

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

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 sub-conscious 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

Oliver Lodge,' he says. "We are rising to the conviction that we are a part of nature, and so a part of God—that the whole creation—the one and the many and the all one—is travelling together toward some great end, and that now after ages of development, we have at length become conscious portions of the great scheme, and can co-operate in it with knowledge and with joy.

"We are no aliens in a stranger universe governed by an outside God, we are parts of a developing whole, all enfolded in an embracing and interpenetrating love, of which we too, each to other, sometimes experience joy too deep for words." I do not say that that is the view of science. For scientists seem to differ among themselves as much as theologians. But it is the view of a scientific thinker. And it is good Christianity. It is very like St. Paul in modern language. And if that view is true then life is not a futility. Movement there is. And our little lives gain meaning if our striving is in the line of the underlying purpose.

'Having quoted a scientist, let me quote also a modern seer. "Lord, I believe," says Studdert Kennedy, "man is no helpless thing that like a bird in spring comes fluttering to the light of life, and out into the darkness of long death. The breath of God is in him, and his agelong strife with evil has a meaning and an end. Though twilight-dim his vision be, yet he can see Thy truth, and in the cool of evening Thou, his friend, dost walk with him and talk (did not the word take flesh) of the great destiny that waits him and his race, in worlds that are to be. By grace he can achieve great things, and on the wings of strong desire mount upward ever Higher and Higher, until above the clouds he stands and stares God in the face."

'That is the faith needed to keep us sane and hopeful. God in Christ has given us that faith.'

Love-in-Action.

It is not real Christianity merely to carry a gilt-edged Bible and hymn-book to church on Sunday, like an upper-class person. Individual worship of God is not enough. The church must be transformed into a mutual aid organization, a society for the realization of Love-in-action. Shall we not actually start movements among ourselves for the practical expression of love? Having begun them, not one of us should back out. It was by such activities that Europe was transformed.

To tell the truth, love is dangerous. It is a 'dangerous thought' for a moneylender to talk

about lending money without interest; and the ideal of monogamy, with husband and wife true to each other, is too narrow a doctrine to suit the house of ill-fame.¹

Atonement.

Just as this chapter is being read, comes from Japan the issue of the *Japan Advertiser*, an English newspaper published by Americans, for 1st September 1935, in which appears the following headline:

PRISON WINS PRAISE OF U.S. SOCIOLOGIST.

Visitor to Fuchu Prison (Tokyo) impressed by
Rarity of Escapes despite Easy Opportunities.
Cleanliness is Lauded.

Inmates' Spirit of Atonement contrasted with
Attitude of American Convicts.

One mind seems to be at work in a Japanese prison; in an American prison two minds are at work in diametrically opposed directions. That, according to Dr. Jesse Steiner, head of the Department of Sociology of the University of Washington, appears, from first impressions, to be the distinction between a Japanese and an American prison. . . . 'What I observed in the Fuchu prison seemed to show that the policy in Japan is educative and not punitive. Through strict discipline favourable living conditions, work and educational lectures, every opportunity is afforded the inmates to atone for their crimes and leave the prison better men.

'American criminals enter prison with the idea of serving time and of getting out as soon as they possibly can. Japanese criminals are apparently in prison to atone for their crimes, for it seemed to me that the spirit of atonement was quietly alive. The administration apparently trusts that spirit, which seems to augment the comparatively weak construction of the cells . . .'

This reminds us of the 1923 earthquake in Tokyo, when the entire population of a certain prison in Tokyo, especially for those condemned to life imprisonment, might have escaped through the fallen walls. Not a man fled. The prison warden marshalled them like a regiment of soldiers, directed them how to leave the ruined buildings, and found them absolutely under discipline though in the open for hours practically without guards. They were as loyal as the guards themselves.²

¹ T. Kagawa, *Meditations on the Cross*, 170.

² *Ibid.*, 162 f.

The Triumphant Entry.

The triumphant entry into Jerusalem startles us by its apparent incongruity with the way of Jesus. It was a principle with Him to avoid the spectacular, and He kept a watchful eye on any rising tide of mass emotion. But His entry into Jerusalem *was* spectacular, and even sensational—and it was intended to be so. The prophecy of Zechariah which St. Matthew recalls in this connexion cannot have been absent from the mind of Jesus, and it is worth while to continue it beyond the point at which the Evangelist stopped. ‘Behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.’

When Jesus rode into the city that day, He knew that every habitable part of the earth had its representatives among the myriads gathered at Jerusalem that day, and all Jerusalem heard a message and were confronted with His claim before the night had come. The action of Jesus is consistent neither with humility nor good sense unless His mind had firm hold of a purpose which reached far back into the history of His people, and forward to a boundless reign of peace and blessedness. Nothing can save the Triumphant Entry from an intolerable theatricality if it was not the symbol of something at least as wonderful and transforming as the Christian faith has declared Him to be. History has its comment to make. Now, after nineteen centuries, when He still has no kingdom worthy of Him, and His people are so little like Him that the best of them are almost ashamed to claim His name, He yet has such a kingdom and such a people as no one could have dreamed of then.¹

The More Adventurous Course.

