

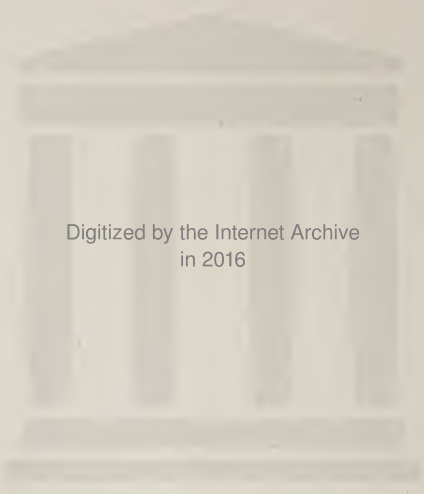
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RELIGION
is only for
WEAKLINGS

BY

REV. WILFRED G. HURLEY, C.S.P.



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QUESTIONS OF THE DAY

No. 4

Religion Is Only For Weaklings

By

REV. WILFRED G. HURLEY, C.S.P.

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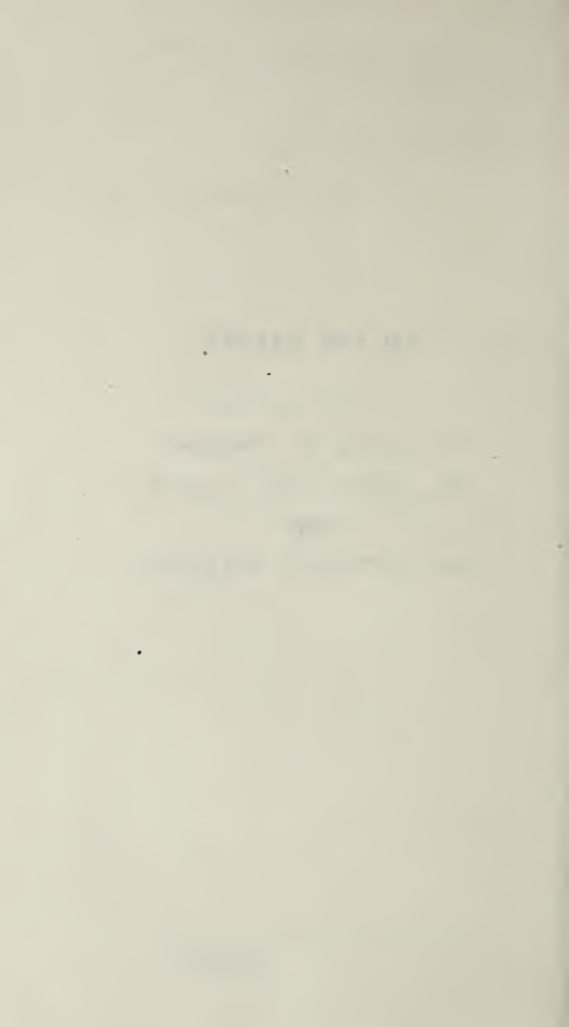
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TO THE READER

It is only just and
fitting that by "**Religion**"
the author has in mind
only
THE CATHOLIC RELIGION



Religion Is Only For Weaklings

“Religion is only for weaklings.”

Of all the flippant, thoughtless remarks, this one heads the list. It is rather catchy. It sounds superior. It implies condescension.

But unfortunately, it does not mean a thing.

Why?

Because everyone, if he is a human being at all, has had his weak moments. Even you!

Moments when you were below par. Moments when you did not quite make the grade. Moments when you have been caught off balance, and just then a heavy, crushing blow came smashing into your life.

You staggered back. Bewildered. Beaten. You did not know what to think. You even stopped thinking.

Where was your boasted strength? Where was your great reserve? Where was all your poise and power?

You realized then, whether you like it or not, you were only a weakling. To put it plainly, you were just a human being. For that moment, anyway.

And nobody knows it any better than you.

