

THE NEW RELIGION.

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SIGNIFICANT and unmistakable signs appear in increasing number on the widening horizon of the religious life. In content, outlook, and purpose religion is undergoing basic reconstruction. The chief and avowed purpose of religion is coming to be the building of personality and the shaping of institutions to this end. Consequently the terminology of the pulpit is changing. The nomenclature of supernaturalism, which connotes the submission rather than the expansion of personality, is found to be utterly inadequate to express and serve the new religion. Everywhere are to be found sermons, prayers and benedictions couched in the language of science, psychology and social well being. Temples, synagogues, and churches are examining their technical equipment and practice. Methods of organization and execution long familiar in the business world are being found effective in institutional religious procedure. Religion is being organized for greater human usefulness. The institutions of religion are forging their way into positions of social, moral and spiritual leadership, where they rightfully belong. In my opinion the world can never get along without religion, but it wants a religion whose impulses, worths, and ideals are suitable to the needs of the new age. The word "religion" remains, but its content is changing.

A word is a symbol of reality. This is true whether the reality be a perceptual fact or a conceptual theory. When reality changes, clear thinking requires that the old symbol be exchanged for another or that the change in content be clearly recorded. When a word symbolizes a movement with continuity of problem and of attempt at solution, the familiar symbol should be kept and its changed meaning recorded. Psychology is a case in point. Once psychology was the name of the science that dealt with the *soul*;

later of the science that dealt with *mental faculties*; then of the science that dealt with *states of consciousness*; and now psychology is the name of the science that deals with *behavior*. The old symbol still holds. Much more should this be true when the symbol is weighted with sacred associations and memories. Religion is a symbol which not only has continuity of problem and of attempt at solution but which is also surrounded with the most hallowed associations and memories. *Religion symbolizes the human attempt to come to terms with life*. This effort, whatever its content and object, is man's religion. This was true of the early attempts of man to relate himself to those instrumentalities and values that seemed to have significance for the welfare of the group, and it is true of later attempts to placate the personal gods in order to gain personal peace. While the content of religion has undergone a marked revolution we shall retain the term religion. My chief purpose, however, is not to justify the word but to record the modern change in its content.

The common denominator of the old religions is found in *man's response* to superhuman sources of fortune. This belief in and relation with superhuman sources of fortune is characteristic of the old religions. Without this psychological situation the old faiths cannot admit the religious validity of any human behavior. Hence the old religions have resulted in a servile psychological attitude.

This pathetic and tragic outcome of the old religions is now somewhat relieved by the new religion which is gradually growing into consciousness. Everywhere modern thinkers are finding the content of religion in human worths and its cosmic significance in man's co-operation with and control of the processes of life to the end that human impulses shall be completely realized. This new religion aims at the conscious experience of the fullness of life. It regards this as the aim and end of religion and of all social instrumentalities. In other words, the new religion stands for the complete and permanent satisfactions of the human life.

The object of the old religion is the superhuman unknown and the chief content of the old religion is the sentiment entertained toward the superhuman unknown. The object of the new religion is *life*, and its chief content is *loyalty* to life. In the old religion right and wrong are defined in terms of conformity to standards extrinsic to human life, in the new, right and wrong

are defined in terms of consequence to human life. The old religion is characterized by trust and receptivity, the new by aspiration and creativity.

The new religion may or may not have a theology but it needs a science of worths and values. Whatever theological significance is inferred from or attached to the new religion is functional, tentative, secondary. The old religion judges man by his contribution to the gods; the new religion judges the gods by their contribution to man. In the old religion theological beliefs are central and imperative; in the new religion theological theories are types of "spiritual short hand." In the old religion a theological revolution is spiritual treason, in the new religion a theological revolution is a change of mental attitude, a shifting of postulates, a minor part of the day's work.

According to the old view religion without superhuman objects of faith is impossible. But if religion according to the new view is the orientation of man to his values, the broadening of perspective, committal to concrete worths, manifestly theological convictions and philosophies of the ultimate nature of the universe are not prerequisite to the religious life. Religion is not constituted of theology or philosophy or metaphysics,—but it may use them as instruments in the enhancement of human life. Man may be utterly void of theology and yet be deeply religious.

In the theocentric world of the prescientific days man wanted super powers or beings whom he could placate and so secure special agency. But science has discredited special agency. It has found the universe to be a self-operating system. It finds ordinary cosmic events and processes routine and impersonal, and other things cared for by highly specialized parts of nature such as man. It regards order and purposes as self-existent. Reality is found, but its ultimate nature is not yet determined. Man's whole world outlook is vastly different from what it once was and it is still subject to change. Hence the new religion does not regard the acceptance of any philosophical hypothesis as religiously necessary.

Yet the new religion does need a science of worths and values. Such a science must be evolved through long experimentation, and must be radically humanistic—founded on human experience, true to human desires, and subject to human observance and control.

The new religion regards all the human impulses as valid and worthwhile and it seeks the complete realization of them all. Com-

plete permanent satisfaction of the human impulses is the aim of the new religion. There is no question of higher and lower impulses. None are mean and unclean. All are good and sacred. The new religion proclaims the democracy of the human impulses. Conflicts in the impulsive life are abnormalities due to the misunderstanding and misuse of the impulses. The well balanced, fully developed, and intelligently controlled impulsive life is the full life. Of all the needs of the race the greatest are for freedom from repression and oppression, and for committal to the fullest possible realization of life on the widest possible human plane.

The new religion is bound up with the full life. It is intimately concerned with all social instrumentalities; with education and politics, with science and art, with industries and homes. It seeks not only to interpret these but to guide them. It aims to see the social life in its fullness and to direct all social instruments and powers to the ends of human life, and to create new instruments and powers of life. The new religion regards the whole sweep of life—the sex life, the political life, the economic life—as within its province. It regards the whole world order as a religious order. The whole of life goes up or down together and none of it is foreign to religion.

Consecration to science is religious consecration, works of art are religious works, governmental achievements are religious achievements, social relationships are religious relationships, and moral victories are religious victories!

The new religion will use existing church organizations and machinery so far as they lend themselves to its purposes. It will reconstruct them where and when reconstruction is found necessary. And it will create new organizations and machinery as the needs demand. It will completely overhaul the forms of public religious service. It will make these forms re-enforce the forward-looking, creative tendencies of the participants and inhibit the backward-looking, imitative, dependent tendencies. The readings, hymns, prayers and benedictions will embody the contemporary values, interpret emerging goals, satisfy the intellect, and stir the social emotions. Where the symbols and imagery of the old rituals re-enforce credulity and dependence the symbols and imagery of the new ritual will re-enforce courage and imagination. The new ritual will not be less lyrical than the old but it will contribute more to the unification of experience. It will not be less reverent but

more inspirational. It will embody in its content not a world of caprice but a world of order. It will synthesize life and give dynamic and purpose to the whole of life. It will weave into the fibres of spiritual devotion all that is native to life.

In its wider significance, understood as loyalty to life and re-enforced with modern imagery, religion shall become man's supreme concern!