

THE CHURCH OF
"PSYCHIANA"

(THE TEACHING WHICH IS BRINGING NEW LIFE TO A SPIRITUALLY DEAD WORLD)

ADVANCED TEACHING
NUMBER TWO

by
DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON



"PSYCHIANA"



LESSON NO. 17

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THIRD ADVANCED TEACHING

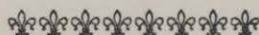
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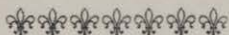
BY

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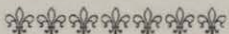


The other day, Mr. George H. Cless, Jr., Executive Secretary of the Glens Falls Chamber of Commerce, sent me a mimeographed copy of an address presented by him to the Southern Adirondack Ministerial Fellowship on Monday, February 15, 1937. So impressed was I with the logic of this address that I wired Mr. Cless asking his permission to use it either in my magazine or in some of my Lessons. Mr. Cless very kindly consented to allow me to do this, so I am going to devote Lessons 17 and 18 to Mr. Cless' remarkable address. It follows in full:



WHERE IS THE CHURCH GOING?

(Have the Church and Religion Made Good on their Claims?)



In the acceptance of this assignment to discuss before you the question of the status and function of the church and its concomitant, the role of religion in our present day society, I fully realize that it is perhaps a bit more presumptuous and foolhardy than courageous for me, a mere layman rated as something of a severe critic of the ecclesiastical system with its doctrines

and rituals, to talk to you about something with which you are undoubtedly more familiar than I.

Yet it sometimes happens that those outside of a particular profession can get a better perspective than those in. It is quite likely that you could tell me many things about my job which I have missed or which I don't know. By the same token, perhaps I am justified in talking to you about the institution you represent and man's relation to it or its relation to man.

At any rate, however violent the differences of thought may be between us, I want you to understand that I stand before you in a very humble spirit and that what I have to say is purely impersonal and objective. My relations with those of you whom I know have always been most cordial and happy and I want them to continue so in spite of the differences which exist in some of our respective points of view.

In a sense I am speaking for only one person --- myself. Anyone would be wholly justified in saying that no one is particularly interested in George Cless' opinions. Yet I am convinced that I am not speaking alone for George Cless but rather voicing the unspoken thoughts of probably uncounted millions. I know some of them who sit regularly in your pews and who will endorse my position completely. That is the only thing which lends significance to and justifies the expression of these convictions, none of which have been hastily arrived at but which have been forged in the hot fires of experience, observation and study over a long period of time.

One of the wars from which there is no discharge is the conflict between the old and the new. This conflict seems to be a recognized fact in all life. The only unchangeable thing in life is change itself. New ideals are continually clashing with old established customs. New scientific discoveries explode formerly accepted scientific facts and explode a good many other things, too. New ideas are opposed by old precedents. In every case the new throws out a challenge which sooner or later must be definitely accepted or rejected.

Socially and economically speaking, we are living in a different world than we did in 1917 since which time we have witnessed more terrific upheavals than ever before recorded in history for a comparable period, culminating in the tragic and disastrous events and conditions of the past six or seven years.

There are those who believe that we in America are passing through a period of transition from an old economic era to a new economic era, that we are leaving behind the era of our national expansion and development and entering the era of our national economic maintenance which will be the era of our

future national existence. It is perhaps true, as one leading business journal stated a few years ago, that we have left behind "a wilderness of worn-out ideas, attitudes, methods, ideals." Or, as Henry I. Harriman, at that time President of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, said, that during this present general period "the United States crossed the meridian line from a nation which has been governed by a laissez faire philosophy to one which, by force of circumstance, was compelled to adopt the philosophy of a planned national economy."

Or, to put it still another way, Hugh S. Johnson, that very colorful keeper of the now busted Blue Buzzard, spoke a very pertinent truth when he said, "Any human economic and political system has failed when people can no longer live under it by their own efforts."

And you and I know that for a good many years a large proportion of our people have not been able to so live. You know that there are those who say that capitalism has failed. Perhaps it has. I don't know. But I do know that the past few years have shown up some very serious flaws in that system and also know that any attempt to change that system will be met by opposition as powerful as ever met any proposed change of any kind.

The repercussions from these terrific upheavals and tremendous changes that have been taking place in our whole social, economic and political structure have been felt in the religious system of the world. Our religious leaders have been faced with baffling problems comparable to those faced by any man in the economic sphere. Change is knocking at their doors!

For a number of years I have followed with care and interest the summaries of the Sunday sermons as reported in the New York papers on Monday morning. Their tone has long been one of almost dire despair. There is a wailing and gnashing of teeth over the relative decline in church membership and the general indifference of the public toward the work of our religious institutions. Many of these ministers are preaching vigorous sermons in condemnation of this indifference, struggling to find panaceas for what they feel to be a most lamentable situation and making frantic and fantastic appeals to the people to come back to the church and God. Dr. Flemming's suggesting of a moratorium on sermons probably represents the ultimate in concessions to an indifferent public.