True it is, when the shock had somewhat abated, when time had done its healing work, your strength returned and your egotism was on top again.

And once more you put up a good front for the world to see. And since it was over, you tried to forget the whole thing. Perhaps, you succeeded.

But I doubt it!

If you were successful, you would not be so quick to speak of others as weaklings.

For when you flippantly say: "Religion is for weaklings," you know you are bluffing.

It irritates and irks you.

So you try to give the impression that you are above the rest of humanity. That you are a little better than the ordinary run of people. That you are of the strong and silent type. That there is nothing weak about you. You are the old rugged type. And just when that type was supposed to have died out.

Why put on this act?

Is it because you think other peo-

ple do not have these weak moments? Then you are certainly fooling yourself, and fooling yourself plenty.

MEET THE CHALLENGE

Every human being goes through such trying times. If he is human and has lived long enough. Life is a time of trial. Of testing. All human beings have to fight their battles. Inevitably some of these battles bring seeming defeat. Every man, now and then, at least, has been bowed down under struggle and stress.

There is a verse in *The Imitation* that sums all this up to perfection. It goes in this way: "Everyone must carry his cross." And the prouder you are, the heavier the cross that is given to you to carry.

You cannot get away from it either. For it is part of the Divine plan of God to make us worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Did not the author of the *Following of Christ* say: "As often as I get rid of one cross, another is given to me to carry."

And all learned and thinking men agree that this author knew men and knew life, and was one of the keenest psychologists that ever lived.

BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF

Time marches on. Nations rise and fall. People die and more people are born. But we are still the same, so-called-human race. The same psychological facts still have their bitter truths.

“Pride goeth before a fall.” And the proud continue, one by one, to become humble.

For God is trying to save man. Sometimes it seems almost in spite of himself. Just as He is trying to save you.

And if it is necessary for God to force a man to his knees by being seemingly harsh and cruel, He will do it. And He will keep on doing it, right to the brink of the grave. For in the very nature of things the Kingdom of Heaven is not for the proud.

The Kingdom of Heaven is only for the humble. Because it is only for the strong.

For strange as it seems, the real truth underlying the life of men is this. It is only the humble who are really strong. For it is only the humble who have that strength which comes through weakness. That is, they have the strength of God.

Your own words confess this. For only in the pride of life with only the strength of men, could you say, "Religion is for weaklings." A strength built on egotism, pride, false courage. Thus your strength is a false strength. Masquerading under a brave front. But nevertheless, a strength that is rotten to the core. A strength that will crumble into powder at the first assault of evil.

Why not be honest with yourself and admit it?

Only the strength of God is the strength that will stay with you. Ennoble you. Enrich your very being. Give you the strength of ten, because your heart is pure. Free you from pride. Give you a conquering confidence. It is the only strength that is real, true, and fine.

RELIGION MAKES MEN STRONG

And here is something that may startle you. It may even make you think.

You will find this strength only in religion!

To put it more plainly, that is one of the services religion renders to mankind. It gives strength to the weak.

So in a way your words are true.

Although not in the way you meant them.

Probably a truer way to sum it up is this: "Religion changes weaklings into strong, super-human men."

It makes men—immortals.

If you have any doubt about this, read history.

Not the history of the arrogant, blustering, cheap, cruel and crafty rulers and kings. By royal birth or murder or treachery they may have gained a certain place in history, acquired a certain amount of notoriety or dubious fame.

But for that matter, in the same way have their present-day successors, the "public enemies No. 1" of the past decade.

They were all of the same stamp. Craven and cowardly. And when their time was up they showed themselves yellow through and through. There is nothing strong and super-human for an armed bully to kill defenseless men, women and children.

But read of men who are real heroes. Heroes that count. Heroes loved, admired, and even their memory cherished. Heroes unflinching. Brave beyond belief. Men who defied man or devil.

Dying undefeated. Conquering even in death.

These are the real immortals.

