

# RELIGION IN LIFE

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*An address delivered under the auspices of the Men's Club, Knox Memorial Church, Manila, September 30, 1962*

Gentlemen and Fellow Christians:

I accepted your invitation on the assumption that you are believers of Christ and Christianity.

Let me state at the outset that religion is essential and necessary in the life of the individual, in the life of the nation, in the life of mankind.

Humanity has need of education and religion. What is the central thought in both? The answer is: Life, the good life. If we are interested in education and religion, and we must be, we must see that they function in our lives and in the lives of our fellowmen.

As you know I have long served in the field of education. Recently I was chosen President of the Educational Center of Asia which my co-workers and I hope to convert into the University of Asia. It is my purpose to serve the cause of education to the end of my earthly existence. My philosophy of education is outlined in several books the latest volume being one with the title *Life-Centered Education*. In the Preface this paragraph appears: "The main thesis is that life

is central and it is the business of education to enrich and elevate life — life of the individual in its integrity, life of society as a whole. The contention is that what is important to life is what chiefly concerns education and conversely whatever does not touch or affect life is of little or no consequence to education."

If the good Lord will give me more years and strength I hope to write a companion volume to be entitled *Life-Centered Religion*. In religion as in education life is central. We who are Christians believe in life everlasting. It must be axiomatic to all thinking persons that religion is a way of life; that religion must take effect in conduct; that religion to be of real value is life itself; that its goal is the good life now and hereafter.

There is a group of people in the world known as Masons. They form a nucleus of leaders in every civilized country who preach and live the eternal doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man irrespective of race, nationality, or creed. They exemplify the good life, temporal and eternal. Masonry is not an organized religion seeking to proselyte or to fight any church, but it is in a very true sense spiritual or, if you please, religious.

The founder of the Christian re-

ligion was sent to our planet to save man and mankind. The mission of Christ was to establish a faith rooted in salvation and resurrection. These are among the prime essentials of the Christian religion. Sermons and Sunday School classes and gatherings in the Christian churches should center upon the simple message that *Christ can and does save.*

Christ Himself voiced the principle of a life-centered religion when He said, "I am come that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly." Life, abundant and rich, was and is the great objective of the teachings of Christ and His disciples. By disciples I mean not only those close to Him when He was on earth but all who believe in salvation and in life everlasting.

Religion has for its mission the conversion of the bad and indifferent life into a life that is good and active. It seeks to make a good man a better man. Perfection is the guiding principle, perfection is the goal. A high compliment was paid by Jesus to man in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) With God as our guide we may approach, even attain, perfection.

The good life is not the exclusive prerogative or patrimony of any man or group of men. It is a boon to all who zealously will to achieve the good life. It is not reserved for people of any particular epoch. In the Old Testament

days the Lord showed man what is good and what he must do to attain it. We have this in Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The good life and the salvation of souls have not been vouchsafed to people of a particular faith -- not to people who embraced the Christian religion only. It is not logical nor reasonable to think or to believe that none before the coming of Christ to this earth was saved. Does it make sense to consider all who do not belong to a particular church have been denied the good life and the boon of salvation from the beginning of time to this good hour? Did not Jesus give to one of those sinners being crucified with him on Mount Calvary who had faith that Jesus "hath done nothing amiss" this assurance of salvation: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"? (Luke 23:43)

It does not comport with sound reason for any group of Christians to believe that only they are eligible to be saved to the exclusion of all others even other fellow Christians. I do not share the belief that salvation is reserved exclusively for a specified body of church communicants. Under a just God and an understanding Savior there must be salvation or at least hope of salvation and heavenly life for men and women who have faith and love, children of Our Father in heaven

who are good and Godly, whose lives are serviceable and holy.

Religion which teaches the good life and seeks saved lives is not limited by creedal, geographical, or racial boundaries. It is universal. It is also multicolored. As the Creator in His infinite wisdom created men of varied colors. He must have intended the good life and the salvation, which both morality and religion hold forth, for His human creatures regardless of place of birth or pigmentation. Christianity, as one of the great religions, fosters not only the good but the best in a human being.

Religion and morality have been held precious and priceless by prophets and seers, thinkers and philosophers, bards and writers, artists and artisans, savants and the unlettered, — by all men of noble impulses from time immemorial. They are indeed eternal verities. People and peoples have exalted and will ever exalt what is moral and spiritual because morality and religion inspire lives to be purposeful. They cultivate the human and the divine in life and in living.

