

Religion Helps Men Understand Universe and His Part in It

Dr. Roger Larson is this week's guest writer. He has been minister at the Alpine Community church about two and one-half years, coming from Los Angeles, where he was associate minister at Plymouth Congregational church. He recently received his Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

Next week will be Russell Gastil.

Religion seeks to discover and interpret the meaning of the universe and of life and to relate our conduct to that meaning. Men ask the purpose of the universe and why we are here. Religion replies that the universe is not an accident nor man a by-product of matter. It asserts that there is a God behind the universe and an eternal purpose in creation. Thus it seeks to point men beyond the temporal and passing interests to eternal truths.

The church, as the exponent of the Christian religion, therefore, affirms that the worship of God should not be casual or occasional, but the center of life and habitual. The vertical relationship to God which we approach in our worship should be the inspiration for Christian living.

Thus strengthened by our vertical relationship to God, we reach out in our horizontal relationship toward our fellowmen, in a life governed by the spirit of love and expressed in human service. As the ideal for such living, the church proclaims Jesus Christ who, by His life and teachings of perfection, culminating in the Cross, was the personification of God in human life, and the Redeemer of those who make Him their Master and Lord.

At Christmas, we celebrate the revelation of that event. Though the world has commercialized Christmas to make us think about material things, we are celebrating the birth of one who came to tell us that the spiritual life is more important than the material things. We are not really observing Christmas until we recognize its religious significance. It is that religious note expressing itself in sharing that make our Christmas the most joyous season of the year. The Christmas spirit of joyous unselfishness is the Christian spirit. The happiness which is ours at Christmas becomes habitual when that spirit of unselfishness become habitual in our lives and when we discover in it the meaning of life. Jesus proclaimed that philosophy of life when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But the basis of that way of life is religious. Only in our vertical relationship with God can we be strengthened for that horizontal relationship of love and service to our fellowmen.