
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

work which He has accomplished.'[1] If the true attitude, in the end, is that not of the theologian but of the preacher, and still more of the worshipper, in penitent faith, at the Lord's Table, then we must beware of claiming, for any theory, a monopoly of the truth. If no single form of exposition, no one type of Eucharistic worship, can express the full meaning of what God has done for men, no theoretical explanation that we can offer will make fully clear the mystery of the Cross. We do well to 'look with suspicion on theories of atonement which are only too complete. . . . If atonement be the act of God, it has in it the unfathomable quality of God Himself.'[2]

[1] Berdyaev, *op. cit.*, 180.

[2] H. R. Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, 195.

Discernment.

By Edward Grubb, M.A., Letchworth, Herts.

'This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent' (Ph $1^{9.10}$, R.V.).

St. Paul prays for his friends at Philippi that their love may be accompanied by 'knowledge and discernment'—no blind emotion, but a love enlightened and directed by a true perception of spiritual values. The word translated 'discernment' is that from which we derive the term 'æsthetic'; its meaning is obvious from the words that follow, which point to an inward power of distinguishing true from false, and preferring the excellent to the base. St. Paul had used these words before, when writing to the Romans about the moral advantage enjoyed by the Jew through his knowledge of the Law. We know from the letters to the Corinthians the kind of moral difficulties that confronted his converts from paganism, and we can appreciate his desire that they should meet such difficulties with a clear understanding of 'the mind of Christ.' This is why he couples 'discernment' with 'knowledge.'

It is for '*all* the saints at Philippi,' not only for 'the bishops and deacons,' that he thus prays. The humblest Christian shares with the ablest the gift of the Spirit, which brings to him or her not only life but light—a power of discernment which he must use and not neglect. In the same way, Jesus Himself (quite naturally and unobtrusively) had required from His disciples the use of their own power of discernment. 'Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' And, again, 'If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?' St. Paul treats the inward power of discerning truth and right as a gift from God rather than as an endowment of the 'natural' (or 'psychic') man—to whom, he says, the things of the Spirit are 'foolishness.' He had just been pointing out that the deepest truths of life are not seen by the eye, or heard by the ear, or demonstrated by the 'heart' (or understanding) of man, but are *revealed* to him by the Spirit. Just so Jesus had given thanks that, whereas the truths of the Kingdom are hidden from the wise and understanding, they are 'revealed to babes.'

Yet there is in St. Paul's mind no rigid division between natural and supernatural gifts and powers. He prays for the Ephesians that they may have given to them 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation, having the eyes of their heart (or understanding) enlightened.' We shall be near to his thought if we regard the supernatural as shining in and through the natural—taking it up, transforming and using it, as life transforms, and expresses itself in, matter. The Christian experience, he believes, is able to raise the whole being of man to a new level of power, efficiency, and insight.

It is clear that the Apostle envisaged two ways of apprehending truth; and in this respect his philosophy appears to be still valid. In modern speech we might distinguish them as intellectual and intuitional. When we are dealing with the phenomenal world, which is open to observation, we use our senses and our intellect. The senses bring us the raw material of knowledge, which the reasoning intellect works up into a coherent system of scientific truth. When, on the other hand, we have to deal with the world of supra-sensible reality, which lies behind phenomena, our senses fail us. The intellect can still work; but, in the absence of sensuous material, it is apt to spin fancies. In this region its conclusions cannot well be checked by the more accurate observation of

facts. Consequently, the way lies open for the sceptical judgment that the supposed spiritual world is not reality at all.

Is there, then, any source of real knowledge other than that supplied by the senses aided by the intellect? Unquestionably there is. If there were not, the very conditions of a worthy life would be missing. The whole world of *values*, æsthetic and moral, comes to us through a power of 'discernment' and appreciation applied (for the most part) to sense experiences which it distinguishes as of higher or lower worth. The understanding of human character, though conditioned by outward signs such as looks and words and acts, is based fundamentally on an inward intuition of what these signs mean. The significance of life is perceived just in so far as we use our power of intuition or discernment.

But, while material supplied by the senses is usually needed for appreciation of beauty or moral worth, it fails us when we reach the deepest level of supra-sensible experience—that which is concerned with God and His relation to us. 'No man hath seen God at any time.' Here pre-eminently we have to walk by 'faith,' not by 'sight.' Faith is essentially trust in an intuition of reality, and a venture which that trust dictates—as necessary to our well-being as the trust in the unseen air which each young swallow instinctively exercises when it makes its first plunge from the nest. Deep in the heart of every person lies an instinct for God, an intuition of the 'numinous' or Divine. That is why the concept 'God' does not disappear from human thought, nor the word from human speech. But in many people it remains at the subconscious level, like seeds in the ground, so that the Reality it stands for can be plausibly denied. The 'saints' are they in whom it blooms and bears fruit in consciousness and will and consecration.

And yet, though each conscious person possesses in some degree this power of 'discerning' the Divine, there is usually the greatest difficulty in imparting to others what it is that is 'discerned.' And this for two reasons. In the first place, the spiritual life has no special language of its own. The only terms in which it can express its experience are of the nature of symbols derived from sense knowledge. Spirit itself is 'breath'; the Divine is 'that which shines.' Hence its language is always open to misconstruction by minds that lack the experience. Secondly, the images in which its 'revelations' are clothed are usually derived from previous experience and from ideas that are already in the mind. This is obvious when we consider the 'visions' enjoyed by some mystics. A Christian saint may 'see' the exalted Christ; not so a Moslem Sufi. A Roman Catholic may have visions of the Virgin, but a Protestant has been differently taught. For both these reasons, the heavenly music has to be rendered through imperfect instruments. Psychology may inform us about the quality of the instruments, but not about that of the music—for to this psychology (as such) is deaf, and, if wise, it will also be dumb.

Religious truth, then, depends for its matter upon the exercise of an inward power of intuition or discernment; its form is largely due to intellectual processes. Both are urgently needed if we are to advance in knowledge of the truth. Without 'discernment' there is no assurance of objective reality; without intellectual scrutiny and criticism the way is open for credulity and superstitious fancies. Evelyn Underhill, by a homely analogy, suggests the difference in these two ways of apprehending truth (*Mixed Pasture*, p. 9): 'We have to allow that there are two kinds of real knowledge accessible to man. One kind of knowledge is like seeing within a narrow but sharply focused area. The other is more like bathing in a fathomless ocean, or breathing an intangible and limitless air. It gives contact and certitude, but not understanding; as breathing or bathing gives us certitude about the air and the ocean, but no information about their chemical constitution.'

Entre Nous.

The Sense of Futility.

Dr. Herbert Gray gave a number of talks in St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and these are now being published in *St. Martin's Review*—that outstanding example of what a parish magazine at its best may be. The subject of the first talk was 'The Sense of Futility.' In it Dr. Gray addressed himself to the men and women who to-day are feeling genuinely that life is futile and are asking, 'What is the good of it all?' 'Let us hear Sir