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Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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The Function of Religion in Life, 1915.

First Sermon, the year.

Frid. Eve. Sept. 4, 1915.

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Sermon

The Function of Religion in Life.

~~In beginning~~ The life is forever
for evolving new concepts, &
coining new terms to express
these concepts. The successive con-
cepts of an age are the history of
its development and the new
terms which an age produces
or the new meanings with which
it endows old words are the
milestones of its progress. Our
age has galvanized an old
term and imbued it with
great significance. That term
is "function". Function has become
the watchword of our times, the
magic word which serves as
a touchstone for all the verities of

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life. When we behold a new fact in experience we immediately inquire as to its function. When a new truth is promulgated we at once ask, is it workable, does it function? In fact we no longer ask, Is this or that true or untrue. We state it thus. Is it good or bad? - In a word - Can it function beneficently in our life? Will it enhance or retard it, enrich or impoverish it?

Our age is intensely practical. Our life is very mundane. Its standard of Evaluation, its way of determining the ^{utility} value of things is serviceability. There were times in the history

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of mankind when men thought different
by, when men judged not by
standards of life and ^{practicability} ~~actions~~
but by ideas of other worldliness
of ultra-mundane considerations.
The more I observed a thing
was of earthly value the less
practical it was the finer
and the nobler it was. But
a change of attitude towards
life has ^{come} ~~come~~ over mankind
with the ~~renaissance~~ ^{humanism} ~~that~~
~~thought & new learning~~. Men
are busy with themselves very
earnestly with this world & God,
combating its evils struggling
with its perplexities clearing &
beautifying it. And in this prac-
tical work of life building man

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materially utilizes all things that
can be of service to him. ~~That~~
Accordingly asking all know-
ledges - Can your function in
my scheme of things? Can
you help me to build better
of inner? Can you make my
life fuller & more purposeful?
The things that can answer
yes - are adopted as true.
Those that ^{cannot} ~~negotiate~~ - are
discarded as false.

Religion must submit to
the same test. It can claim no
^{special} ~~exceptional~~ ^{privileges} ~~considerations~~ on the
^{strength} ~~ground~~ of age & tradition. Life is
impatient with traditional things
that which have outlived their
usefulness. Can religion function

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in life in our busy practical
Every day life, that is the question
That confront us to day and
in beginning our religious activities
for the new year ~~we must~~ it ~~must~~
behoves us to pause & consider.
Religion may be characterized
as the supreme hope confidence
and optimism of life.
Religion in positing an intelligent
and benevolent creative spirit
in the universe makes life
purposeful and the world
more ~~lowly~~ ~~man~~ with
a spark of divinity ^{over} in
a world such as the materialists
conceive, a world tyrannically
ruled by an inexorable
blind fate, where there

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is neither freedom for man
life is reduced to brutal
instincts man is chained
~~to the~~ robbed of freedom.
initiative idealism in fact,
all virtues which make life
livable. Why should man
strive labor hope when
all is pre-determined, when
that which shall be ^{new} ~~is~~ already
fixed by that which was ~~the~~
before. Why live at all? Surely,
there is enough of misery &
suffering in life to make
one, who doubts the ultimate
triumph of the good over the evil,
question the value of life.
~~Life & materialism are~~
~~are mutually exclusive.~~

"Faith," said Tolstoy is the sense
of life that man by virtue
of which man does not destroy
himself, but continues to live
on. If man did not believe
that he must live for something,
he would not live at all."



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higher self. Religion holds
that the world is ^{constantly} being created.
Life is not complete perfect.
Surely not the life the spiritual
life of man. Life is & ever
will be in the process of
becoming ever more perfect.
In the work of perfecting life
man is the partner of
god. Men, say the Rabbis
is $\pi^2 \pi^2 \pi^2 \pi^2$ "the co-worker
of god in the act of creation".
The man who has no ideals
has ceased to be a co-
worker of god because for
him life is complete & defi-
nitely closed. For idealism
is the divine asserting itself
in you. It is god revealing

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himself to you. Religion then
in relating God with man
has safeguarded for all
times idealism in life.

What channels does
idealism always follow?
Evidently, these, social
service. An ^{western} idealist always
thinks in terms of humanity
or in other words in terms
of morality. Religion, then
is the basis of all ^{ethical & good} social
service. It is a fundamen-
tal principle of all religions
that man comes to God thru
man, that ^{we} man realizes
this God giving faculties
thru socially ^{beneficial} action.
The ladder whose head

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reaches the foot stool,
first throne is built by
man and its rungs
are the seeds of kind-
ness and of love and
the ^{overtunities} ~~specialties~~ ~~special well~~
~~brotherhood~~ ^{reproduction} ~~regeneration~~

This philosophy & religion which I have endeavored to present to you is peculiarly Jewish. ~~Not~~ that other religions I should rather say consciously Jewish. In no other religion have there thought been so clearly & forcibly enunciated. God is called the אלהים "the King who deserveth life." The Torah, morality is called the דבר יפה - the

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(over)
free of life. Judaism ~~was~~ ^{is} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~life~~ ^{life} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~human~~ ^{human} ~~life~~ ^{life} ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~something~~ ^{something} ~~sacred~~ ^{sacred} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~divine~~ ^{divine} ~~Evil~~ ^{Evil} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~correlated~~ ^{correlated} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~death~~ ^{death} ~~good~~ ^{good} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~life~~ ^{life}.

