

TO KNOW THE TRUE FROM THE FALSE

AN ESSAY BY

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The following was first published in Reader's Digest. Issue Date: August 1972; Vol. 101, No. 604.

There is truth, and there is falsehood. There is good, and there is evil. There is happiness, and there is misery. There is expansiveness, and there is self-withdrawal. There is freedom, and there is slavery.

There is that which ennobles, and there is that which demeans. There is that which conduces to strength and health, and there is that which conspires to weakness and disease. There is a climate of confidence and trust and peace, and there is when the spirit of contradiction and conflict hits you in the face. There is that which puts you in harmony with yourself, with others, with the universe, with God, and there is that which alienates you from yourself, from the world and from God. There is that which makes you feel certain and confident, and there is that which insinuates doubt and uncertainty in your soul. There is that which makes you decisive, and there is that which causes you to waver and equivocate. There is that which opens every pore of your existence to the whispers of being, and there is that which causes you to shut up like a clam. There is when you see God on the face of every man you come across, and there is when you pass men by without even noticing them.

There is when you want to dance and sing, and there is when you have no desire to move or look at anything. There is when you love children and old women and flowers and the drifting clouds and the raging waves, and even the rocks and stones; and there is when you hate everybody and everything – above all, yourself. There is real ecstatic mastery over every impulse in your being, and there is awful flabbiness whereby everything sweeps you away with it. There is life and fullness of being, and there is tending subtly, gradually toward nothingness and death.

These things are different and separate and totally distinguishable from one another. Truth is not the same as falsehood, happiness is not the same as misery. We will not be far wrong if we say the first elements of these 17 pairs all come from the living God, and the second elements all from the devil.

The greatest error in modern times is the confusion between these orders of being. Nothing is anything firm in itself — this is the great heresy of the modern world. But, there is no power on earth or in heaven that can make falsehood truth, evil good, misery happiness, slavery freedom. And yet what do philosophers tell you in the great centers of

learning? They insist that everything depends on what you mean, on how you define the thing, so that truth properly defined could be falsehood. Yet it is the devil himself when you are denied the firmness and certainty of being, when everything is made dependent on you. For then the mind becomes blurred and blunted in its judgement that it fails to see the real, given distinction between things.

How do we become true and good, happy and genuine, joyful and free? Never by magic, never by chance, never by sitting and waiting, but only by getting in touch with good, true, happy, genuine human beings, only by seeking the company of the strong and the free, only by catching spontaneity and freedom from those who are themselves spontaneous and free.

You will then develop a sharpness of perception to differentiate unerringly between the true and the phony, between the beautiful and the hideous, the noble and the mean. You will also develop the ability to blush, the ability to cry and shed tears, the ability to repent, the ability to fall on your knees and pray, the ability to become a real more human person.

Should you read the Bible – both Old and New Testaments, especially the Psalms and the Gospels – reverently and prayerfully every day, should you read the deepest and purest saints and men of God, should you faithfully serve the church and participate in the fullness of its life despite its endless frailties and imperfections and tribulations, should you practice the great art of mental and moral discipline, and should you seek, with love and expectation and self-giving, the company of those who do these things, I guarantee you two things: first, that you will experience in your own life and being a taste of what is beautiful and strong and certain and free; and second, you will develop such a sharpness of vision as to distinguish the true from the false whenever you come across them. And both your being and your vision will grant you some knowledge of God.