Writing of achievement in *Nash's Magazine*, Sir Wilfred Grenfell says: ‘It is a joy so irrespective of cost or reward that it is the “one valid explanation of,” and apology for, our brief stay on this planet. Of that joy the athlete has no monopoly. To the scholar, to the scientist, to the martyr, to every life which embodies the spirit of self-conquest, it affords the utter satisfaction of knowing that what you have to give is needed.’

¹ W. R. Maltby, *Christ and His Cross*, 54.

‘An invaluable rule for me has always been: when two courses are open, choose the more adventurous. So the emotions, faith, courage and love, are my truest guides, because of their capacity as compared with the limitations of a half-ounce of protoplasmic thinking machinery. Such modern scientists as Eddington, Jeans, Bragg, Millikan, Einstein and Edison have become my “men of action,” not chiefly because they gave us radio or motor-cars or telephones or wireless or countless mechanical aids to achievement, but because of their increasingly intellectual modesty, when the greatest of all human interests, the reality of the spiritual, is concerned. When they, “humble men of heart,” teach that there is a spiritual Power outside ourselves, we can understand how a dozen unlearned men could “turn the world upside down.”’

Slides on Archæology.

A desire is often expressed for slides illustrating the archæology of Palestine and the Near East. It is not generally known that these can be secured from the Palestine Exploration Fund (2 Hinde Street, London, W.), who publish an excellent catalogue of them.

NEW POETRY.**Benvenuta Solomon.**

Mr. Solomon has published his second volume of poetry—a collection of thirty-eight poems with the title *The Harp of Ur* (Blackwell; 3s. 6d. net). The last poem is to the old gods, the Immortals:

Who promise no hereafter, neither torment nor salvation;
Proffer naught of consolation—man must still his fate endure—
For there's nowhere any comfort, save we comfort one another,
Saying, ‘Brother, bear a little yet, since death at last is sure.’

The note of the collection is that of this poem, for to Mr. Solomon life is ‘a cruelty set to music with a dark chord closing all.’ But besides sadness there is endurance and courage in the poems. We choose ‘The Reed’ for quotation:

THE REED.

Beside the river-bank a reed
Was shivering 'neath the moon;
For it must serve the Master's need
When he would make a tune.

The moon went down, the storm-wind shrilled ;
 The Master's grasp was stark—
 The reed his breath awoke and thrilled
 Lay broken in the dark.

When all its hope of music died
 In bitterness and pain,
 He raised the reed once cast aside
 And blew a tune again.

G.G. ; D.K.R. ; J.L.

Gerald Gould, Denys Kilham Roberts, and John Lehmann are the compilers of *The Year's Poetry: 1935* (Bodley Head; 6s. net). They have chosen their forty-four poets and their poems well. They would satisfy any good principle of selection. But as the method of selection—and of arrangement too, for that is by the age of the poets—is not usual, we state it. 'Our endeavour,' they say in the preface, 'has been to choose not so much what we each, with necessarily differing opinions, regarded as the outstanding individual poems of the year, but rather poems which in our opinion best illustrate the most significant contemporary tendencies and developments.' The thought is often not easy; it is too complex and the imagination too subtle. But in all the collection there is no mere versifying. All the poems are genuine utterances of explorers of the imagination.

We quote Siegfried Sassoon's 'Ex-Service' for its message for to-day, and Edwin Muir's 'The Harvest':

EX-SERVICE.

Derision from the dead
 Mocks armament mad.
Redeem (each Ruler said)
Mankind. Men died to do it.
 And some with glorying gladness
 Bore arms for earth and bled:
 But most went glumly through it
 Dumbly doomed to rue it.

The darkness of their dying
 Grows one with War recorded;
 Whose swindled ghosts are crying
 From shell-holes in the past,
Our deeds with lies were lauded,
Our bones with wrongs rewarded.
 Dream voices these—denying
 Dud laurels to the last.

THE HARVEST.

Walking on the harvest hills of night
 Time's elder brother, the great husbandman,
 Goes on his round. His massive lantern,
 Simpler than the first fashion, lights the rows
 Of stooks that lean like little golden graves
 Of tufted barges foundering low
 In the black stream.

He sees that all is ready,
 The trees all stripped, the orchards bare, the nests
 Empty. All things grown
 Homeless and whole. He sees the hills of grain,
 A day all yellow and red, flowers, fruit and corn,
 In darkness. The soft hair harvest-golden
 In darkness. Children playing
 In the late night-black day of Time. He sees
 The lover standing by the trysting-tree
 Who'll never find his love till all are gathered
 In light or darkness. The unnumbered living
 Numbered and bound and sheaved.

O could that day
 Break on this side of Time!

A wind shakes
 The loaded sheaves, the feathery tomb bursts open,
 And yellow hair is poured along the ground
 From the bent neck of Time. The woods cry:
This is the Resurrection.

O little judgment days lost in the dark,
 Seen by the bat and screech-owl!

He goes on,
 Bearing within his ocean-heart the jewel,
 The day all yellow and red wherein a sun
 Shines on the endless harvest lands of Time.

Printed by MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED, Tanfield Works,
 and Published by T. & T. CLARK, 38 George Street,
 Edinburgh. It is requested that all literary com-
 munications be addressed to THE EDITOR, Kings
 Gate, Aberdeen, Scotland.