Why is this? What is wrong? Is the trouble with the sacred ecclesiastical system and its multitude of divinely inspired creeds, doctrines and dogmas or is the trouble with the people who apparently are more and more refusing to recognize ecclesiastical authority and in many cases turning away completely and finally from the church? Where does the trouble lie? Who or what is responsible for the situation?

Of course I could be just as dogmatic and blunt as those who say that the capitalistic system is on its death bed (and it may be) and that we should herald in a socialistic form of society and say that the whole ecclesiastical system is on its death bed and is on its way out. Rather, however, let us analyze the situation. I will try to do it as unemotionally and fairly as lies within my power.

During the past twenty years of this terrific world-wide upheaval which I mentioned a while ago, I have had occasion to do a good deal of traveling, wandering and, incidentally, some fighting, over a goodly share of the world's surface. I have been thrown in contact personally and by correspondence with a great many different people in different walks of life in various parts of the world. I read a great deal and as I have tried to absorb and digest all the things that I have seen, heard and read, there is one feature which to me stands out above all others --- a revolutionary change is going on in the collective mind of mankind.

Man's whole philosophy of life is changing. His whole outlook on the world's institutions, secular and religious, is changing. He is no longer content to accept as sacred or as the final and ultimate truth whatever doctrine is handed down to him. He has found that many of the things which he has been told in the past are not true. He has learned that many of the doctrines, be they social, economic, political or religious, which he has accepted in the past without questioning simply do not check with the facts of life as he sees them about him.

While I do not always condone the forms which these various world-wide changes have taken, I feel very sympathetic toward the spirit which is motivating the changes because I, too, have learned that the realities of life do not square with much of what we have been told in the past.

May I be pardoned here for injecting a bit of personal history and something of a personal confession. I was brought up in what is commonly referred to as a Godly home. I was reared in a sincerely orthodox spiritual atmosphere. My father and grandfather have been devout elders in the Presbyterian Church. For as far back as I can remember, I have always been active in one or more phases of church work and for many years I have served in that class commonly known as the pillars of the church. I am conservative in saying that I have probably read as much religious literature as any other layman and undoubtedly a vast deal more than most of them. I have even written and had published many articles in a number of different religious magazines.

Today I must say that I am obliged to retract much that I said long years ago and reject much that I was told to believe.

If I have any regrets over my past, the major one undoubtedly is that I spent so many years of my life to date in an attitude of blind, unquestioning acceptance of whatever was served to me and not enough years in evaluating those doctrines of all kinds which were placed in my daily diet.

Along came the World War. Oh, yes, I know that the immediate reaction to that is "old stuff." The World War is the excuse on which everyone hangs the responsibility for doing all those things that they shouldn't do. But let's see. Perhaps I can give it a bit of a new interpretation. Of course, I have seen man kill man with the blessing of the church on his head. I have seen first hand some of the realities of life, some of them perhaps pleasant and many of them anything but pleasant.

But to make a long story short and to sum this all up, I learned through the most ruthless teacher in the world - experience - that on no point would these realities square with the theories and principles that had been taught. As I look back on those days and the intervening years, it is very easy to see how these discrepancies have widened and I cannot help but feel that they are growing wider and wider today.

At that time a seed of vast and far-reaching change was planted in my mind. I will admit that I was not actively conscious of it at the moment. Only over a long period of years has it been possible for that seed to burst, send down its roots and send up its branches so as to enable me to become fully and wholly conscious of just what that seed was. At any rate, with growing intensity and reality, I have become aware of a new philosophical attitude, the origin of which has nowhere been more dramatically and effectively explained than by Hervey Allen in his book, "Toward the Flame:"

"Men who have faced death often and habitually can never again have the same attitude towards life. It is hard to be enthusiastic about little things again. The fact that everybody is soon going to die is a little more patent than before. One sees behind the scenes, the flowers and the grave blinds, the opiate of words read from the Good Book, and the prayers. For there is Death, quiet calm, invincible and there is no escape.

"It is my honest opinion, a very humble one, that the sight of battlefields must always be a great blow to the lingering belief in personal immortality

"There is no man who is so totally absorbed by the present as the soldier. It claims all his attention and he lives from moment to moment in times of danger with an animal keenness that absorbs him utterly. This is a happy and a saving thing. With time to brood, conditions would often seem intoler-

able. To the soldier NOW is everything. It is in the piping times of peace and leisure that man has had the time to afford himself the luxury of an immortal soul. When the present world is not engrossing enough, we begin to ponder on another."

Yes, to the soldier, NOW is everything. He thinks not of the tomorrow because there may be no tomorrow. His concern is today with its dirt, mud, filth, lice, shot, shell, hunger and fatigue. How can he cope successfully with these things? Nothing else counts. Nothing else is of any importance. Let us survive today to the best of our ability and let the morrow take care of itself.

In this manner, I think I have boiled the question down in a large measure to the relative importance of creating a healthy, happy, sane, normal, secure life for mankind in this realistic world here and now or being saved through the operation of the sacred machinery of an ecclesiastical system for some questionable residence in beautiful mansions in the hereafter. And I am very definitely prejudiced in favor of the former.

