

RELIGION

for the

ORDINARY MAN.

THE ORDINARY MAN IS RELIGIOUS.

THE church building may be empty, and the queue at the cinema door may be long, but the ordinary man, and that means nearly everybody, is nevertheless religious. He continues, though, in his weakness, not always with "all his heart, soul, strength and mind," to love the Lord his God, and his neighbour. He has not forgotten to practise "A pure religion and undefiled," for now as in the past he succours "the fatherless and widows in their affliction." His soul aspires, though it may be dimly, to eternal truth; and he responds gratefully to sincere effort, if intelligent, to lead him to more complete religious development. He wants religion, but he wants it in language that he can understand and in a form for use in his daily life.

RELIGION FOR MAN'S GOOD.

This attitude of the ordinary man is natural, for our civilization, the product of science—a search of truth—has profited the ordinary man exceedingly, and religion is expected to do no less. Science has advanced human welfare and vastly enlarged man's spiritual comprehension. It is understandable and useful. The scourge sweeps over the land, and the bacteriologist stays its ravages; the infidel scoffs at prayer and the radio-physicist girdles the earth and fills space with the spoken word. Every onward step in science means human betterment. Kings of old knew no such comforts as are possessed by to-day's Everyman. The ancient prophets could not conceive of infinity as we who have looked through telescope and spectroscope into the vastness of space. Religion must do as much for man's good; so reasons the ordinary man—and he reasons properly.

CHANGED VIEWS OF RELIGION.

Here begin our modern religious demands. Religion, the search for highest truth, centering in God, must serve man's needs and increase his comfort, both here and hereafter. It can not retreat before man-made systems of acknowledged, limited extent. The Lord declared that He had come that

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men might "have life" and "have it more abundantly." The ordinary man expects that the abundance so promised shall begin to-day, continue to-morrow, and be everlasting. To enjoy a full life here on earth as the gift of science, and in the hereafter in heaven as the gift of religion, would be a sorry interpretation of the Master's words.

A new religious common-sense has arisen. Law must be operative in the spiritual as in the material realm. Eternal life and joy are but the sum of joyful days that have been lived. A miserable earth-life followed by a glorious heavenly existence is neither a logical nor attractive programme. The sulphurous hell of yesterday has been replaced by the more severe, but more rational doctrine that as a man sows, so shall he reap, in the here and the hereafter. We shall be judged by our works; and we build our road to heaven with our daily deeds. Since the purpose of life is abundance—that is, happiness—life must be so ordered that every day promotes permanent happiness.

RELIGION IN DAILY LIFE.

All of which means that religion must not be remote from actual living. It must help solve the problems of daily life, of the body and mind as of the soul, material as well as spiritual. Hence, since the healthy body is the beginning of happiness, and the end of religious endeavour is constant happiness, all that pertains to bodily welfare must be given the religious imprint. Morality, temperance, cleanliness, proper food, clothing and shelter, daily tasks, and just government, should be affairs of true religion. There are life-problems in education, economics and sociology, intellectual, industrial and agricultural, urban and rural, national and international, to which religion should give answers and direction. Honesty, industry, thrift and co-operation, bases of prosperity, are most effective when used as principles of religion. All such help should be positive and constructive.

The church, the conservator of religion, has too often said "don't," when the ordinary man has needed to be taught what to do. The evils of intemperance have been shown in high lights, while the value of temperance has not been stressed. How tremendous would be the economic gain of the nations if the grogshops were closed and the money and energy saved were used to meet the urgent needs of the governments! The ordinary man expects his religion to help him in all such matters, else some other organization will become his most intimate companion. The stamp of religion upon the issues of the day would lead men into a new appreciation of the church. That would not drag

holy things into the mire. Is not the earth holy, and all things upon it? Holiness is the substance of all righteous acts.

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

Let us not misunderstand. The ordinary man is not a gross materialist. He knows that the spiritual is greater than the material; that an ounce of character is worth more than "a ton of cleverness;" that a moment's communion with God transcends all gifts of earth. And—he wants his religion to be fearless in its spiritual claims. Then he can follow.

Religion is more than ethics. To be honest because it is safe and profitable in a community of equally strong men; or to be virtuous to escape venereal disease; or to obey the law of the land to avoid the jail—is of the earth and not of heaven, of the day and not of eternity. Silver is but silver until stamped with the King's image; then it becomes the legal coin of the kingdom. Schools teach economic and social theory, but the church must try it by the divine law that provides endless joy and growth for righteous man. The test is simple enough: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Ethics is man-made, religion God-made; the one of the earth, the other of living fire. The ordinary man hungers for the present living voice of authority; for teachers who, like their Master, speak "as one having authority," for a Priesthood ordained of God and not of man.

RELIGIOUS COMPREHENSIBILITY.

Through all religious thinking by the ordinary man, runs the desire for comprehensibility. The net result of the experience of the last few centuries of science is the conviction that man may know the universe—that the dark and forbidding unknown may be explored and gradually be revealed to the human mind. The evil eye vanished with the coming of bacteriology; chemistry undid alchemy, and astronomy laid astrology low. Superstition fled with the coming of the law of cause and effect in the affairs of life. The mysterious is merely the unknown. Eternally shall we explore and know the infinite universe. Fear and darkness have vanished and light and comprehensibility have come with this day.

The truths of religion must likewise be within human understanding or the ordinary man will lose heart. The little that we know and teach must be comprehensible. Life's purpose must not be a deep secret, or life hereafter a matter of hope and conjecture. The eternal command, "Repent and be baptized," must be more than an arbitrary command. There can be little

loyalty to the Fatherhood of a God who is only a universal essence, a rarified philosophic conception. Jehovah of old at least could speak. Moreover, there must be the unyielding conviction that in religion as in science there will be a constant unfolding of new truth pertaining to the spiritual realities of man's sojourn on earth. The appeal to the mysterious does not satisfy in the clarifying age of science.

"ONE CAME RUNNING."

This is an age eager for new truth and its uses. Eyes and ears are open, every sense alert. Mankind is on its toes. In the clamour for attention, the voice of religion is faint and weak. Who is to blame? That must be answered elsewhere.

This would be a happier world if in our eagerness we did as one of old.

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Above all desires in the heart of the ordinary man is the desire for eternal life. Religion can satisfy this deepest of all desires if it but cling to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

THE DESIRE SATISFIED.

The Lord does not forget His children. When they stray away, He seeks to bring them back. When they forget sane and permanent happiness for fleeting, transient satisfaction, He offers them the way of return.

Even so, in this age, when religion has been changed from its original purity, away from the daily needs of the ordinary man, the Lord has caused the simple religion of Jesus Christ, with its fullness of authority, to be re-established. It has been organized through divine direction under the name of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its century of existence has proved it to be a life-giving power to its members. It meets the religious requirements of the ordinary man.

Every person would do well to investigate its possibilities for human happiness.

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