

---

# *Perspectives on Religion*

**R**eligion is the medium to bring mankind back to God. But there is more to it. Religion also brings the heart of God to people and reconnects God with man, for as we come closer to God, we naturally feel His heart.

Although some people may think the words "religion" and "suffering" are almost synonyms, I do not believe they are. Those who advocate such an ideal are often the ones disillusioned with crusades and religious wars. They are the ones who are upset that so many denominations still exist, and they dislike the extremes in the conflicting religious viewpoints. But what mankind fails to recognize is that religion is not the end-all. It is only a vehicle.

Religion brings the spiritual self to the forefront and emphasizes denial of the physical self. The purpose of religion is to subjugate the physical body and place it in its original position of object to the spirit.

Practice of religion is not something that one should "do" on the side. I feel that if a person is not religious and refuses to live by a set of spiritual principles, he is little more than a hunk of flesh. Yet satisfying the fleshly and physical concerns is what he regards as "life." Such a person lives almost like an animal here on earth. When he dies physically, the body that was "him" is placed six feet underground. But if he has not accumulated any spiritual values, what part of him actually goes where? Bones and flesh decompose and once again become part of the earth, but if he did not nurture his spirit during his physical lifetime, it most likely would be quite immature and underdeveloped at the time of his death and could not go to a very high realm in spirit world. Belief in God changes that; when a person lives his faith, he nourishes his spirit at the same time. No matter what kind-of life a person led while on earth, his spirit lives on. But whether or not he adhered to certain spiritual laws will make a difference. The level of his spiritual growth while he lived on earth will be a factor in determining where he will live in the spirit world.

**W**e should understand that the only true value can be found in God. Religion exists to help us uncover it. Religion exists to bring us to God, and is the vehicle to assist us in becoming one with Him. Once we achieve that oneness with God, we will have no other dreams or hopes other than living for and with God, and building His Kingdom here on earth. That would be our crowning achievement. Religion would then no longer be necessary.

Mankind needs to recognize that the highest dream any of us can have is to live eternally in the Heavenly Kingdom with God. In this world so liberally saturated with suspicion and doubt, such a credo may sound a bit abstract, but nevertheless it is very real. The passion we feel for our religious doctrine can sharpen our vision, nurture our belief that it can be done, and incite us to aspire to do it.

The restoration of the world could have been fulfilled at Jesus' time. If that would have happened, the wars and revolutions of the past and the sufferings of these last two thousand years would not have been necessary. The Kingdom of Heaven could have been erected on earth during that age, and the religious schisms would never have occurred.

Jesus was not accepted and therefore could not fulfill everything he was meant to accomplish. The effect of these repercussions was great, the resultant suffering by people throughout the world and the estrangement of cultures and peoples, tragic. Now the Messiah has come with the tremendous task of reuniting everyone, enabling all mankind to see one God and one Christ. He must also assure all people that their religion—whether it is Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, or any other—has a part in preparing its followers to be led to the one God. The same God created us all. Even though we have been brought up in different cultural spheres and concerned ourselves with different segments of human life, eventually history will come to a culmination point and God will totally reveal Himself to all of us. Everyone is a brother or sister to everyone else—the Arabs, the Jews, the Germans, and the British are part of the same family of man as the Africans, the Asians, and the Eskimos. All former enemies will live together sometime. Truly this is a beautiful dream! But it is *not just* a dream, God has never had anything less in mind. He originally created one set of parents, never envisioning so many divisions between races, families, and nations. He wanted one world-wide family, and He has not changed His mind since He designed the world. He still desires that we all live according to His will and bask in the radiance of His love.

Unificationists should respect every religion. When we don't, we must realize that our personal views are then not in accordance with the stand of the Unification movement. Throughout the ages God has been working to elevate man's consciousness through the many religions and philosophies.

To come to the point where we are today, millions and millions of peo-

ple have suffered and died. Many brilliant people have worked hard, always researching, always developing new discoveries. So many people of all ages have gone down on their knees and prayed to God for salvation. And now the Messiah has come to bring the absolute truth and absolute salvation for everyone.

Yet as people hear the Principle today they often sanctimoniously question and even ridicule our faith. How must God feel? What must their ancestors think? They are the last link in the chain composed of many generations. We represent the same. Many, many of our ancestors paid a price even with their lives to enable their descendants—us—to be connected to the Messiah. But when those people reject the truth brought by the living Christ, their ancestors are forced to wait until later to be resurrected.

