

Church Holds Plato-Like Talks To Combat Religion's Skeptics

By GEORGE W. CORNELL
NEW YORK (AP) — Skeptic: "How could a good God have created or allowed so much evil in the world?"
Believer: "God decided to give men freedom of choice. That necessarily means freedom to do the wrong thing."
That's a sample of the frank, give-and-take religious discussion which was completed this week in one of the summer's most unusual series of church services.

Modeled on the dialogues of the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, the series has produced some remarkably plain talk about the ordinary doubter's "roadblocks to faith."
The pro-and-con discourses have been held Sunday nights for the past five weeks in New York's Protestant Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

Play Both Roles
The Very Rev. Dr. James A. Pike, dean of the cathedral, and Rev. John M. Krumm, head of Columbia University's Department of Religion, have alternately played both roles of skeptic and believer.

Here are a few abbreviated excerpts of the questions posed by the skeptic stationed with a microphone in the congregation, and the answers given by the believer standing in the pulpit:

Virgin Birth Belief
Skeptic: Is not our religion unscientific? Since it becomes less important as science reveals more of the unknown?

Believer: Religion deals with the meaning of things, the "know why," science only with the "know how." Science can release atomic energy, but it can't say when it's right to use it. We may do amazing things with calculating machines, but we can never invent one that will answer the question—why a calculating machine?

Skeptic: take the virgin birth. That's something a scientifically trained person would find very difficult to accept.

Religion Uses Analogy

Believer: For 1900 years, the image of the virgin birth has been the most effective way to preserve from distortion the truth about the divinity and humanity of our Lord. Men's words and explanations pass with time, but this medium of communication abides. Since in the incarnation, God was trying to say something, maybe this was the best way to do it. That's why I believe in the virgin birth historically.

Skeptic: But science gives us pre-

cise and definite results. Religion is so vague and personal.

Believer: True, precision comes more readily at lower levels. For example, it's easier to be precise about chemistry than psychology.

Skeptic: But does it make any real difference how people behave whether they accept this dubious hypothesis of the existence of God?

Believer: For everyone, there is something that is ultimate, basic, and that is God. For some people, their God is themselves. The real question then is—what kind of God.

Skeptic: I don't like these man-like descriptions of God. Isn't God above that?

Believer: We have to speak in some form, some analogy. We have borrowed human language, personal language. Some people speak of God as "a great force." They've borrowed language from physics. Some speak of God as "a value."

That's borrowing language from economics. God is something more than human, but not something less.

Skeptic: Granting I already accept Christian ethics, I can go along living just as good a life without going to church.

Believer: You remind me of a man who was heir to a great fortune who was content to live on the inherited capital, without doing anything to replenish it.

Worship Anywhere?
Skeptic: Timid souls may need church fellowship, but doesn't it take more courage to strike out on one's own?

Believer: Assume one can be a Christian by himself, why do it the hard way? There's such a thing as a self-educated man. But a man would be foolish to throw over the advantage of schools just to prove his courage.

Skeptic: I can worship God just as well on the golf course or driving through the countryside as I can in church.

Believer: It isn't really a question of whether you can, but whether you do. In a sense, you could work at golf while in church—muse on the best shot for approaching a certain hole. But most golfers would consider that a feeble substitute for the real experience.

Skeptic: Speaking of evil, could not an all-powerful God have arranged it so we all do the right thing.

Believer: Yes, he could have run us like a puppeteer manipulates his marionettes. But God chose freedom as the most rewarding possibility for us.

Skeptic: But what about wars,

in which so many innocent people are involved entirely apart from their own wills.

Freedom of Choice
Believer: Just as God decided man should be free, not an automaton, he decided man was to be social, not isolated, that he was to work out his destiny in inter-relationships with other free beings.

Freedom means the possibility of hurting others. If our culture is living too fast, if we are running the human machine in ways it isn't designed to run, erratic disorders—even diseases—are not surprising.

Skeptic: I don't see that Christianity does not have a complete explanation, but it has an answer. Christianity does not avoid tragedy in life, but it takes men beyond tragedy. It affirms that despite evil men do to themselves or others, or the pain that fortuitous circumstances bring, God still reigns and his mercies are sure.

Premier of Kashmir State Out of Office

SRINAGAR, Kashmir (AP)—Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, Premier of disputed Kashmir state, was removed from office Saturday night by the ruling son of the abdicated Maharajah.

