. Ashe's criticisms:—

You could have substantiated the Comparative Religion argument by producing a parallel to the central Christian concept of the historical Incarnation, i.e. a pre-Christian analogue for the opening verses of St. John; or, in some degree, by producing a parallel to the chief single event in the Christian narrative, the Resurrection. You did neither, and if the essentials can't be paralleled the entire case from parallelism collapses or rather turns around. So much for the J. M. Robertson line of argument.

Now apart from anything else, I never attempted in my criticisms of Bruce any "J. M. Robertson line of argument"—all I did was to impeach, as far as possible, the "documents" which Bruce claimed as "reliable". I may have failed in convincing Mr. Ashe of course; but I must congratulate him on the way he has "turned round" the "entire case" away from Bruce altogether, dragged in J. M. Robertson, and then complains that I didn't deal with the "opening verses of St. John". But had I done so, he would have pointed out that I never dealt with Elijah flying to Heaven in a Fiery Chariot, and would have insisted that I could not find any "analogous" passage in any other religion.

I am sure that had I claimed that the story of Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp was "unreliable"—that is, that the Documents in which the story is narrated are unreliable—he would have challenged me in exactly the same way he defends the Christian "documents". He would have asked me where else could be shown the historical story of the Wonderful Lamp? And if I failed to do so, that would prove that the Wonderful Lamp really had existed, and like Christ Jesus, was still somewhere around.

Of course I never touched "the opening verses of St. John"—they always appeared to me about the biggest and most hopeless nonsense in the Bible—just as silly in fact as "sinning against the Holy Ghost", a sin which could never, *never* be pardoned. I find it difficult to believe that anybody would want to defend such unintelligible gabble. For what in Heaven does it mean? Let me quote it:—

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . .

That is how the Authorised Version puts it, and the editors of the Revised Version were obviously afraid of altering a word for they give exactly the same translation. Almost the same comes from Dr. Young's *Literal Translation of the Bible*. Not so Dr. Moffatt for he gives us,

The Logos existed in the very beginning, the Logos was with God, the Logos was divine. He was with God in the very beginning . . .

The word "Logos" is not in the AV at all—it is the Greek word in our English characters, and it is obvious that Moffatt was quite dissatisfied with the "Word" as its translation. And no wonder. For whether it should be "Word" or "Logos" it has literally no intelligible meaning.

It is no doubt a purely "Gnostic" word, and if it is true that there is no "pre-Christian analogue" in any

other religion, the reason must be that like the word "God", it is just "gabble".

Webster in his *Dictionary* defines "Logos" as "Christ the divine word", which merely adds more confusion as to what it means; for if "Christ" means (according to Webster) "the Messiah, or (Lord's) Anointed", what do the words "Messiah or Anointed" mean? We could spend hours trying to find out—and in the end, is anybody the wiser? Webster says the word "Logos" is a name "of the second person of the Trinity", which immediately drags in the "Trinity", as if anybody knows what *that* word means! Moreover, to make things even more unintelligible, Webster adds that it was "under the influence of Plato and Philo Judaeus" that the word "Logos" came into use "considered as the expression or incarnation of the Divine Reason, especially as the mediator between God and man". So the word "Logos" is also the "Mediator", and "Divine Reason"!

But we haven't quite done with it. In the "Commentary" of the edition of the Four Gospels published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, written by the Rev. J. M. Fuller, he tells us that "the Word was not a mere attribute of God, like Wisdom or Power or Goodness", for John says, "The Word was with God", and 'this declares the distinct personal existence of the Word'. We now know therefore that the Word or the Logos has a "personal existence", which means (if it means anything at all) that it can walk and think and eat—unless Mr. Ashe or Mr. Bruce means something quite different from what the word "personal" usually means.

It also appears that (according to Mr. Fuller) the word "Logos" is "a true title of Christ", that "He is the very eternal God", and "of one substance with the Father", as well as "*the expression of the mind of God*" (Mr. Fuller's italics); and "the Word is a distinct Person—'*with God*' from everlasting".