It was they who were the inspiration of the discoverers and explorers of the New World. Their example which strengthened the pioneers in the heartbreaking attempts to establish themselves in America. It was these heroes, the memory of whom encouraged the first Americans in their fight against overwhelming odds and nerved them in their hours of seeming defeat.

The only real heroes. The only true immortals. The men and women of God.

TRULY IMMORTAL HEROES

The only heroes who really live in the memories of others. For the heroes of the world perish with their works. With the passing away of the empires and the civilization with which they were identified, their memories are completely obliterated. Thus, the great Pharoahs of Egypt.

But the heroes of religion live forever. Because they are of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom which shall have no end.

It is unfortunate in this regard that we have overlooked in recent generations the first of these great immortals of the Christian Era. The Apostles of Christ.

They were real men. For they faced a task which would have daunted even the most fearless.

Remember they had a very limited education. No cultural background or family tradition to give authority to their words. They followed the most humble occupations. They were of a race, conquered, abject and despised. They followed a Leader Who had humbly submitted to being put

to death. A most ignominious death, by crucifixion.

The task that lay before them was to bring a proud, richly cultured, sensuous, depraved and materialistic world to bow before this crucified Leader and acknowledge Him as the Son of God and God Himself.

The passing of the years has only served to stress the magnitude of their work. The situation in the world today, especially in Europe, would seem to emphasize how hopeless their task must have appeared.

But they did conquer!

Because their belief, faith, religion, call it what you will, made of them mighty supermen.

There was no place for weaklings among them.

First they conquered themselves. Then they went forth and conquered the world.

A ROCK OF FAITH

For instance, Simon, the son of Jona. He may have been like you in the beginning. Blustering. Sure of himself. Going to show his companions what a real man would do.

He would stand by Christ to the end.

But when the time came! What a different story. He cowardly denied Christ. When a servant girl questioned him, he asserted with a panic-stricken oath that he did not even know Christ.

But Simon had this in his favor. He was man enough to admit when he was wrong. And quickly began at the bottom to build up his character the right way.

And he did it, too. With the help and transformation of the Holy Ghost.

And then, he was no longer Simon. For Christ had changed his name to Peter or "Rock." And "Rock" he was going to prove himself to be. A rock of faith. A rock of courage. A rock of indomitable love.

From the little upper room where he had been hiding from fear of the Jews, he went to the busiest street corner in the city. There, throwing discretion to the winds, he preached to that mob who had just crucified Christ. Daring them! Defying them! Flinging into their very faces what

he thought of them and their evil deeds.

And this was not for the one occasion. Nor for the one day. But for twenty-five years he continued in the same spirit. Every day marking a new challenge. Every hour noting new deeds of daring. At the end, they must put him to death. But he would die as he had lived?

The world never beheld a more magnificent scene! They were going to crucify Peter, the Disciple, as Christ, his Master, had been crucified. They dragged him to the Coliseum before the tens of thousands of bloodthirsty beasts of humanity. Their shouting and clamoring for his death reached the high heavens. But he was now invincible in his courage and love. Into their frenzied, cruel faces he even dared to fling a last defiance.

He was not worthy to die as Christ had died. Crucify him as they wished, but crucify him with his head to the ground. That even by his death he might testify to the world that Jesus Christ was God.

His magnificent daring awed and

stupified even them, as they granted his request.

THE GREAT ST. PAUL

Or consider Saul, a bullying persecutor of the Christians.

If there was any man in history who ever had to do a complete about face, it was this man.

On one of his purging expeditions the hand of God struck him from his horse. God spoke to him in questioning reproach.

But Saul, like Simon, had within him the makings of a hero. The character of the man was shown by his first words: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?"

Saul was no longer Saul. From then on he began a new life. He became the great St. Paul.

Each day found him performing feats of incredible heroism. Smashing the difficulties in his way. Riding rough-shod over all obstacles. Read his own statement about the life he lived.

"Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes, save one.

“Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea.

“In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils of the sea, in perils from false brethren.

“In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

Remember St. Paul was not given to boastings. Seven years of solitude, prayer, and penance in the desert prevented that. He simply stated the facts. And the facts were that even in a world where cruelty, hardship and suffering were common-place, his courage, fortitude and strength stand out. Yet it was not his strength.

For Paul gave credit to Him to Whom credit was due. His strength was the strength of God.

It is so, too, with the other Apostles.

DARING ALL! CONQUERING ALL!

So also, with those first Christians. For three hundred years the soil of the Roman Empire ran red with their blood. Persecuted. Taken away from their homes and loved ones. Thrown to the wild beasts. Burned at the stake. Crucified. Subjected to every form of diabolical cruelty that man could devise. Hundreds, thousands, finally millions suffered death.

And you say, "Religion is for weaklings"?

Down through the ages the story is the same.

Attila, the ravaging hun, sweeps down over the plains with his Barbarian hordes.

Attila who boasts that where his horse trod grass would never grow again.

Attila who called himself "The Scourge."

Until, finally, he is stopped, confronted, and turned back.

By a gigantic army?

No!

By a single man!

By Leo I! The valiant successor of St. Peter as head of the Church.

Leo goes forth to meet him single-handed. Alone. His dauntless courage, his indomitable will prevails. Attila, crafty, shrewd, withdraws his forces. The strength of man is no match for the strength of God.

Read of Joan of Arc. Read of Ignatius, founder of the Jesuit Fathers. Dominic, founder of the Dominican order. Francis, the head of the great and valiant missionaries, explorers who proudly bear his name, Franciscans. Saints all and heroes all. Overcoming the world because through their religion they feared nothing. Daring all! Conquering all! With the Divine Strength.

THE MARTYR OF MOLOKAI

But you say, what about the present age. Then look across the sea to the lonely isle of Molokai. There are the vilest of all human creatures on earth, the lepers. Under a banyan tree a young priest is stretched on the ground. His face is buried in

his arms. The tears course down his cheeks. It is his first hour at Molo-kai. The first day of a long lifetime of service to these vile unfortunates.

A weakling?

He has dedicated his life to God in a thankless, merciless task. At the end, he himself will fall victim to this dread disease. Preaching to his congregation he will begin his sermon, "We lepers." A human being with super-human strength.

Was this the strength of a man? You know it was not.

The strength of man could never have prevailed.

It was super-human strength. The strength of God.

Peter, Paul, Leo, Joan, Ignatius and all those other countless saints of God. In them also shines this Divine strength and power.

The story of religion in the final analysis is the story of their lives. Today they are on the altars of our Church. They *are* religion.

So you think you are strong, while religion is for weaklings?

How would you have stood up

faced with the situations and events which they faced and conquered?

More to the point is the question, how will you stand up in the future? In the situations and events which will come into your life?

Only time can tell us this story.

You probably will never be called upon for such a display of heroism because you are probably very, very far from being cast in a heroic mold.

And God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.

However, you will be tried pretty much up to the limit of your powers. That is inevitable. For that is life. Life as it always has been. Life as it is today.

TAKE YOUR STAND

Nineteen hundred years ago Christ made that startling remark, "He that is not with Me is against Me." And never before in the history of the world were His words any more true than they are today.

In the past it was easily possible for a man to be somewhat on the side of righteousness, and yet, to a certain extent, condone and tolerate evil.

But that is impossible now. As far as you are concerned today, it simply cannot be.

Why?

Because never before in the history of the world has the line of demarcation been more clearly and definitely drawn between the good and the evil. Never before have the forces of God and the forces of evil been so definitely lined up in battle array. Today there is no neutrality for you. Even belligerent or non-belligerent neutrality. If there are such neutralities. Today you must take your stand. Either you are with Christ or against Him. One side or the other must have your allegiance and support. Either you are wholeheartedly supporting God and His forces of good. Or the forces of evil have you named as their ally. Because this is a battle for supremacy.

