

**A NOT IMPOSSIBLE
RELIGION**

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A Not Impossible Religion by Silvanus P. Thompson

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SILVANUS P. THOMPSON

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Preface

A NUMBER of Dr. Silvanus Thompson's friends had, from time to time, expressed the hope that he would give to a wider public some of the results of his thoughts on religion and life, by which not a few had been helped in an age when many find it difficult to reconcile the methods of science with the spirit of Christianity as it is expressed in the accepted views of the Churches.

Realising as he did how many men and women, within and without the various sections of organised Christianity, were longing for an expression of faith which they could whole-heartedly accept as true, knowing, too, that they had failed to obtain in the orthodox creeds and communions the help they were seeking, he was at work at the time of his death, in June, 1916, on a volume in which he wished to set forth his own vision of a simple spiritual Christianity, in no wise in conflict with the discoveries of research or the attitude of science, a living practical religion which would meet the deepest needs of others, as it had done of his own life. His intention was that the volume should be anonymous, but although he did not live to complete the work, it seems right that now it should be published under his name. He had corrected some of the chapters, others were still unrevised, one was incomplete, and one to be entitled "Finis Coronat," remained, alas! unwritten.

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Doubtless many passages would have been modified or altered by him, but it has seemed better to issue these papers substantially as he left them.

In a very few cases one or two omissions or alterations have been made, and three chapters are withheld which do not seem necessary to the scheme of the book. It should be added that the various chapters were written, in some cases at an interval of years, in the midst of an exceptionally busy life, crowded with intellectual activity, and burdened with a heavy weight of work for others. In one or two cases they were prepared and delivered as separate addresses.

In his intense love of truth and indignation with unreality and insincerity, Dr. Thompson has sometimes written severely of orthodoxy and its exponents. It must not be thought, however, that he did not love and cherish true religion everywhere, even when it found expression in the most orthodox language and way of worship. Two friends amongst those with whom he was accustomed to meet and discuss some of the deepest problems of life and religion, whom he regarded with especial love and veneration, were in the one case a devout Roman Catholic, and in the other an Anglican clergyman.

Above all, it must be remembered that this book was not intended for men and women who are content with a creed and a worship which are accepted as orthodox. It is addressed to those who are already unhappy and troubled because they cannot reconcile the dogmas they had been taught to believe with what they are convinced is the true attitude to life ; some of whom have already long given up any

connection with organised Christianity, while others still continue to observe forms of religion which have ceased to have meaning for them, and in so doing feel, at intervals, an uneasy sense of insincerity. To such men especially the writer of this book makes his appeal. He would have been the last to proclaim his own views as a dogma, or to ask that they should be accepted by others untested by the fire of thought in the crucible of experience. He did not set them forth as a final statement of what he believed or would have another believe. He is rather exposing to his reader a method of approaching life's problems, an attitude of mind and will, a way of life, not a theory about life. He was ever himself learning and helping others to learn. Above all other research he had learned to set the quest for truth; it was in all his own labours his inspiration. He wrote knowing that he might make mistakes, that he needs must make them, but he knew, too, that he was seeking the truth, and writing for the seekers of truth. He shares the fruit of his own religious experience with his fellow-men, asking them not to accept his judgment of it, but rather to taste and see for themselves as they walk along the same way, or by different roads to the same goal.

T. EDMUND HARVEY.

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