And Mr. Fuller triumphantly adds that "we are too much accustomed to think of creation as belonging to God the Father alone", but—referring to verse 3, "All things were made by Him . . ."—says Mr. Fuller, "Here and elsewhere God the Son is most distinctly to be the Creator . . ."; so that the Word, which is a distinct Person, is also the Creator of the world as we get it in Genesis. And so, as the Word, that is, the Logos, is Jesus Christ himself, it was Jesus who created the world. The people who believe in the theory of Evolution, and who (like myself) declare that all this about the Logos is *super-nonsense*, look like going to the place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth—much to the delight of Jesus; for it is he who stresses more than anyone else the actual existence of Hell.

But Mr. Ashe might well complain I have not given a pre-Christian parallel to the Logos of Christianity. Well, according to the English Orientalist Hyde in his *Religio Veterum Persarum* (I have not read this book, but the passage is quoted in Waite's *History of the Christian Religion*) dealing with Zoroaster (c. 800 BC) we find,

"You, my sons," exclaimed the seer, "will perceive its rising [that is a star would appear when the child (Zoroaster) should be born] before any other nation. As soon therefore as you shall behold the star, follow it whithersoever it shall lead you; and adore that mysterious child, offering your gifts to him, with profound humility. He is the Almighty Word, which created the heavens."

Here then, in plain language, hundreds of years before the Christian religion appeared, we find not only the famous "Star" (of Bethlehem?) but the marvellous "Logos" of John; and I ask Mr. Ashe to explain it.

In any case, what did Philo (born about 20 BC) mean by his "Logos"? He meant, "the first begotten Word", "the Image of God", "the Divine Word", "the first begotten Son of God"; and he claimed that this was "the Word" which created the Universe. Of course it was. When we are told in Genesis, "And God said, Let there be light", it was the "Word" which created light! Wonderful! But Philo was writing a century at least before John and his Word.

The idea of the Word creating anything was as common to ancient thought as the word "Creator". Whoever wrote John—and nobody knows who was the author—just "took" the idea from the "mystics" around him. It conveyed no meaning whatever to anybody, any more than anything written by Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, or other champions of ancient religions, meant anything when they described "God".

Evolution in particular, and science in general, has annihilated all these ancient Oriental superstitions. And such questions as Mr. Ashe's to me are relics of a long bygone age. But so long as they are asked, somebody has to answer them—I suppose!

Finally, I must put on record that one solid believer in the Logos bemoans how thoroughly and badly the Word let him down on July 14th. It or he or He (or however you name the Divine whatisit) told Dr. Elio Blanca that the world would come to an end on that day and it didn't. The Doctor, who before this happened, might have fully supported Mr. Ashe, said, "I must have been mistaken in interpreting the voices I received from the Logos, that is, the Supreme Authority". So after all, it wasn't the Logos that went wrong but Dr. Blanca; that is at least some consolation.

The Sabbath

IT IS MORE THAN LIKELY that the Sabbath, as the day of rest it was designed to be, was instituted as a social amenity long before it was hitched to religion as Jehovah's post-Creation surcease from labour. As in the case of man-made morals, which were given religious sanctions to make them more easily enforceable, so it is probable the day was designated "holy" and kept from fear of reprisals for failing to do so.

As a day of rest, or of difference from the usual round, it is a good thing and needs no religious connotation to make it so, but it is through this affiliation that its observance is sought by the religious element in our society, rather than as one of beneficial relaxation from routine. This means that its chief purpose, in their eyes, is church attendance, and the fact that this is declining is the source of the churchmen's worry.

It may be of interest to speculate upon the question of what, or who, has been responsible for this drift away from the churchgoing habits of past days. Some would attribute it to a slackening of the beliefs on which the day's holiness was based, but this is as doubtful as is the question of whether it was ever the urge to worship which filled the fanes, as that attendance of them was so often the sole outlet and opportunity to meet the neighbours. Travel facilities, which have developed so much in recent years, would appear to account for the deplored absenteeism rather than any departure from a doubtful piety.