You know this by your own experience! Never before have the good been any better, and never before have the bad been any worse.

The proof of this statement. It is easy! Just look around you at the world as it is today.

VICE IS RAMPANT

Never before in the history of the world have heinous crimes against morality, decency and all that is basically right in human nature been so brazenly and flagrantly committed.

Crimes of depravity. Crimes against little children. "Murder syndicates" with their unbelievably cold-blooded killings. Wanton betrayal of public trust by graft, even in the highest offices. Crimes against sex. Open violations of the marriage vow. And remember such sins and crimes, formerly few and sporadic committed by depraved and moronic types, have now become universal.

Today, it would seem a deliberate attempt to increase their number is being coolly and calculatingly planned and executed by men of diabolical intelligence and reason.

Sexual exhibitionism on the stage and screen. Although the producers know only too well this filth is to be brought before the eyes of impressionable youth. Do not the producers know? They certainly do! Do they care what untold harm may follow? They certainly do not!

Risque radio skits. Pornographic magazines openly displayed for sale. And the same with smutty stories and lewd literature.

On all sides, on the radio, screen and in magazines the sacredness of marriage is openly mocked. Contraceptives and birth control openly advocated and displayed in drug store windows. Decency is treated as prudishness. The wildest license is taken as a simple liberty. While vice and sin are advocated in nice sounding words. And if not advocated, then most certainly condoned and lightly passed over.

At times it would seem that all decency has been thrown to the winds. That vice and sin are being openly encouraged. That deliberately, at least in our country, an attempt is made to corrupt as many as possible. Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, it does not matter. The attack is made on every front.

So common have such vices, sins and crimes become that you are no longer shocked or astounded.

Offenses which in days gone by would have horrified your fathers, to-

day bring no surprise. You accept them almost as a matter of course.

And as it is with the individual, so it has become with nations.

You may rant and rave against such national debauchery. But you are really not astounded. You may utter horrified words, but down in your heart the frightful terror of it does not strike home. The point is you accept these terrible and terrifying evils as more or less to be expected. The bombing of defenseless cities. The machine-gunning of their inhabitants. The invasion, spoliation and dismemberment of weaker nations without even the declaration of war. All these no longer have an appeal to you as being outrageous and incomprehensible.

Why is this?

Because, perhaps unconsciously, you realize that the forces of evil have definitely amalgamated and aligned themselves for this battle. A battle to the finish.

There is a situation that faces you in regard to the forces of evil in the world today.

A VALIANT DEFENSE

While on the other hand, you realize also, that never have the good been any better and more consoling to the heart of God than they are this very day.

Never before in the history of the Church has the Altar railing been so crowded with monthly, weekly and daily Communicants.

Never before have the good put up a more valiant defense or a more determined onslaught against these forces of evil.

You know thousands of real fathers and mothers desperately fighting to maintain Christian principles and practices in their homes. Sacrificing anything and everything to keep their homes strong in the Faith, and their children untainted by the filth and rottenness which surround them.

Young men in business and the professions, sick at heart at the low standard of ethics which they daily encounter, willingly sacrificing opportunities for advancement rather than betray the principles of Christ or compromise with their conscience.

Are they weaklings? Do you think so for even a minute? These men have within them the courage and the strength of real heroism. They hold aloft the banner thrown to them by St. Michael the Archangel.

Should not the same be said of the thousands, hundreds of thousands of young women in the world today foregoing pleasure after pleasure? Denying themselves enjoyment and good times evening after evening, week after week, month after month. Preferring a humdrum, drab existence rather than violate decency and sinlessness? Accepting, time and time again, cruel disappointments and heartache because they will not waver in their loyalty to Christ?

Are these young women weaklings? Is it not rather, they have the strength of God Himself.