Moses left the legacy of the Ten Commandments.

Buddha prescribed what have been styled as "The Right Rules of Life" and "Five Commands of Uprightness."

Confucius taught a great principle when he said, "Do not do unto others what you do not wish others do unto you."

Jesus gave the positive Golden Rule, "Do unto others what you wish others do unto you."

Deuteronomy records what has been deemed "Israel's testament of faith in which the redemptive love of God and the whole duty of man in God's service is nobly and convincingly proclaimed." The words ascribed to Moses need not be confined to the Israelites. They hold meaning for other peoples of other times and climes. Said Moses: "Hear, O Israel: *The Lord Our God, the Lord is One.* And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and shalt teach them diligently unto thy children . . ."

The present world it seems, has come upon evil times. Many peoples, our people included, have not taken this divine message seriously to heart. Our generation has failed to love the Lord Our God in the spirit of the heavenly command. And parents are not teaching God's words diligently to their children.

The essence of God's message has been transmitted from place to place and from generation to generation. In the course of the years it reached these shores and found lodgment in the hearts and minds and consciences of at least some of our people. It is highly significant that the greatest of our race, Jose Rizal, paid heed to the divine mandate and believed in God and lived the religion of his choice. Other Filipino leaders, Mabini, Jacinto, Bonifacio and others likewise exemplified the faith and in the deca-

logues and ethical codes which they fashioned for life's guidance they avowed love of God.

In our country there are evidences of moral decadence. In the olden days the bamboo ladder of the ordinary house in town or barrio symbolized the honesty of our people. When the ladder which was attached to the house by a rope was tilted, all passers by respected it. Nobody dared enter the dwelling place though all the occupants were away. Now, houses with locks and iron bars are invaded and much of their contents are carted away. And the moral blight is general. The metropolitan papers display in bold head lines cases of robbery in plain daylight; pedestrians held up on the city streets; churches and cemeteries desecrated; malversation of funds, falsification of public documents, padding of payrolls and expense accounts, influence peddling, plain graft and corruption. Cheating in the classrooms and in bar or civil service examinations, undergrading and upgrading of the prices of commodities bought and sold, pilferages in the most unexpected quarters, and other forms of perversion swell the proofs of the prevalence of vice and sin and crime.

These are a challenge to moral leaders and religious institutions, and civic organizations. Churches have to fight and church leaders and members must be active and militant. One wonders whether we have become soft and we are too ready to compromise or be callous and indifferent; whether it is in the direction of right to be silent on the fear of God and the danger

of eternal damnation. It is admitted that appeal to man's better nature is commendable, that the emphasis on righteousness and virtue is correct, that it is good philosophy to teach a person to do what is right not because of fear of punishment or expectation of reward but simply because it is right. True reward is inherent in a good deed. The good and righteous way of life here and now is the means to bring about a new heaven and a new earth.

The times verily call for reform. Our society calls for crusades and crusaders for morality and religion. The Philippines demands enlightened religionists. Church leaders and ordinary members have to make their religion vital and living by habitual reading and studying and thinking.

What shall we read? Of course, read religious books of your choice. But one book is indispensable — the Bible.

The Bible is matchless as a source of inspiration. It is a multipurpose book. It is rich as history, biography, literature. It contains beautiful prose and inspiring poetry. It teaches truth and beauty. It is replete with philosophy and therefore it enriches, ennobles, and elevates life.

Church men such as you can do much to diffuse the Bible. One of the great achievements of our generation is the translation of the Bible and its popularization. Many homes unfortunately are without books. Let us begin with the Bible. In the United States there is a group of good and Godly men who

give their time and substance to see that every hotel room is furnished with a copy of the Bible. Such men are real ministers and evangelists. What a blessed thing it would be if the Bible goes to the hut of the peasant and to the palatial home of the rich and the intellectual!

The truths of the Bible and the riches of a life-centered religion can serve to awaken a desire for a greater and better Philippines, yes a greater and better world. Let us see to it that as we grow in number we also rise in stature and deepen in our devotion to the quest of the good life and salvation.



#### MY ANSWERED PRAYER

I asked for strength that I might achieve;  
I was made weak that I might obey.  
I asked for health that I might do greater things;  
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches that I might be happy;  
I was given poverty that I might be wise.  
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;  
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;  
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.  
I received nothing I asked for — all that I hoped for.  
My prayer is answered.  
I am blessed.

—Anonymous

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