It has been a long progression from the time when a Sabbath journey was limited to two thousand paces, to the

possibilities of today. That may be what has effected the change. About *who* was instrumental in bringing it about there may be many guesses, but this scribe plumps for the man who re-invented the pneumatic tyre, the use of which, if not the main cause, certainly accelerated the regression from the custom of churchgoing. The device was designed to make the bicycle a more tractable vehicle than it was at the time, and when, as a consequence, Society (with a big "S") took to the wheel, Sundays were often devoted to its use, particularly by townfolk glad to get away from the streets for a while. Mrs. Grundy, too, was given her dismissal, largely as the result of this liberating medium, which dissipated many pruderies and conventions of the time. Then came the motor car, dependent for its success to a great extent on the insulating property of this revolutionary invention. The 2,000 paces limitation was multiplied, and social needs were transferred to the groupings which grew around the new means of transport. So, if blame or credit, is to be awarded, either must go to the late J. B. Dunlop and those who collaborated to make his invention the success it became—and remains.—From *The Western Secularist*, Perth, Western Australia, May 1960.

Disestablishment in Barbados?

A BARBADOS READER sends us an article by Mitchie Hewitt, "Bishop is welcomed but Church in suspense", from the *Barbados Advocate* (date not given) and, although a closer knowledge of West Indian conditions would no doubt increase our appreciation of what Mr. Hewitt has to say, we think it is of sufficient interest to summarise in some detail here.

As the title implies, Bishop Evans recently took up his duties in the island, and the task that faces him is not an enviable one, according to Mr. Hewitt. Indeed, "in view of the history of the Church, it is even a challenging one". A former bishop, Bishop Hughes—obviously admired by Mr. Hewitt—studied the Anglican Church Act and then described it as a "poisonous document". Mr. Hewitt asks what the new bishop thinks of it, and "Is he as anxious as Bishop Hughes to do away with it"? The latter thought that the document had been compiled "by men whose ignorance of the real nature of the Church was monumental". Or, if they knew anything about it "were inspired with a vicious and vindictive spirit against the Church and against the Bishop in particular". "An act which has fifteen sections dealing with the subject of pew rents cannot be squared with the gospel", continued Bishop Hughes. "We do not profess our belief in the Fatherhood of God and in the brotherhood of man in order to sort ourselves out on a cash basis every time we go into a church to worship." From which we may assume that the Anglican Church in Barbados, as in so many other places, supported a system of privilege. It would seem that Bishop Hughes recognised the transitoriness of that system and when "he gave up his bishopric in disgust" in 1951, he warned the Church to "Take heed".

Mr. Hewitt asks the new bishop to do just this. There have been persistent warnings over the years that the Anglican Church must stand on its own feet, he says, and "I believe that it can do so".

Well, it looks as though it may have to do so in the not-too-distant future. For, at the opening of the present legislative session in January, the Governor, Sir John Stow, announced "that his government intended that negotiations for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Anglican Church would be finalised during this session". "By now," says Mr. Hewitt, "all Anglicans must be resigned to the fact that it is the intention of the Barbados govern-

ment to disestablish and disendow . . . It is no longer a point of controversy, it is a matter of inevitability except there is a change of government and the new cabinet decides to reverse the decision". The idea of disestablishment has apparently been mooted for many years, but it was not until 1947 that the Anglican Synod began to take it seriously. In that year, at its annual meeting, the Synod passed a resolution requesting the Bishop to inform the Governor that, "if invited to do so, the Synod would be pleased to confer with the Government in the preparation of the necessary legislation, should the House of Assembly pass the Address which had been tabled by Mr. J. A. Haynes".