Could and would you do this?

Could you boast of such strength as their strength? Have you the un-failing courage and persistent fortitude which they possess?

You know you have not! For the

secret of their strength and power is their religion.

And is it not the same with the great army of those who love God? This great army, which in season and out of season, unfailingly follow Christ. With the loyalty that never hesitates. With the strength that never fails. With a love that never falters.

A real heroic love.

Bravely, courageously, proudly, they love their God. Realizing the futility and emptiness of any other definition of love except that of Christ Himself when He said: "If any man loves Me, he will keep My commandments."

That is real, true love.

And that is real, true religion.

And that is the love and religion that conquers all evil.

YOU CAN CONQUER

Now as it is with all mankind, so it is with you. On which side do you take your stand? All that is fine, noble and splendid in you is calling upon you to follow Christ. To fol-

low Him loyally, faithfully and well. To conquer with Christ. To steadfastly stand against the forces of evil without flinching.

Why do you not face reality? Without religion you will fail. Without religion you will probably give in, adding your name to the casualty list of the living children of the Living God who have lost their heritage to live as beasts.

But with religion it will be a different story. You will realize the living presence of the Eternal God. You will remember the heritage of your faith. That faith which has come to you through the indomitable, unconquerable courage and love of your great and noble forebearers in the faith.

With religion you will conquer all evils. No matter how great. No matter how trying.

Out of the fight for your God, you will come forth resplendent. In the glory of achievement. You will have fought the good fight. You will have won because you have strength which is the strength of God.

There will be other times and other trials. Make no mistake about that!

There may be the trial of sorrow and loss. A grave you can never forget. For a while, life may not seem worth living.

But with religion you will keep your shoulders back and your chin up. Steadiness and calm will be yours, although the suffering may seem, at first, as final and conclusive.

MISFORTUNE BUILDS CHARACTER

There may be the trial of economic disaster. Failure in business. Or worse still, the efforts of a lifetime swept away overnight.

Perhaps the pain of treachery and betrayal. Maybe the loss of faith in someone or something you valued more than life itself.

But whatever it is, religion will bring to you the infinite, unflinching, unconquerable strength of the Eternal, Almighty God, Whose own you are.

“Religion is only for weaklings.”

Do not be a fool. By your own words you lay bare the secret thoughts within you. The real instincts of your soul. Admiration for strength. Love for courage. Reverence for fortitude.

But whether you know it or not you are a weakling. With only a weakling's powers.

Egotistical. Blustering. Bombastic. A strength that must fail at the first onslaught.

What to do about it?

Begin today to be the real, strong, courageous, indomitable self you want to be.

Your first step?

Admit your pride. Humble yourself. Destroy that false, foolish mental picture of yourself which you have so carefully painted of yourself.

A picture you foolishly cherish. Throw it away.

It is worthless anyway. It is not really a picture of yourself. Certainly no one else would recognize that it was you.

Destroy it!

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Know yourself as you really are.

That will be the first real test of courage.

Later on, you may, through God's grace, have the courage to admit that you were wrong.

Then you have really started going up the ladder of your desire.

You will acquire real strength.

Then, perhaps, you will faithfully practice your Catholic faith.

Faithful attendance at Mass. Monthly Confession and Communion. A member of the Holy Name Society. Be that sort of Catholic of which God and His Church can joyfully say: "This is my son."

A real man. In the eyes of God and in the eyes of men. And in your own eyes.

So you see, while you were right in one way, in another way you were wrong. Definitely wrong. Absolutely wrong.

Religion is really for the strong—the great—the heroic. It is the meat and drink of the mighty.

CAN YOU TAKE IT?

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**QUESTIONS
OF THE DAY
SERIES**

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TITLES

**Religion Is Only Wishful
Thinking!**

Is Religion a Racket?

Religion Is An Opiate!

Religion Is Only for Weaklings!

Religion and the Fifth Column!

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