The nominal chief of state, Yuvraj Karan Singh, regarded as a figurehead ruler over the hotbed of feuding between India and Pakistan also dismissed Abdullah's five-man Cabinet.

Abdullah had been generally pro-Indian in the long dispute between India and Pakistan over possession of the big Himalayan state bordering on Red China and Afghanistan and a near neighbor of Soviet Asia.

The Cabinet crisis arose over current talks between the prime ministers of India and Pakistan over Kashmir's future.

Sheikh Abdullah, a Moslem, was quoted in India last April 11 as saying he by no means was in favor of complete accession of his largely Moslem state to India, which has a Hindu majority.

Abdullah rose to power after Sir Hari Singh, the Maharajah, acceded his state to India in late 1947. However, India put the case before the United Nations, and it has been pending there since January, 1948.

Abdullah rallied the Kashmiri people behind him, and has been a problem at times to both Pakistan and India, although he generally favored a sort of union with India.

Nearly two-thirds of American farms keep dairy cows.

and granted independence to India and Pakistan. The future of Kashmir was left pending in the partitioning.

193 Forest Fires in State This Year

PORTLAND (AP)—One hundred ninety-three forest fires have blackened 510 acres in Oregon so far this year, George Spaur, state forester, reported Saturday.

The report, which covers 15 million acres protected by the State Forestry Department and private fire patrol organizations, said the figure was considerably below average. There were 143 fires and 340 acres burned over last month, however.

Seventy-six of the fires were in Eastern Oregon and 117 in the western section of the state. Lightning caused 40, and the remaining 153 were man caused—44 due to smokers' carelessness.

VALLEY GOES ON SHIP

SEATTLE (AP)—The transport Gen. Hugh J. Gaffney arrived Friday from the Far East with 1,245 passengers. Aboard was Cpl. Robert C. Wilson, 238 Grand St., Independence.

Young Rider, Old Story



RUTHERFORD, N. J.—The perils of motoring come as a rude shock to five-year-old Steven Levy, of Brooklyn, N. Y., as he weeps over the prostrate form of his grandfather, Ruben Sarapin, following a collision with another car near Rutherford, N. J. The boy's mother, Mrs. Anita Levy, lies injured in rear of car. The crash occurred when an approaching car jumped the concrete divider strip and then struck the Sarapin car head on. No one was seriously injured. (AP Wirephoto to The Statesman.)

Salem Man Heads Board of Accountants

PORTLAND (AP)—The new board of governors of the National Society of Public Accountants Saturday named James E. Keys, Salem, Ore., executive director.

He will direct the business affairs of the public accountants' organization from its headquarters in Washington, D. C. James A. Gorman, San Bernardino, Calif., newly elected president, announced the appointment of Keys to the director's post.

Keys is a past president of the national society and of the Oregon Association of Public Accountants, which he helped organize.

The national group's board of governors met here Saturday to implement the decisions of the na-

Nudists End Convention With Election

CAJON, Calif. (AP)—Nudists Saturday reelected Mervyn Mounce, Spokane, Wash., president of their American Sunbathing Association which is holding its 22nd annual national convention here.

The new board of directors includes Mel Stevens, Seattle, and James Sutherland, Spokane.

In other business matters the undressed delegates decided their 1953 ASA convention will be held at the Sunway Society Ranch, Spokane.

A bid to have a nudist booth at national convention held here Monday through Friday.

Texas Heat Wave Kills 2

DALLAS, Texas (AP)—Two heat deaths were reported in Texas Saturday as a blazing sun sent temperatures to record levels in several cities.

Dallas' 108 was the hottest day of the year and hottest Aug. 8 in Weather Bureau history. The same was true of Fort Worth's 105. The state's high reading was 100 at Llano in south Texas.

Oleomargarine manufacturers in the United States used about 213,828,000 pounds of skim milk in their product in 1952.

The Oregon State Fair next month was approved, but the bare announcement gave no details on what the booth would contain.

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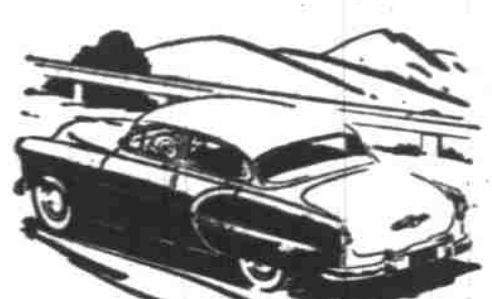
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