

# Religion, in Some Shape or Other

by J.C. Philpot

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*Religion is indispensable to civilized society, binding it together from within, and a national creed must be based on the Scriptures.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 14:34, Matthew 7:15, 2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 John 4:1

**Topics:** "True Religion", "Societal Breakdown"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot emphasizes the indispensable role of religion in maintaining civilized society, comparing it to the mortar that binds society together from within. He warns of the dangers of atheism and anarchy that can lead to societal breakdown, as seen in historical events like the French Revolution. Philpot distinguishes between true spiritual religion and the false religion that the world embraces, highlighting the necessity of a form of religion even if it is not the true faith in Christ.

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## Transcript

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Religion, in some shape or other, is indispensable to the very existence of civilized society. Crude, wandering tribes, like the Australian negro or the North American Red Indian, may exist without any public mode of worship or any outward acknowledgment of a Supreme Being, though even these poor outcasts have some dim notion of "The Great Spirit;" but man, in a state of society, can no more live without some recognized form of religion than he can exist without laws or government, property or marriage. Society has to be held together from within as well as from without. Law and government, the rights of property and the divine institution of marriage, as clamps and girders, bind together society from without; religion, as mortar, binds together society from within. When society is broken to pieces, it is either by atheism springing a mine from within, or by anarchy battering down the walls from without.

The first French Revolution gave fearful proof of this. It commenced in atheism and ended in anarchy, until, after rivers of blood had been shed, tyranny stepped in to chain up the tigers and hyaenas which were ravaging the land; and one of its first acts was to restore the worship of a Supreme Being. So Socialism, that Satanic plot against God and man, loudly proclaims its abhorrence of property, of marriage, and of religion--the three grand elements of civilized society, without which our fair country would be a wide scene of robbery, carnage, lust, and blasphemy.

But let us not be misunderstood. When we speak of religion in this wide, general sense, we mean by the term not that true religion which is the special fruit of the Spirit. There is a natural religion as well as a spiritual religion. Natural conscience is the seat of the former; a spiritual conscience the seat of the latter. One is of the flesh, the other of the Spirit; one for time, the other for eternity; one for the world, the other for the elect; one to animate and bind men together as component members of society, the other to animate and bind the children of God together as component members of the mystical body of Christ. True religion is what the world does not want, nor does true religion want the world. The two are as separate as Christ and Belial.

But some religion the world must have; and as it will not have and cannot have the true, it will and must have the false. True religion is spiritual and experimental, heavenly and divine, the gift and work of God, the birthright and privilege of the election of grace, the peculiar possession of the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. This the world has not, for it is God's enemy not his friend, walking in the broad way which leads to perdition, not in the narrow way which leads to eternal life.

But a religion without God is a nonentity; and since Christ has come into the world, and Christianity, as it is termed, is generally established, a religion without Christ becomes a contradiction. As, too, the Scriptures have been translated into different languages and are widely spread and much read, a national creed must to a certain extent embrace what is taught in the Scriptures, or men will instinctively see that the religion professed is not that which the word of God has revealed and brought to light.

But religion having thus become general cannot exist without an order of men to teach it and practice its ceremonies. Hence come clergy, forming a recognized priestly caste; and as these must, to avoid confusion, be governed, all large corporate bodies requiring a controlling power, thence come bishops and archbishops, ecclesiastical courts, archdeacons, and the whole apparatus of clerical government. The ceremonies and ordinances cannot be carried on without buildings set apart for the purpose; thence churches and cathedrals. As prayer is a part of all religious worship, and carnal men cannot, for lack of the Holy Spirit, pray spiritually, they must have forms of devotion made ready to their hand thence come prayer-books and liturgies. As there must be mutual points of agreement to hold men together, there must be written formulas of doctrine; thence come articles, creeds, and confessions of faith. And finally, not to prolong to weariness this part of our subject, as there are children to be instructed, and this cannot be safely left to oral teaching, for fear of ignorance in some and error in others, the very form of instruction must be drawn up in so many words; thence come catechisms.

People are puzzled sometimes to know why there is this and that thing in an established religion--why we have churches and clergy, tithes and prayer-books, Universities and catechisms, and the whole apparatus of an Establishment, from the Queen, the head, down to the sexton, the tail. They do not see that all these things have sprung, as it were, out of a moral necessity, and are based upon the very constitution of man; that this great and widespread tree of a national religion has its deep roots in the natural conscience; and that all these branches necessarily and naturally grow out of the broad and lofty stem.

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