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

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

This, then, is the sum of the whole matter: the only omniscience with which we have to do, the only omniscience which has to do with us, is the omniscience of perfect love; the All-Great is the All-Loving too. Faber is right--there is none with whom 'earth's failings have such kindly judgment given'; and Paul is right, for this also is a 'gospel,' if we will receive it, that God judges the secrets of men. He sees us, not only as we are, but as we are becoming. 'He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.' With what confidence do the writers of the New Testament take refuge in this thought of God! One of them speaks of 'boldness toward God,' of 'boldness' even 'in the day of judgment.' It is a word that takes one's breath away, and we may well hesitate to make it our own. And yet, if we are set to do His will, past the verdicts of man, past even the sterner verdicts of our own hearts, we may appeal to the love that knoweth all things; we, too, may say, though in uttermost humility, 'With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord.'

### III

This is what the doctrine of the Divine omniscience may be to us; but, let us remember, whatever we

make of it, however little we think of it, however little we like to think of it, it is true; God does know all things. Men go through life sometimes like masked figures at a ball; but God sees behind the masks that men wear. We may deceive each other, we may deceive ourselves, we do not deceive Him. We are what we are, and not what others think we are. Men may take our tinsel for gold; is it therefore gold and not tinsel? When shall we learn that we cannot hoodwink God? 'Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord'; and the elders of Israel, practising their unclean abominations in the dark, said one to another, 'The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.' All the workers of iniquity boast themselves and they say, 'The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob consider.' Is it so that we are seeking to persuade ourselves? Then for us this is the word of the Lord: 'All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do,' and 'The secrets of men shall God judge.'

Search me, O God, and know my heart:

Try me and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting.

## Recent Foreign Theology.

### The Conception of the Numinous.<sup>1</sup>

THIS book of twenty-seven essays, most of them quite short, has grown out of the appendices to Otto's now well-known work, *The Idea of the Holy*, so admirably translated into English by Mr. J. W. Harvey. They are meant to elucidate the conception of the Numinous, the newly coined term by which Otto helpfully indicates the Holy *minus* its moral factor or element. It points, generally speaking, to the supernal or unfathomable aspect of the Divine, and in several of these papers Otto brings out, with a wealth of sympathetic knowledge, the strong emphasis laid on this idea, this side of God's being, by such writers as Chrysostom, August-

<sup>1</sup> *Aufsätze das Numinose betreffend*, by Rudolf Otto (Stuttgart: F. A. Perthes A.-G., 1923; pp. 258).

tine, Eckhart, Luther, and Zinzendorf. We may take it that Otto has fairly made out his point regarding an ingredient in the conception of God which had been too much slurred by rationalism in the past, and that it was salutary for us all to be reminded of the cardinal truth that religion is not morality pure and simple, and that if it be merged indistinguishably in morals it is eviscerated. 'How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'—no one who knows what Biblical religion is will ever deny this lowly agnosticism of faith.

At times, however, one cannot but question whether Otto is not disposed to tip the balance unduly in the other direction. He seems, repeatedly, to be in peril of losing 'the Father' disclosed in Jesus all over again. I have been conscious of this

oftener in this supplementary volume than in its predecessor. It will be no gain if religion be flung back upon sheerly unethical mystery or mystification; is there not a sense in which all moral intelligences are of one order, so that it is the knowable and not the unknowable in God that is most real, near, and sure to the Christian mind? Illustrations of the Numinous from the empty spaces in Mohammedan mosques or from Buddhist painting, in themselves perfectly legitimate, seem occasionally to underline an element of the weird or bizarre in the highest religious notions in a fashion that confuses more than it clarifies the final issue. So again when Otto writes (p. 49): 'Our customary prayers and hymns keep within the region which I call the "rational." They lack what I call the "non-rational" and more especially the "numinous." This, however, is the other half of religion, *and its deeper, more mysterious underground and background.*' The words I have italicized raise a tremendous problem. Is there anything deeper in God than His holy love, or in us than the contrite faith with which we respond to it? If there is, then Hinduism may be as close to the ultimately real in God as Christianity. There are other passages in the present volume which exhibit a like tendency, and all one can say is that they are inconsistencies in a thinker who earlier could put the matter with perfect balance as follows: 'To get the full meaning of the word "holy," as we find it used in the New Testament, we must no longer understand by the "holy" or "sacred" the merely numinous in general, nor even the numinous at its own highest development; we must always understand by it the numinous completely permeated and saturated with elements signifying rationality, purpose, personality, morality' (*Idea of the Holy*, E.T., p. 113).

Allowing for this, there is nothing but enjoyment to be got out of Otto's delicate and masterly studies of the negative theology of the mystics, the importance of silence in worship, the significance of naming God contemplatively in prayer 'He' instead of

'Thou,' the *simplicitas dei*. To Otto, mysticism is just the one-sided development of factors always present in piety as such; Christianity, he agrees with Ritschl, is not mysticism, but it invariably has a mystic tinge—which Ritschl would deny. It is urged that many mystical passages have been interpreted with a dull and unpoetic literalism. What we should find in them really is powerful and vivid figurative representations of the moods of authentic faith.

Students of the Old Testament ought not to miss a paper on the prophetic experience of God, with special reference to Isaiah. Here it is shown how all the great Christian ideas—salvation, grace, the Kingdom of God—are germinally present in that prophet's sense of God. Pentecost itself is in line with Is 6; to refer it to Hellenistic influence is futile. A later essay on the resurrection experiences of the disciples puts forward the suggestive thesis that they were experiences in the Spirit, analogous to those through which prophets were called. Moreover, they can only be interpreted in the Spirit, and this is in fact the only properly *historical* interpretation. We need not try to explain them any more than the experience of regeneration.

There is no space to dwell on four striking essays on sin, 'lostness,' and the religious idea of original guilt. On the last-named subject Otto has much to say that will bear reflection. He does not seem to make out a right to assert 'original' but only intrinsic guilt; many of his statements are as uncontrollable as fine poetry; and he leaves on one's mind the question whether we do not need a third term, other than sin and guilt, to denote the real quality which 'congenital guilt' makes a shot at but misses.

Otto's work has a distinctive tone; once read it is hardly to be forgotten. We owe him a clearer understanding of the fact that religion begins with religion, not with something else, and that it never ceases to be itself.

H. R. MACKINTOSH.

Edinburgh.