

Religion of the Spirit



The religions of the world have a double origin—natural and revelatory. And at any one time and among any one people there are to be found three distinct forms of religious devotion; these religious urges are:

1. Primitive religion. The natural and instinctive urge to fear mysterious energies and worship superior forces, chiefly a religion of the physical nature, the religion of fear. Much of this primitive form of worship persists in the religious forms of even the more intelligent cultures.
2. Civilized religion. The religion of the mind—the intellectual theology of the authority of established religious tradition.
3. True religion. The revelation of supernatural values, partial insight into eternal realities, a glimpse of the goodness and beauty of the Father in heaven—the religion of the spirit. The great difference between the religion of the mind and the religion of the spirit is that, while the former is upheld by ecclesiastical authority, the latter is wholly based on human experience.

Until humanity becomes highly intelligent and more fully civilized, there will persist many of those naive and superstitious ceremonies which are characteristic of the

evolutionary religious practices of primitive societies. Until humanity progresses to the level of a higher and more general recognition of the realities of spiritual experience, large numbers will continue to show a personal preference for those religions of authority which require only intellectual assent, in contrast to the religion of the spirit, which entails active participation of mind and soul in the adventure of grappling with the rigorous realities of progressive experience.

The acceptance of the traditional religions of authority presents the easy way out for our universal urge to seek satisfaction for the longings of our spiritual nature. The settled, crystallized, and established religions of authority afford a ready refuge to which the distracted and distraught soul may flee when harassed by fear and tormented by uncertainty. Such a religion requires of its devotees, as the price to be paid for its satisfactions and assurances, only a passive and purely intellectual assent.

There are always those timid, fearful, and hesitant individuals who prefer to secure their religious consolations through the religions of authority, even though, in so casting their lot with them, they compromise the sovereignty of personality, debase the dignity of self-respect, and utterly surrender the right to participate in that most thrilling and inspiring of all possible experiences: the personal quest for truth, the exhilaration of facing the perils of intellectual discovery, the determination to explore the realities of personal religious experience, the supreme satisfaction of experiencing the personal triumph of the actual realization of the victory of spiritual faith over intellectual doubt as it is honestly won in the supreme

adventure of existence—seeking God, for oneself and as oneself, and finding him.

The religion of the spirit means effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty, and progress. The religion of the mind—the theology of authority—requires little or none of these exertions from its believers. Tradition is a safe refuge and an easy path for those fearful and halfhearted souls who instinctively shun the spirit struggles and mental uncertainties associated with those faith voyages of daring adventure out upon the high seas of unexplored truth in search for the farther shores of spiritual realities as they may be discovered by the progressive mind and experienced by the evolving soul.

The appeal of religions of authority is largely to the mind. True religion makes its chief appeal to the divine spirit of God the Father which resides in your mind; a religion which derives its authority from the fruits of its acceptance that so certainly appear in the personal experience of all who really and truly become believers in the truths of this higher spiritual communion.