Many people have suffered for us. In fact, millions of people have suffered so that we could participate in God's providence at this time. What a great responsibility each of us has. We must be careful not to talk in a condescending way about the people of the past, either our own ancestors or the great figures of history. According to today's standards they may have been primitive or ignorant, but in their hearts they also searched to discover that higher being we call "God." To do so, they suffered and paid indemnity. This has gone on for thousands and thousands of years. And yet today, we do so little. We many times ignore their sacrifice, taking it for granted that God chose us, and yet we continue to rebel. Are we saying that we don't want to do God's will? Can we face God and still declare that we want to give up? The world has rotated and turned many times throughout its history. And our many ancestors worked to bring us here. One day thousands of them will stand in front of us in spirit world. Since we will be responsible for them, we must work to purify ourselves. And we must work for the unification of religions, so all humanity can one day recognize that we have in common, the one Father in Heaven.

Generally, the people who endorse a certain faith accept the premise that God, as the Creator of the universe, is their original Parent. Based upon that assertion, they then begin their personal quest to resemble Him. They hope that one day they will exhibit the same kind of characteristics He manifests. Yet countless people think that religion or faith in God is not a necessary part of life. They create a world without God and then proclaim that He is dead. The world is far too full of hatred, and much too devoid of God's love. Everyone does his or her best to survive, but the Heavenly Kingdom which God wanted to create from the beginning is still not established. How can God reform this world to be the place where He can live?

Religion is the starting point. Eventually everyone has to embrace religion; religion teaches a person how to conquer physical desires and focus on how to develop spiritual values and find a way back to God. Through the practice of religious faith, people can eventually climb out of their perdition.

The term "religious life" may conjure up images of donning sackcloth and ashes or walking through the streets wearing sandals and begging for alms, but that is not necessary at this time. I feel strongly that to live a spiritual life entails recognizing and performing our human responsibility to one another. We would then grow in self-confidence, spiritual power, authority, and stature in the eyes of God as well as in the eyes of others. Living a life of faith in this age does not necessarily require the same external trappings as it may have in St. Francis' day. The idea of sacrifice may not be too appealing or agreeable to this technological and sophisticated society, yet the concept of sacrifice and service persists throughout the Bible and other holy books. In the minds of many people though this is a different time and a different age. And in this era of computers, videos, and travel into space, such virtues of the heart may no longer be considered significant. Quite the opposite, people who embrace such ideas may be ridiculed and regarded as odd or strange.

Some people feel they can no longer endure the idea of religious crusades and tearful conversion experiences, and that is when they discard the idea of faith altogether. However, religion is merely the means to show us a clearer picture of God. The greatest shield and protection, and the greatest security in life is the love of God. We have but to discover and then connect with it.

Many people feel religious life requires little more than going to church once a week. Compromising the principles they learn from their religion, they continue to live by Satan's rules and involve themselves in the ways of the world instead of the ways of God. To me, faith entails an internal change and is not dictated solely by external rituals and customs. I feel religion or faith should definitely become a way of life. Throughout history, God and humanity have had to trudge a road of misery. It is time we looked at the signposts and discovered for ourselves how many more miles we must travel before we reach God, and whether or not we are even on the right road in our journey to mirror Him.

Many religions use candles, pictures, or statues. Some use substances such as water or salt to purify things or people. Certain faiths use the practice of bowing while others use altars, prayer shawls, or beads; countless external rituals and ceremonies are practiced in most faiths. Although they are not of paramount importance in helping one's spiritual growth, they

often afford the user a certain feeling of reverence. They are vehicles to help us discipline ourselves.

However, it is the internal and invisible traditions which are of greatest significance. Those exemplified by Buddha, Mohammed, Jesus, Father, and other religious leaders seem to be similar in nature: sacrifice, service, love, repentance, forgiveness, perseverance, and willpower could be considered only a partial listing.

Those men were natural people, people of high moral caliber. They demonstrated honesty, righteousness, integrity, and lived exemplary lives. They threaded their lives with prayer, desiring constant communication with God. They shed sincere tears, and their humility before God was extraordinarily pure. Observing their relationships to God, one can easily perceive that those men never tried to hide even their inadequacies from their Heavenly Parent. They were alive with religious fervor and tried to kindle the hearts of many others. To me, that is true belief, and a true act of faith.

When I pioneered the Unification movement in Austria, one member invited several Czechoslovakian men to listen to our theology. I began to talk to them and naturally used the word, "God." Each of them referred to his dictionary. They all found the word at about the same moment and then started to laugh hysterically. Perhaps they thought they had been invited to some sort of nightclub, but to their surprise they were confronted with ideas about God and faith. To them, religion was something that belonged to the medieval ages. They immediately got up and walked out. I can never forget them or their reaction. Unfortunately, to many of this generation the word "God" as well as the ideas of religion, perfection, and the goal of becoming a person of deity, are often considered only myths.