

Religion NOW

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HEAVEN and HOLOGRAM

As we approach the third millennium it appears a new world is struggling to be born. The present world is confused by change, with discolored concepts, prevailing misunderstandings, a chaos of changing mores and values.

The world is now a global village, yet we find it fragmenting into mutually hate-filled tribal enclaves. Does the gospel mean anything for a generation that must face problems of this magnitude?

As racial groups denounce each other, political groups threaten each other, social values conflict, does the gospel mean anything? Or is it a part of the chaos?

Not that most people don't have their hands full. Younger parents generally both work outside the home. There are children to feed and care for after work, dishes to wash, house to clean, cars to maintain, television to watch, yards to tend. You name it, people do it.

This is people from the outside. But each of us has an inner life, a secret world of our own. We think. We wonder. We ask what it all means - unless we've deliberately stifled the spiritual part of our lives, smothered it being busy, busy, busy.

It has been said that the person who is completely content is either very blessed or very blind. The discontent around us and with in us today may be a good thing.

Belief, those matters regarded as true, may be assumed as points of definiteness in life. And when we further describe them as "personal conviction" we show another feature

of it. It appears to be incommunicable, in the sense it cannot be conclusively demonstrated as true to the satisfaction of other people. We can persuade others to share it only by bringing them to stand where we stand.

The chain of inference may be broken, but the strength of belief appears not to be impaired by the break. It is as if we passed from one dimension to another, so that something which before was mysterious or opaque or even incredible becomes simple and clear and self-evident.

When this happens it lifts us above the rational and pedagogical to heights of human experience. Characteristic of the spiritual aspect of our nature is to wonder, which is the experience of not-knowing, the not-yet.

Religion is essentially an inner feeling that there is a God. Our spiritual selves cry out for love, justice and mercy. We seek a moral certainty.

(Heaven & Hologram, cont'd)

In the Old Testament drama of Job, one of the characters, Zophar the Naamathite, declares to Job: "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven - what can you do? Deeper than Sheol - what can you know? Its measure is larger than the earth, and broader than the sea." (Job 11:7f).

This belief is strongly contrasted to our modern scientific position which demands knowledge and verifiable facts. The scientist within us desires facts and certainty, while the spirit within us assumes understanding that seems real to us.

Do we need to choose between these?

Perhaps the truth does not lie with either extreme. The divine and holy in life can perplex us at times; at other times challenge us; and can condemn us when our moral intuition speaks to us reprovingly.

Science gives an accurate but restricted portion of reality. Thus my title, "Heaven and Hologram". The hologram, a creation of modern science, is an image produced (without lenses) on photographic film in such a way that under suitable illumination a three-dimensional representation of an object is seen. The depth in the scene makes its objects seem real. The hologram is a scientifically demonstrated, verifiable symbol of reality.

Heaven, on the other hand, in most of our minds, is representative of feelings of great pleasure, the absence of evil, paradise. It is something in the realm of faith, an assumption worth attempting to work toward.

Both terms are useful in understanding our everyday living and condition. Faith and reason, belief and knowledge, combine to contribute to our advancement to full growth.

Speak of heaven we think of God. The word "God" has no meaning in itself. It is a functional word that acquires its meaning from history and human experience. In mythical or ontological times it acquired its content from the way in which humans thought about their relation to the world and nature. In modern times the mythical or ontological content dissolved. In our post-modern time still newer concepts must be formed. The meaning of God is found, not in rational abstractions, but in living experience and life.

The realm of God cannot be rationally placed in a system, but can refer to that which is dependable and reliable, found and experienced in life, in one's own life, in the life of the world of which we are now a part. Our community which was once small and limited is now global. We are all part of one global village, and the complexities of the holy and moral realities of life are less obvious, but nevertheless real. Secularism holds sway today, but the realm of God does not need to be diminished by it.

We must seek the spiritual within the material, the divine within the temporal. Today's knowledge has given us a dangerous liberation, which, if utilized may lead us to great heights of development and maturity.

For instance, love, the greatest, most powerful force and motivation in life may be seen as the moving power of both personal and national life.

(Heaven, cont'd)

We place our trust in money, in stocks and bonds, in armed forces and weaponry, in political alignments and deals when the practice of love promises peace and rehabilitation.