And because of great love
of life, Judaism was supremely
idealistic. Judaism was always
seeking new realms for the
human soul new fields
for men's ^{spiritual} activities. Its battle
cry was ~~71097 UN1 58~~ - Unto
the Heights. Never at a standstill,
always progressing, evolving,
searching ^{including} - that is secret
of Judaism's life. ~~from~~
Moses Alexander Governor
of Idaho, in the ~~holy~~ ^{holy} ~~ing~~ ^{ing} ~~ign~~ ^{ign} ~~orance~~ ^{orance} of his ~~man~~ ^{man} ~~has~~ ^{has} ~~at~~ ^{at}

Judaism loved life because
it believed in life in the triumph
of the good over the evil, of light
over darkness. ~~It was Israel~~
and because of its unshakable
faith, because of its great po-
tencies as it was equipped to
endure suffering & humili-
ation, to turn his back to the
smelters, to be despised &
rejected, oppressed & afflicted.
because it knew that
God is in his heart &
all is right
with the world

Recently a Jew, Moses
Alexander, Governor of Maharashtra
has taken occasion to
call the idealism of Israel
into question.

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recognize that their ideals of
justice & brotherhood may
be realized. But what of
the idealism of the Bible? of
the prophets? of the Psalms? of
Job? who could in the
midst of all his suffering
exclaim "I know that
my redeemer liveth!"

And the idealism of Israel
was the father of Judaism's
great message of service.
Service is the keynote of Israel's
history. To what end was
Israel redeemed from Egypt
& sent forth upon a career
of an independent national
existence? Why was Israel
chosen by God? So that it, too,

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may stumble thru a life
of utter self-indulgence?
So that it too may conquer
despotic empires ^{people} and then
in turn, be conquered & despised
enslaved? The answer is
given by the author of the
story himself. p. 201 "px 754"
"Send forth my people—
why? So that ^{they} too, may
write its little name on the
shifting sands of time &
be washed out by the next
great wave of history? "Send
forth my people that they
may seek me! Service
shall consecrate its life!
Service shall activate
its being. And twice

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17.

in that Biblical passage is
the significant word "in the
wilderness" added to
the phrase "send forth my
people ^{that they may} & serve me!" "In the
wilderness!" "Yea, in the
waste, howling wilderness
of life where the oases are few
and where the blinding storms
rage coldly where the lips
are parched and the souls
are sick with misgiving,
there let my people go
& serve me!" "In the wil-
derness!" where the lonely
caravan stumbles aim-
lessly through the scorch-
ing sands ^{adversely}
knowing whether to turn,

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then let my people go &
serve me! Service &
service alone was the
purpose of Israel's redemp-
tion and selection.

The function of Judaism in
our lives is coextensive
with that of religion in general.
It is to serve as the sanctifi-
cation of life as the divine
impulse for upward climbing,
as the call to service &
social usefulness.

We pray, Almighty God that
in the beginning of our religious
activities for the year this
message of our religion may
be firmly impressed upon
us. May we be true to thee

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19.

and to ourselves by ~~dedicating~~
our lives even ~~enriching~~
our lives with the beauty
of the truth by dedicating
ourselves to the service
of ~~dedication~~ men.

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The function of religion in life.

Friday, September 4, 1915

Life is forever evolving new concepts, and coining new terms to express these concepts. The successive concepts of an age are the history of its development and the new terms which an age produces or the new meanings with which it endows old words are the milestones of its progress. Our age has galvanized an old term and imbued it with great significance. That term is "function". Function has become the watchword of our times, the magic word which serves as a touchstone for all the verities of life. When we behold a new fact or experience we immediately inquire into its function. When a new truth is promulgated, we at once we ask, is it workable, does it function? In fact we no longer ask, is this or that true or untrue. We state it thus - is it good or bad? In a word, can it function beneficently in our life. Will it enhance or retard it, enrich or impoverish it?

Our age is intensely practical. Its standard of evaluation, its way of determining the intrinsic value of things, is utility. There were times in the history of mankind, when men thought differently, when men ~~XXXX~~ judged not by standards of life and practicality, but by ideas, of other-worldliness, of ultra-mundane considerations. The more stripped a thing was of earthly value, the less practical it was, the truer and the nobler it was. But a change of attitude towards life came over mankind. Men are busying themselves very earnestly with this world of God, combating its evils, struggling with its perplexities, clearing and beautifying it. And in this practical work of life-building, man utilizes all the things that can be of service to him. He accordingly asks of all knowledge - can you function in my scheme of things? Can you help better times(?) Can you ~~XXXX~~ make my life fuller and more purposeful? The things that can answer yea - are adopted as true. Those that cannot are discarded as false.