That idea of the importance of the present has lingered on, grown, expanded and blossomed into full bloom. The condition and situation we find ourselves in today still gives us a fair comparison with the situation of years ago when a bullet or a shell fragment was apt at any moment to put an end to our earthly career.

The universe in which we live is cruel. The forces of nature or "Acts of God," as they are sometimes called by poor, misguided souls strike without any consideration of what will happen or to whom. When rivers overflow their banks, sweeping away human lives and property, as we have witnessed within recent weeks, when tornadoes, storms and earthquakes wreak their havoc or when volcanoes throw forth their fire and molten metal burying whole cities, they ask no one's permission. They don't differentiate between the godly and ungodly, the good and the bad, the just or the unjust, the rich or poor, the saint or bum. These forces are cruel and, incidentally, wholly out of step with the ecclesiastical portrayal of a loving father who cares and protects.

Among the animals of the forest and the fish of the sea the stronger devour the weaker. In the forest there goes on an unseen but terrific struggle in which the stronger forms of vegetation reach up to the light for life, shadowing to its death the vegetation beneath.

And man is a beast of prey (not p-r-a-y) almost as cruel and ruthless as the animals of the forest or jungle, though he does act with more finesse. The economic history of our modern times alone furnishes a swiftly moving tale

of the daring and ruthless exploitation of the weak by the strong.

This is the universe in which man lives. This is the universe in which man is competing with man in a struggle for life, security and such happiness as he may gather in the pursuit.

Frankly, I am not concerned any more with what will happen to my soul, whatever it may be, in the future. It will have to take care of itself and work out its own salvation in whatever environment it may find itself, just as you and I have to do here. I am not interested in any mansions in heaven. I am interested in the comfortable home for myself and family and the millions of other families on this earth here and now. I am not interested in flying to the breast of Jesus and I have no desire to be washed in the blood of the lamb, nor am I concerned with any other sacred doctrines just because they are incorporated in a book which we are told is divinely inspired.

A year or so ago a very important church gathering was held in a large nearby city and was addressed by a well-known scientist from a neighboring college. When he had concluded, he was asked this question from one in the audience: "Do you believe there is a heaven?" For a moment this educator and scientist hesitated and then made his reply in these words:

"As a scientist, I must admit that there is not one whit of evidence to be found anywhere in support of the contention that there is a heaven. As an elder in the Presbyterian Church, I hope there is one."

The investment in the institutions set up to spread this hope and to fix it in the minds and hearts of mankind runs into billions of dollars. The annual expense of maintaining these institutions runs into hundreds of millions of dollars. It seems to me that such a sum of money could be used to better advantage by making mankind happier while on earth rather than directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, inducing him to be content with his present lot by holding up the hope of reward in some fantastic heaven.

Hopes are fine. We all hope for this, that and the other thing but, after all, hoping for heaven is a very unsatisfactory substitute for shoes on my boy's feet, for food to nourish my family, for a home in which to live in decency and comfort and for fuel with which to heat that home in bitter weather.

Sordid, crass materialism!! Maybe it is. But I happen to be living in a fairly materialistic world and it seems to me that human problems are the only valid problems which confront us.

My intelligence refuses to accept any religion, be it Christianity

or any other, that tends to become a tool for social control and make man content with an unhappy, unsavory lot as the will of God and holds out before his nose a bunch of straw in the form of hopes of a future reward that cannot be proven, demonstrated and that no one knows anything about.

I don't say that that is the fundamental purpose of this very fundamental tenet of religion but it has certainly developed into the upshot of the whole thing. It was Karl Marx, or some other high personage of the Communistic faith, who referred to religion as the opiate of the people. It was Plato who espoused the cause of religion in order to keep under control and in their place as the will of God those men who would be eliminated in his proposed educational tests to find the best equipped leaders for his Utopian state.

It was Napoleon who said: "What is it that makes the poor man think it quite natural that there are fires in my palace while he is dying of cold? That I have ten coats in my wardrobe while he goes naked? That at each of my meals enough is served to feed his family for a week? It is simply religion, which tells him that in another life I shall be only his equal, and that he actually has more chance of being happy there than I. Yes, we must see to it that the floors of the churches are open to all, and that it does not cost the poor man much to have prayers said on his tomb."

Not so long ago I sat in the office of the head of a great business organization and heard him tell that the minister of a certain congregation had called upon him for a check to help in the work. He said he was glad to do this and added these exact words: "Keep 'em religious in order to keep 'em quiet."

Such testimony from such men in such varied fields of activity cannot be thrown out as totally irrelevant.

No, I am not interested in such a religion and the time will come when any religion or any church with any such foundation will surely crumble. Any doctrine which is an insult to intelligence and detrimental to the welfare and well-being of mankind cannot prevail forever.

On the other hand, I don't question for one moment the established fact that the Christian religion has brought a form and kind of comfort, peace and happiness to millions of people.

But it is done in a very strange way.

The philosophy of Christianity first breaks your leg and then provides you with a crutch.

Sin --- sacrifice --- salvation --- eternal life. There are the