THE REALITY OF RELIGION

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649534401

The Reality of Religion by Jr. Van Dyke

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

www.triestepublishing.com

JR. VAN DYKE

THE REALITY OF RELIGION

Trieste

THE

REALITY OF RELIGION

BY

HENRY J. VAN DYKE, JR., D.D.

PASTOR OF THE BRICK CHURCH, NEW YORK

Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.
ST. AUG. *Conf.* i. 1.

SECOND EDITION.

London
T. FISHER UNWIN
26 PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1885

PREFACE.

AMID the strife of systems and the war of words our souls are thirsting for the living God. We long to find and know Him, to touch Him with the outstretched hands of faith and love, to feel Him drawing near to us and filling the dry cisterns of our lives with the sweet, clear waters of Divine communion. Even as one who has wandered long in the desert yearns and pants for the flowing spring, so our heart and flesh cry out for God.

After all, this is the deepest need of humanity. This is what we desire most ardently: not so much the proof of theories and the unfolding of doctrines; not so much the criticism of Scripture and the triumphant vindication of certain forms of belief; not so much the development of more elaborate modes of worship and church government, or the return to a more primitive simplicity; not anything in the world do we

desire so much as to come into close and living contact with that Perfect and Eternal Spirit in whom our souls must find their only rest.

We do not sneer at the dogmas of theology. They are certainly as important as the dogmas of science. We do not despise the questions of ritual. They are at least of equal consequence with the questions of social order. But *religion* is infinitely beyond all these. It is more vital and more profound. It does not appeal to the intellect alone. It is not satisfied with the conclusions of logic. Nor does it rest at ease upon the æsthetic sense. It reaches down into the very depths of the living, throbbing human heart, and stirs a longing which nothing outward and formal can ever still, —*the longing for personal fellowship with God.*

Yet I cannot help feeling that a great part of our religious life comes far short of this. We play with forms and symbols; we repeat creeds and prayers; we let others do our thinking and feeling for us,

and then vainly strive to lift ourselves, by an effort of the will, to the height of their experience. Is it not true? Has it never come over you like a shadow of gloom? Have you never sat in the church, — your eyes delighted with the solemnities of arch and window, — your ears thrilled with the rushing music of great psalms, — but your heart empty and sad, yearning for something more and better, without which all the rest is but a hollow dream? Have you never followed with painful care the course of some intense theological controversy, linking your mind with the tempered steel of closest argument to the right conclusion, and then asked at the end, "But where is my God?"

Surely there must be something more than forms, either of worship or of belief. There must be *realities*, which we can feel and know in the innermost recesses of our spiritual life. And if we can once touch these and hold them fast, then our souls will be satisfied, and we shall not be greatly moved. The lesser conflict may long con-