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Religion must submit to the same test. It can claim no special privileges on the strength of age and tradition. Life is impatient with traditional things which have outlived their usefulness. Can religion function in life, in our busy, practical, everyday life; that is the question that confronts us today and in beginning our religious activities for the new year, it behooves us to pause and consider.

Religion may be characterized as the supreme hope, confidence and optimism in life. Religion, in positing an intelligent and benevolent creative spirit in the universe, makes life purposeful and dowers man with a spark of divinity. "Faith", said Tolstoy, "is the sense of life that sense by virtue of which man does not destroy himself, but continues to live on. If man did not believe that he must live for something, he would not live at all." In a world such as the materialists conceive, a world tyrannically ruled by an inexorable, blind fate, life is reduced to brutal instincts, man is robbed of freedom, initiative, idealism, in fact of all virtues which make life livable. Why should man strive, labor, hope, when all is pre-determined, when that which shall be has already been fixed by that which was. Nay, more, why live at all? Surely, there is enough of misery and suffering in life to make one, who doubts the ultimate triumph of the good over the evil, question the very value of life.

****portion missing

...higher self. Religion ~~holds~~ holds that the world, and especially the world of man, is being created. Life is not complete, perfect. Surely not the life, the spiritual life of man. Life is and ever will be in the process of becoming ever more perfect. In the work of perfecting life, man is the instrument of God. Man, say the Rabbis, is *(Hebrew - see p 8 of ms)* the co-worker of God in the acts of creation. The man who has no ideals has ceased to be a co-worker of God because for him life is completely

and definitely closed. Your idealism is the divine asserting itself in you. It is God revealing Himself to you. Religion, then, in relating God with man, has safeguarded for all times idealism in life.

What channels does idealism always follow? Evidently, those of social service. A western idealist always thinks in terms of humanity, in terms of morality. Religion then is the basis of all ethics, of all social service. It is a fundamental principle of all religions that man comes to God through man, that we realize our God giving faculties through socially benevolent activity. The ladder whose head reaches the footstool of God's throne is built by man and its rungs are the deeds of kindness, and of love and the sentiments of brotherhood and cooperation.

This philosophy of religion which I have endeavored to present to you is peculiarly Jewish. I should rather say consciously Jewish. In no other religion have these thoughts been so clearly and forcibly emanated. God is called the *(New Testament p. 10 of MSS)* "the king who desireth life". The morality is called the *(Hebrew - see p. 10 of MSS)* the tree of life.

Judaism loved life because it believed in life, in the triumph of the good, over the evil, of light over darkness. And because of its indomitable faith, because of its great opportunism, it was equipped to endure suffering and humiliation, to turn his back to the smiters, to be despised and rejected, oppressed and afflicted, because it knew that God is in His heaven and all will be right with the world.

And because of its great love of life, Judaism was supremely idealistic. Judaism was always seeking new realms for the human soul, new fields for man's spiritual activities. Its battle cry was *(Hebrew - see p. 11 of MSS)* unto the heights. Never at a standstill, always progressive, evolving, searching, inclusive - that is (the) secret of Judaism's life. Recently, a Jew, Moses Alexander, governor of Idaho, has taken occasion to call the idealism of Israel into question.

****portion missing

And the idealism of Israel was the father of Judaism's great message of service. Service is the keynote of Israel's history. To what end was Israel redeemed from Egypt and sent forth upon a career of an independent national existence? Why was Israel chosen by God? So that it, too, may stumble through a life of gluttonous self-indulgence? So that it too may conquer, despoil, enslave~~x~~ people, then in turn be conquered, despoiled, enslaved? The answer is given by the author of the story Himself: *(Hebrew - see p. 16 of MSS)* "Send forth ~~my~~ my people"- why? So that Israel, too, may write its little name on the shifting sands of time to be washed out by the next great wave of history? "Send forth my people that they may serve me!" Service~~x~~ shall consecrate its life! Service shall activate its being. And twice in that Biblical passage is the significant word *(Hebrew - see p. 17 of MSS)* "in the wilderness" added to the phrase "send forth my people that they may serve me". Yea, in the waste, howling wilderness of life, where the oases are few and where the blinding storms rage wildly, where the lips are parched and souls are sick with misgivings, there let my people go and serve me! "In the wilderness!" Where the lonely caravans stumble aimlessly through the scorching sands of adversity, not knowing whither to turn. There let ~~XH~~ my people go and serve me! Service and service alone was the purpose of Israel's redemption and selection.

The function of Judaism ~~XH~~ in our lives is coextensive with that of religion in general. It is to serve as the sanctification of life as the divine urge for upward climbing, as the call to service and social usefulness.

We pray, almighty God, that in the beginning of our religious activities for the year, this message of our religion may be firmly im-

pressed upon us. May we be true to Thee and to ourselves by ennobling our lives with the beauty of Thy truth, by dedicating ourselves to the service of idealism. Amen.

