

Religious Interpretations of Contemporary Human Experience: Pg 102-106

For many people religion plays a big part in the type of life you will lead. It shapes the decisions you make, the job you might do, the paths you might take.

There are a number of different interpretations of life that have been shaped by religion that we could take at. These are:

1. The Prophetic Interpretation of life
2. The Mystical Interpretation
3. The Holy Interpretation
4. The poetic Interpretation.

We will look at each of these individually.

Prophetic interpretation of life:

A prophet is a person who examines society and critiques it in light of their religious beliefs. If you have a prophetic interpretation of life you will look at the world that you live in and you will want to challenge all of the injustices that you see because they go against your religious beliefs. This is a deeply religious way of life. It's roots are to be found in the old testament writings of the Prophets such as Isaiah, Amos and later through Jesus Christ.

The prophet believes that a world that is unjust and behaviour that is unfair to all is an offense to God.

Prophets are often very unpopular people as they are speaking out against the status Quo and upsetting those who are in power.

An example of a person who lives a prophetic life in our world today is Fr. Peter McVerry SJ.

The Mystical Interpretation:

If you take a mystical interpretation on life, unlike the prophet, you are not seeking to change society for the better. Rather, you are making an inner journey - trying to leave behind all the distractions of the world. This interpretation of the world is found in all faiths.

If you are taking a mystical path in life you are trying to get to know God on a personal level.

Imagination is very important to those who take a mystical view of life. Through meditation and prayer you try to know God.

Mystical interpretations of life have become very popular in recent times. Buddhism is a prime example of a mystical interpretation of life. It is a belief system that places great importance on meditation.

The Holy Interpretation:

This means that you understand the events that happen in your life in a holy way. For example events such as birth, death and marriage are events in your life that you consider holy and are events where you believe that God is present. When life is seen as 'Holy' special times are celebrated through ritual and prayer.

In Christianity, the sacraments are examples of the holy interpretation of human experience. For example at the sacrament of baptism when we welcome the arrival of a new member in to the Christian family the ritual is rich in prayer and symbol (water, oil, white robe) and the same can be said of marriage (vows, rings, candles). By celebrating these events with prayer and ritual - the person is saying that they consider them to be holy.

The poetic interpretation:

People who are creative, poetic, lyrical, artistic, may choose to express this religious interpretation of life through music, poetry, art, literature, etc. If you took this interpretation of life then the poetry, art, music, etc, that you create is your way of expressing the beauty and presence of God in your life.

People are often inspired to create beautiful works of Art based on God. The poet John Shea has written poetry that is deeply religious but that is still connected to every day life.

John O'Donohue is another example of a man who expresses his religious view of life through his literature. Though his use of beautiful language he offers his readers and inspiring view of God and life.