Love will disallow millions to starve to death while others have food to waste. Love will disallow thousands to die of diseases we have the means to cure. Love will share resources proportionately so there are no poor.

This is "heaven" talk. Experiments here and there where we apply the law and practice of love appear as holograms, visions of heaven becoming real. Can we not use our "holograms" to bring back Eden?

I think we can. The realm of God is not something of the past, but is reality, working like leaven in our midst. It is foolish to be a non-believer. The realm of God is a summons to be a practicing believer. To disregard the realm of God is condemnable.

Thought: "The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ." St. Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:14).

Give me work to do;
Give me health;
Give me joy in simple things;
Give me an eye for beauty,
A tongue for truth,
A heart that loves,
A mind that reasons,
A sympathy that understands.
Give me neither malice nor envy,
But a true kindness
And a noble common sense.
At the close of each day
Give me a book,

And a friend with whom
I can be silent.

This Psalm Calls Us To Love

This psalm calls us to Love, and more singing even as it hovers, slowly and sweetly, like frankincense.

Some say the psalm is sustenance, like thick loaves.

Some say the psalm is virtuous like the clean, white Sabbath tablecloth. But see how the psalm flies over the wine dark sea, where far below the Greek youths bob in their boats, and imagine loves who have not been consecrated.

The psalm whisks over a body of water so turquoise that the men who sailed it developed the Philosophy of Beauty.

This psalm does not imagine it will have an ancient charm.

The psalm doesn't dream of Roman law.

The psalm rolls over sites that will one day be mosques and churches.

This psalm takes not the credit nor the blame.

This psalm weaves its way through the masonry, then disappears into the winding channels of the marketplace, before it can be interpreted.

This psalm emerges from behind the veil, launched as sound, encouraged by the fig-cut lips of our sleeping sister.

This psalm lands like a kiss of dried rock,

To be found by a child on the lips of discarded idols.

And, just after the Creation, beautiful animals, peacock and zebra, fresh with their new names, allowed the psalm to move through their not yet familiar mouths;

And it passed over the trilling tongue of the hummingbird in its ruminative

(Psalm of Love, cont'd)

flight.

This psalm made the armadillo dance its bad but unselfconscious dance.

This psalm performed the daily wedding of Earth and Sky, and performed only one divorce: of beast from burden.

Say Yes to the psalm, for it is a psalm.

The psalm like a glance will not change direction in the middle.

This psalm calls us to love.

(Written by Norman Robert Doidge, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, essayist and poet, Toronto).

DON'T EXPEL STUDENTS FOR BEING KIDS SCHOOLS TOLD

So-called "zero tolerance" policies to deal with school violence are fostering a "troubling" criminalization of petty childhood behaviour, says the director of a leading treatment centre for children at risk.

"Kids are being suspended for typical childhood behaviour," said Ken Greenberg, executive director of Earls court Child and Family Centre in Toronto.

"Instead of being kicked out and treated like criminals, they should be getting help," he said.

Greenberg noted that one child he knows received a week's suspension for jabbing another child with a pencil.

"The kids were just playing," he said.

The centre has just completed a survey of school-violence policies in 126 boards across the country and found that almost all boards had provisions to suspend or expel

students.

"Unfortunately there seems to be a greater emphasis on what to do after the violence than on how to prevent it," Greenberg said.

Just 18% of school boards surveyed had policies that focused on intervention and prevention of violence while 48% of boards emphasized punishment for misbehaviour.

Greenberg, whose centre treats children under age 12 who have been in contact with the police, said society's growing support for zero tolerance policies toward school violence will have dire consequences.

"The research shows that the earlier you can intervene, the better chance there is of having a mediating effect," he said. "School boards that simply want to get these kids out of their schools are taking a very short-sighted approach."

POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

Many people's personal and professional potential can be stunted by negative thought. If you want to be happy and successful, motivational experts say, you must think positive thoughts. Your dominant thoughts become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

We think an estimated 50,000 thoughts a day, and many are damaging to our self-esteem. Norman Vincent Peale declared that if you can manage your thoughts you can manage your life.

"If you think you can or if you think you cannot, in both instances you're right." - Henry Ford.

"Religion NOW" is published in limited edition by Rev. Ross E. Readhead, B.A., B.D., Cert. of Corrections, McMaster University, in the interest of furthering thinking and participation in religion.

Dialogue is invited and welcomed.