

RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

Swami Kriyananda



In ancient times the Oracle of Delphi was regarded as the most sacred center of prophecy in the world. The legend is that when Christianity came, the oracle stopped speaking because a new dispensation had come. Throughout history we see this happening in different ages—that a new expression of religion replaces the old. I believe that in centuries to come, we will see that a whole new spirit has come into religion from this dispensation.



When the great Indian yogi Paramhansa Yogananda (author of the spiritual classic *Autobiography of a Yogi*) came to the West, he said that his mission was to revive original Christianity and original yoga, the original spiritual truths which have been taught by all great masters. He spoke of a new dispensation, meaning a new way of applying these truths, because human consciousness has changed. Many people today understand that merely the garb of a priest doesn't make a person holy, nor the garb of religion make it truly a vehicle for God.

The religion of the future is going to offer a much broader view of what it's really all about. In the past the thought was that religion could be expressed only in a specific way, and anybody who thought differently would be damned. The wild compulsion to get out and convert the heathen, when in fact they might know more than we, is something that is gradually passing.

This kind of broad-mindedness is something that people are beginning to appreciate increasingly. We still find fanatics everywhere, but there's a growing awareness that God is in everything and everyone. The kind of religion that we will have in the future will not be a religion that supplants or drives out other religions. It will allow all of them to flourish, and gradually in this process, it will begin to give a different emphasis to the whole thing.

What can that emphasis be? It can only be the emphasis of experience over dogma. Narrow-mindedness and bigotry are what keep dogma afloat. When you get rid of dogma and still have religion, you've got to have something to cling to—the experience of these truths. That's what religion has always been meant to be about. Gradually over time it has become a matter of the priests placing themselves between God and us in order to stay in business. The real purpose of religion, however, is to help us to find God within ourselves.

The religion of the future will be a product of the fusion of old religion with new science. It has looked for a long time as if science was a terrible threat to religion, but all it's been is a threat to the exclusive claims of religion. Religion hasn't tried to prove anything—all it's said has been that you must believe as they say or you'll be damned. It's a little uncomfortable to think you might be on the wrong side of the fence, and that you'll wake up in eternity to find that you've made the wrong choice.

Then science comes along and says, "We don't know anything about these spiritual things. We can't prove them, but there are other things we can prove." So science, with the things that it could prove—mass, weight, motion—has been able to expand its knowledge to infinity. The picture of the universe that science has given us is so incredibly vast, varied, and marvelous that it sets all the claims of religion in the shade. Many scientists even talk about subtle worlds behind this world, and of the possibility of other realms of consciousness.

But science alone can only take us so far. People begin to want something else—something that gives them joy, peace of mind, understanding, mental clarity. All of these things religion should be able to give us, because it's what religion is really all about. The religion of the future is going to emphasize this aspect. It won't banish all forms in favor of a new form. Rather, it will say use the forms if they help you, but use them to go within. Use them to commune inwardly with God and to raise your consciousness to superconsciousness.

The religion of the future will also see things more as energy. It won't work so much with rituals and outward forms, but will work rather with consciousness and the energy that consciousness can direct to accomplish its ends. We realize, for example, that in using this principle of energy, it isn't enough merely to pray—we must pray intensely, with great energy. We must put our entire beings into what we're doing in our religious practices. The emphasis will be not on the thing that we're doing, but on the energy that we bring to bear on what we're doing.

In the future we will find a more complete religion because of this concept of energy which is awakening in Dwapara Yuga, the age of energy in which we live. This concept is going to take us increasingly to an awareness of a total approach to religion. Because our bodies are composed of energy, the way to cure the body will be a part of our religion: to eat properly, to exercise regularly, to be closer to nature.

Man will live in much more harmony with himself on all levels, and with higher realities as well. A sense of reverence for

all life will also be a part of future religion. The old religion taught a rejection of the world, but we'll be moving towards an acceptance of it in a divine way. We'll begin to see each other as channels for divine qualities that we want to develop. I've always believed that the mark of a spiritually refined person is the ability to appreciate others, an ability to be grateful. That ability, then, is going to develop more, so that we will begin to see people as channels for God, and all nature a channel for divine energies. When we do that, and begin to live in harmony rather than conflict with nature, we will find that this planet begins to treat us, too, as friends.

Now, increasingly, the earth is beginning to rumble and to think that if we want to be its enemy, it will shake us off like fleas. We may be headed toward great natural calamities merely because we haven't yet understood how we can live in harmony with nature.

The religion of the future will be a religion of harmony, not of persecution, a religion of expanded awareness that includes higher and higher realities. It won't lock God up in a church, but will see Him in the trees. It will see the whole world as a church—and show us that wherever we go, we can worship Him.

This is what we must all try to do—bring God back to life in the world around us by our appreciation of it. Naturally, He will come where He's appreciated, come where He's called. Naturally, He will absent Himself where He is ignored. That is why this planet is going through such upheavals today. These upheavals will continue until man finally wakes up and realizes that this religion, which I say is the religion of the future, will be an all-embracing one, a religion, above all, of love and of joy.

☞ Talk by Swami Kriyananda, date unknown ☞