Mr. Hewitt gives details of the Synod's voting in favour of that resolution by 50-25. Of the clergy present, 33 voted for it, and 9 against; of the laymen, 17 for, and 16 against. This meant, as he says, "that in the ranks of the clergy the principle of disendowment had found a great measure of acceptance whereas among the laity there was a split, with half of the representatives in favour of the principle and the other half against it".

He tells us, though, that the Barbados Government has shown "a great deal of timidity" on the question; that "there has been vacillation of the worst type". It found itself committed to a policy of disendowment, "negotiations for which had been taking place over the years without any sign of finality in the near future". Committed to this policy, the Government could not go on "indefinitely adding clergymen to the pension list". It therefore passed a Suspension Bill, which "allows cures to be filled, but makes it very difficult for the Church to recruit vicars. It divides the clergymen into two sections. Those who were in the service are pretty well secure, but those coming after are in a state of insecurity and uncertainty".

In fact, according to Mr. Hewitt, the Anglican Church is "faring worse than if it had been disendowed years ago". He even believes (fears?) that the present session will pass without the necessary steps being taken by the Government, despite Sir John Stow's specific announcement to the contrary. Hence our query at the head of this item.

CORRESPONDENCE

NOT SURPRISING

It does not strike me as so surprising that a Roman Catholic actor (Spencer Tracy), should portray a Rationalist, as happens in *Inherit the Wind*, the film about the Tennessee "Monkey Trial". Since when have an actor's religious or political beliefs prevented them from taking parts which involved the expression of opposing views to their own? The writer of "This Believing World" must be surprised if a Protestant plays the role of a Catholic priest.

P. DUNCAN.

SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM

Mr. R. Smith (*THE FREETHINKER*, 3/6/60), asks me "What Scientific Materialism has to offer in the way of happiness and the fear of growing old, and the fear of death". To the part of the question about happiness, my reply is, everything; in fact there is nothing else available. The second part, ". . . to offer . . . the fear of growing old . . ." does not make sense; I cannot see why you should offer anything to a fear.

The only way to promote human happiness is to find out what makes people happy and to do this we must investigate the facts of human existence, psychological as well as physical. The only possible way to get the right answer is by scientific method. The achievement by Science in more than doubling the expectation of life over the last 100 years indicates its immense possibilities for good. As another example, Immunisation against Diphtheria must have resulted in the saving of many thousands of child lives and the loss of which would have caused great sorrow to the parents. And the Scientist works in this way because of his deep love for humanity. Religion, on the other hand, has been an abominable curse to mankind and religious faith a cause of eternal hatred and misery; it is not only useless but a menace to happiness.

Mr. Smith talks of "the fear of old age and death" three times in eight lines which suggests that for him such fears are obsessive. As old age and death are natural and inevitable, fear of them is irrational and in Mr. Smith's case, morbid. Perhaps he really means that the destitution of old age and premature death are to be feared, in which case there are surely numerous agencies both within and without the National Health Service which could reassure him. In any case I really do think he should see a kind wise doctor.

(Dr.) J. V. DUHIG (Australia).

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, July 27th: Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Arthur, Barker, Corstorphine, Ebury, Hornibrook, Johnson, McIlroy, Mills, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Trask, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Mr. Cleaver and Mrs. Venton. Posters had been printed; advertisement in *Tribune* for 6 months arranged. New members were admitted to Birmingham, Marble Arch, North London and Sussex Branches which, with 2 individual members made 7 in all. Letters to the Prime Minister, Home Secretary, Minister of Education and N.C.C.L. regarding Conference motions were approved, as were a letter to Edward Wooll, Q.C., Recorder of Carlisle regarding an atheist probation officer, and a letter of condolence to Miss Jennie Lee, M.P., on the death of her husband. A Benevolent Fund Sub-Committee of Mr. Barker, Mr. Griffiths and Mrs. Venton, and a Rules and Standing Orders Sub-Committee of Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Venton, President and Secretary, were elected. A Building Fund appeal was announced. Possible Conference venues in London for 1961 were suggested. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, August 17th, 1960.

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