

# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

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## JOINT COMMITTEE GROUP TO REVIEW BRYANT RESEARCH PROJECT

President E. B. Willingham, acting upon vote of the Joint Committee to ask a group to review and evaluate the research project undertaken on its behalf by C. E. Bryant last summer, has named the following: E. O. Clark, chairman; Clarence W. Cranford, E. F. Campbell, William Turnvall, and W. H. Jernagin. They will carefully examine Mr. Bryant's voluminous report November 14, and after study prepare a statement for publication and perhaps authorize a longer one for those who may request such from the headquarters office, subject matter of report, tax funds allocated to church interests.

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## PRELATE AND PASTOR AGREE ON CALAMITY OF CHURCH POLITICAL PARTY?

In his address commemorating the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Massachusetts Baptist State Convention, the Executive Director of the Joint Committee on Public Affairs, quoted by the Boston Herald, lamented the formation of church political parties in this country and said that hope of relief from the hurtful pressures of such may lie in the growth of Roman Catholic liberals.

Tending to confirm this view is the declaration of Bishop John J. Wright of Worcester, Massachusetts. While still seeking to justify the functioning of Roman Catholic political parties in Europe, the prelate said, as quoted in the Catholic Standard of Washington, D. C.:

"There has never been a movement here toward anything like the European Christian Democratic parties since there has been no necessity for Catholics or other religious people to organize their own political parties.

"It would be utterly alien to the traditions of this country to give any political movement a religious name and Catholics would be the last, I hope, to contemplate so mistaken and unnecessary a step."

The Bishop, however, perhaps is somewhat unaware of the political activity of his Church in the United States. Dr. Robert J. McCracken, in a Reformation sermon delivered in his Riverside Church, New York, and printed in The Churchman, Episcopal national magazine, pointed out the facts:

"With the tide running against it in Europe, its stronghold for centuries, Roman Catholicism is engaged in ceaseless, surreptitious pressure to obtain a position of preference and control in the New World. Nor can there be much doubt as to the success attending its efforts. It has an astonishing hold over the machinery of American life - the press, the radio, the films, the whole field of public relations. It is constantly bringing its weight to bear on local, state and national officials, on the political

machines which rule many of our cities, on labor unions, social welfare agencies, teachers' organizations. Its clearly avowed purpose is to make America Catholic.

"Already we are at the place where no political party is prepared to incur or even risk the hostility of the hierarchy. A respect is paid to its censorship which is eloquent evidence of the pressure being employed to enforce it. Fear of a Catholic boycott has become a factor alike in commercial and political life. Editors and business men as well as Senators and Congressmen are afraid to give offense to Catholics because back of Catholics is an authoritarian system which can make its weight felt. It is high time Protestants realized that Rome has established itself practically as an independent empire in the United States.

"Take the President's nomination of an ambassador to the Vatican. Doubtless it was prompted by a variety of motives, of which one was the desire to secure closer collaboration between the United States and the Vatican in the struggle against communism. But behind it was there also on Rome's part a bid for preferential recognition, and on the President's part a bid for the Catholic vote? On what level are we to operate in this matter? On the level of power-politics, or on the level of principle? For Protestants there is a principle at stake. It runs right back to the framing of the Constitution. The founding Fathers, familiar with the union of church and state on the continent of Europe, familiar with the struggle for ascendancy on the part of both and with the tension and friction resulting therefrom, resolved that here the two should be separate -- that the official, institutional functioning of the one should not be linked with the official, institutional functioning of the other. There was to be no establishment of religion in America. There was to be no political status, certainly no preferential status, accorded to any ecclesiastical body. Equal rights for every faith and discrimination against none was the democratic principle laid down by the makers of the Constitution. It is the distinctive feature of American life and the guarantee of religious liberty, which is the fundamental liberty.

"The principle of the separation of church and state is a principle to which the Roman Catholic Church is absolutely opposed in theory and reluctantly conformist in practice in countries where it is without power of jurisdiction. In every country where its influence is paramount it asserts its spiritual supremacy over the state and over the rights of minority religions. The American clergy trained at the Pontifical University in Rome are taught: 'Catholics must make all possible efforts to bring about the rejection of this religious indifference of the state and the instauration, as soon as possible, of the wished-for union and concord of state and church....Whether tolerance of non-Catholic religions is promised under oath by a statutory law or not, it can never be admitted.' That is what is taught in Rome. Here in the United States Monsignor O'Toole, professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of America, had this to say: 'No Catholic may positively and unconditionally approve of the policy of separation of church and state. But given a country like the United States, where religious denominations abound and the population is largely non-Catholic, it is clear that the policy of treating all religions alike becomes, all things considered, a practical necessity, the only way of avoiding a deadlock.'"

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#### MISTAKEN USE OF THE WORD SECULAR

The ambiguous word "secular" is being freely used today in certain circles as a means of ruthlessly condemning our prized American system of government and public schools.

Let us pause to consider the facts.

For ages prior to the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the word secular applied to all who were unordained by the church, to all outside the religious orders.

The Reformers repudiated this cleavage among those of different vocation, and adopting the term "the sacredness of the secular", declared every person of faith was entitled to recognition for his true religious character and work, whether he belonged to the so-called "religious" or not.

