

Evelyn Underhill Quotes

“On every level of life, from housework to heights of prayer, in all judgment and efforts to get things done, hurry and impatience are sure marks of the amateur.”

“If God were small enough to be understood, He would not be big enough to be worshipped.”

“In mysticism that love of truth which we saw as the beginning of all philosophy leaves the merely intellectual sphere, and takes on the assured aspect of a personal passion. Where the philosopher guesses and argues, the mystic lives and looks; and speaks, consequently, the disconcerting language of first-hand experience, not the neat dialectic of the schools. Hence whilst the Absolute of the metaphysicians remains a diagram —impersonal and unattainable—the Absolute of the mystics is lovable, attainable, alive.” *Mysticism*

“Every minute you are thinking of evil, you might have been thinking of good instead. Refuse to pander to a morbid interest in your own misdeeds. Pick yourself up, be sorry, shake yourself, and go on again.”

Eternity is with us, inviting our contemplation perpetually, but we are too frightened, lazy, and suspicious to respond; too arrogant to still our thought, and let divine sensation have its way. It needs industry and goodwill if we would make that transition; for the process involves a veritable spring-cleaning of the soul, a turning-out and rearrangement of our mental furniture, a wide opening of closed windows, that the notes of the wild birds beyond our garden may come to us fully charged with wonder and freshness, and drown with their music the noise of the gramophone within. Those who do this, discover that they have lived in a stuffy world, whilst their inheritance was a world of morning-glory: where every tit-mouse is a celestial messenger, and every thrusting bud is charged with the full significance of life.” *Practical Mysticism*

“The spiritual life of individuals has to be extended both vertically to God and horizontally to other souls; and the more it grows in both directions, the less merely individual and therefore more truly personal it will become.”

“Idealism, though just in its premises, and often daring and honest in their application, is stultified by the exclusive intellectualism of its own methods: by its fatal trust in the squirrel-work of the industrious brain instead of the piercing vision of the desirous heart. It interests man, but does not involve him in its processes: does not catch him up to the new and more real life which it describes. Hence the thing that matters, the living thing, has somehow escaped it; and its observations bear the same relation to reality as the art of the anatomist does to the mystery of birth.” *Mysticism*

“All men, at one time or another, have fallen in love with the veiled Isis whom they call Truth. With most, this has been a passing passion: they have early seen its hopelessness and turned to more practical things. But others remain all their lives the devout lovers of reality: though the manner of their love, the vision which they make to themselves of the beloved object varies enormously. Some see Truth as Dante saw Beatrice: an adorable yet intangible figure, found in this world yet revealing the next. To others she seems rather an evil but an irresistible enchantress: enticing, demanding payment and betraying her lover at the last. Some have seen her in a

test tube, and some in a poet's dream: some before the altar, others in the slime. The extreme pragmatists have even sought her in the kitchen; declaring that she may best be recognized by

her utility. Last stage of all, the ~~Philosophical~~ ~~Indivisible~~ ~~Quoted~~ ~~and~~ ~~Unsuccessful~~ ~~courtship~~ by assuring himself that his mistress is not really there." *Mysticism*

"For a lack of attention a thousand forms of loveliness elude us everyday" *Mysticism*

"Therefore it is to a practical mysticism that the practical man is here invited: to a training of his latent faculties, a bracing and brightening of his languid consciousness, an emancipation from the fetters of appearance, a turning of his attention to new levels of the world. Thus he may become aware of the universe which the spiritual artist is always trying to disclose to the race. This amount of mystical perception—this "ordinary contemplation," as the specialists call it—is possible to all men: without it, they are not wholly conscious, nor wholly alive. It is a natural human activity, no more involving the great powers and sublime experiences of the mystical saints and philosophers than the ordinary enjoyment of music involves the special creative powers of the great musician. *Practical Mysticism*

"Mysticism is the art of union with Reality." *Mysticism*

"As the beautiful does not exist for the artist and poet alone—though these can find in it more poignant depths of meaning than other men—so the world of Reality exists for all; and all may participate in it, unite with it, according to their measure and to the strength and purity of their desire." *Practical Mysticism*

"The business and method of mysticism is love." *Mysticism*

"As the genuine religious impulse becomes dominant, adoration more and more takes charge. 'I come to seek God because I need Him', may be an adequate formula for prayer. 'I come to adore His splendour, and fling myself and all that I have at His feet', is the only possible formula for worship."