When Roger Williams in 1636 established the first free state with a free church in Rhode Island, he rejected the European political systems and created a new form of government on new constitutional principles, limiting its functions to civil and social matters. Says James Ernst, Williams' biographer:

"Civil states, said Mr. Williams, cannot show 'a commission, instruction or promise given them by the son of God....No civil state or country can be truly called Christian, although true Christians be in it.' Even though independent of each other, church and civil state ought to cooperate within certain legitimate spheres of action. In all civil things, the church as a civil corporation of religious people is subject to civil laws. The state ought to countenance, permit and protect the churches and church members in their bodies and goods; and the church ought to help the peace and prosperity of the state by prayers and civil obedience."

It happened that in this way the Rhode Island system, which became the pattern and model for the American Republic, has since been termed a secular state, but without anti-religious implications whatsoever. The word in no way was intended to signify anti-religion. George Jacob Holyoake, an Englishman born in 1806, employed it to designate a governmental system which avoids religious controversy among rival sects by restricting civil government to civil affairs, leaving religion to its legitimate sphere to function in freedom.

James Bryce says: "It is accepted as an axiom by all Americans that civil power ought to be not only neutral and impartial as between different forms of faith, but it ought to leave these matters entirely on one side, regarding them no more than it regards the artistic or literary pursuits of its citizens." Charles A. Beard, the American historian, says: "The Constitution is a purely secular document. It does not confer upon the Federal Government any power whatever to deal with religion in any form or manner." This explains why the Constitution contains no invocation to God, or even mention of God, why the only mention of religion in it is to forbid Congress to establish it by law or to interfere with its free exercise.

insist that all should acknowledge that the word secular as properly applied to our American government and public schools is not a tainted word, that it is not synonymous with anti-God, as vociferously used by some. Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, writing in The Nation, January 15, 1949, has well said:

"Secularism' is a smoke screen. Behind it the Roman Catholic hierarchy mobilizes to secure public funds for the support of parochial education. The ultimate objective is the destruction of the American principle of the separation of church and state. The campaign was begun November 20, 1948, when the Roman Catholic bishops issued a statement called 'The Christian in Action'. Protestants and Jews will...refuse to become allied with an attempt to establish clericalism."

When Protestants mistakenly use the word secularism, in most cases they really mean materialism, or possibly naturalism. Of materialism we have much in the world today. It is the one deadly ism that is the greatest curse to civilization. Let us say what we mean and mean what we say.

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#### NEWSPAPER SUPPRESSION AN INJUSTICE TO ROMAN CATHOLICS

The experience of the Joint Committee's Executive Director with the press in reference to reports of addresses delivered by him on church-state relations may justify some

remarks. In certain instances, as in the case of a Reformation Day sermon before a mass meeting of Protestant people in Logan, West Virginia, the daily newspaper has declined to accord a line afterward. Inasmuch as the speaker expressly disavowed any attack on anyone's faith or religious practice and confined himself solely to a discussion of church-state policies, no justifiable charge of bias could be lodged as a reason for refusing publication. The newspaper's attitude did the Roman Catholics a gross injustice, because it left the impression on the public that they were opposed to religious liberty and democratic freedom of speech, and that under possible threat of boycott of the newspaper they exercised undue influence upon the newspaper to suppress any discussion of public policy affecting all citizens.

In striking contrast with the Logan paper's strange action was the two-column story in the Baltimore Sun, and the four-column head of the Boston Herald's account of similar discussions. The attitude of the Baltimore and Boston papers is all the more impressive since they are published in cities whose populations are predominantly Roman Catholic. So far as known no unhappy controversies subsequently arose as a result of the unhesitatingly publication in the Sun and Herald, hence the unterrified Roman Catholics were regarded more favorably by their neighbors.

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BOOKS BEARING ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

What Americans Believe and How They Worship, by J. Paul Williams. Harper and Brothers, New York, \$5.00. The author, professor in the Department of Religion, Mount Holyoke College, offers an entirely fresh and factual account of religion in America. Seldom does the reader find so much compacted into a single volume.

Of Faith and Learning, by Marcus Bach. School of Religion, State University of Iowa, Iowa City, \$3.00. All interested in what may be undertaken in behalf of religion in the schools and colleges will be much enlightened by this author concerning definite efforts in the University of Iowa.

McCarthy: The Man, the Senator, the "Isim". By Jack Anderson and Roland May. Beacon Press, Boston, \$3.75. Long after the smoke of the fierce battle waged during the presidential campaign this book will be read. It marks a phase in our political history, mayhap a turn in our culture. The work of the authors was done painstakingly and with the aim of presenting an accurate analysis.

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COMMENT ON THE ELECTION

As the campaign progressed the conviction deepened that it would be wholesome for the country for the General to be chosen. This in no wise diminished admiration for Governor Stevenson, whose forthrightness and intellectual quality most people greatly admired. If living in Washington, where it is possible to see accumulated growth of complacency, contempt and corruption, or seriously doubted that a continuation of administration under the same party could correct such evils. Throughout the nation one sensed a depth of earnestness on the part of people, who even in their bewilderment felt that the General offered hope of purification in government. It was apparent that they believed there would be no essential change in domestic and foreign policies. Indeed, earlier in the campaign the General emphasized his purpose to retain social gains made during the past twenty years. Except for his rather dubious offers for a speedy close of the Korean War, there was no essential difference between him and the Governor in respect to worldwide obligations. The President-elect will possibly make it plain that certain fringe elements of support, such as McCarthyism, will not be accepted by him. A curious thing in this election, which gives considerable hope, is that for once the Roman Catholics, who potentially constitute a political balance of power in the country, hitherto chiefly utilized by the Democrats, were much divided. Some of the more liberal Roman Catholic leaders condemned any effort to function as a bloc of voters.