

THE COMPLETENESS OF THE TRUTH

We do not know, when we first become acquainted with the Truth, how complete a thing it is in its adaption to all the wants of man. We know it is glad tidings, in the sense of reporting to us a coming deliverance otherwise unattainable, but we do not know its completeness as a supply for all our needs. It is questionable if we will ever rise in the present state to the full appreciation it calls for. Our faculties are so weak, and our surroundings are so uncongenial, that the vision has scarcely a chance of full development. If we could see it as it is, we should be heartier in our appreciation of it, and more emphatic and cordial in the expression of our praise. I often wish we could see all the fervour of Salvation Army methodism joined with all the light and beauty of divine wisdom and knowledge. This was the combination in David's case; it is undoubtedly the combination that will be seen in the "*general assembly and ecclesia of the firstborn.*"

We will spend a few minutes profitably if we try and take a rapid survey of the excellent features of the Truth. First of all it supplies the personal needs we feel in the state in which we live. All human beings are not conscious of the personal needs I refer to. Our presence at the Table this morning justifies the hope that we do not belong to them. A thoughtful mind recognises the force of David's question,

"He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that formed the ear, shall He not hear?"

Looking abroad on the vast framework of wisdom and might visible in heaven and earth, in things great and small, the mind infers by inevitable induction that eternal power and intelligence lives and reigns. The mind in its full action gravitates as naturally, as irresistibly, to God as the needle to the pole; or rather, it yearns and aspires, and pants after contact with the Eternal. Now where is this aspiration to be fulfilled?

Nature can do nothing for us, except in telling us of God in the language of its awful silences. Mountains and oceans, yawning space and sparkling worlds but overawe us with their greatness. The skill manifest in the constitution of little and even invisible things only baffles with its inscrutability. We can only see the work in nature, we cannot see the Worker; and it is the Worker we require to know. By the Truth we know Him, and only thus. He has revealed Himself and therefore we can become acquainted with Him.

"This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

In this we feel we have cause to greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, we may be, we may be in heaviness through manifold trials. If we do not rise to the fulness of the joy which the fact is capable of yielding, it is because the flesh is weak, though the Spirit is more and more willing. Shortly, the flesh will be swallowed up by the Spirit, and then in strength and light and joy we shall praise as befits the Truth.

The next inexpressible suitability of the Truth lies in the enlightenment it affords us with regard to acceptability with God. We might know God, and be ignorant of our relation to Him. Overpowered like the publican of the parable with the burden of our unworthiness, we

might scarcely dare to hope for approbation and salvation. Where can we know wherewith to approach God with the confidence of friendship? Nowhere in the wide realm of human life, but here, in the gospel. The apostles invisibly stand before us at this Table, and tell us that to them was committed the ministry of our reconciliation; that this ministry takes palpable shape, that *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,”* and that all that He asks at our hands is that we heartily believe and humbly submit to His requirements in the case.

“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

“The wages of sin is death,”—

but He offers to cast all our sins behind His back, and to receive us as reconciled and acceptable children. His requirements are not burdensome; His commandments are not grievous. Love has the highest place among them, and love is the easiest thing. Love is the element in which we may come short. The world is so dark and cold, and we are necessarily so intimately associated with the world in our present life, that love has little chance of growing. Everything nips and blights and oppresses and kills, in divine directions; yet in itself love is the most powerful, the most prevailing, and the most easily managed impulse of which we are capable. Love God and love man, and the rest is easy. Oh, let us fight this battle; it is worth the conflict. We are bound to lose this life; we are bound to get through; in any case, we are bound to lay everything down, and faint and fail, and pass away. If we have been overcome by the bitternesses and darknesses and weaknesses and futilities of a mere self-defensive animal life our existence will have been a failure; whereas, if we yield to the power of love, to God and man, even if it costs our life, we shall achieve a great victory, a double victory, for life now is sweetened and ennobled by love. But consider the glory of being lifted out of the grave by the outstretched hand of beneficent omnipotence, and invited to a place among the shining galaxies of the immortal family of God; Oh, how unspeakable the prize!

Then we need practical principles of life, that will enable us to make the best of the poor mortal state we are in. There is nothing comparable to the Truth here; the maxims of the Truth are all noble and bright and divine. They are such as are calculated to make man beautiful, and they do make him beautiful in the measure in which they prevail with him. They doubtless entail inconveniences, but these are temporary, and are alleviated by the reflection that God, who fills heaven and earth, has the oversight of those who fear Him, and will not allow the inconveniences to press more severely than may be needed for purposes of discipline and ultimate well-being. A man may succeed in life, as the world reckons success, by acting on the selfish propensities; he may do well to himself, and make himself insensible to the well-being of his neighbours; but such success is a poor achievement, whichever way it is reckoned. Even now, such a man is despised by those who profess to respect him, though it is truly written,

“Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.”

The praise is a sinister praise; men defer to success only on the chance of getting a share of it. A successful selfish man will find the true estimate in which he is held after his success deserts him. The friends of sunshine all disappear when the sun goes down, whereas a man acting on divine principles is loved, not for what he has, but for what he is; and if all that he has deserts him, the reality of friendship, which submission to God creates, will be manifest in the constancy of friendship under clouds. This, of course, is a limited consideration, but

still of force so far as it goes. A man of God is prepared to face the experience of the prophets, who were destitute, tormented, afflicted, to the end of their days, of whom the world was not worthy. Nevertheless, it is true that even for the present life godliness is profitable; that is, it imparts a beauty and a sweetness to mortal existence which are unattainable under mere principles of the flesh. So that the Truth is a priceless preceptor and guide and preservative even now, in the darkness where we walk.

But it is chiefly in its bearing on the futurity that lies ahead that the peerless excellence of the Truth appears.

“What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?”

Away from the Truth the answer to this is doleful indeed. What man indeed? Not the highest, not the richest, not the most gifted, not the most blameless, not the most loved, can escape the inflexible law which works in every human frame and dissolves it in death at last. The grave opens her mouth, and the whole stream of human glory descends into it from age to age.

“Shall any deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?”

If the answer depended upon our individual ability there would be nothing ahead but the darkness of despair. No man can bring himself back from death. Is it then an impossibility? In the abstract, reason could but refuse to assert this. Reason would say that it must be possible for life to be restored, and that it must be possible for it to last for ever, but, of course, this is not enough. Men starving in an open boat at sea are not saved by knowing it is abstractly possible for food to be brought to them. Here the truth, and the truth alone, brings hope.

“Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”

Not by man generally, but by one man in each case, by Adam and Christ. Apart from Christ, there is no hope at all; in him we have a hope sure and certain. God has given him the power over all flesh to do as he wills, and he has made known his ready and most gracious willingness to exercise it beneficially towards all who humble themselves to his requirements.

“Him that cometh to me,” he says, *“I will in no wise cast out.”*

Not only so, but he has issued his invitation to—

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Oh! How comforting and consoling are his words in the bleak desert of human life as it now is upon earth; and how distressing it is that in the population there should be such a brutish insensibility to the advance he makes. Well it is for his brethren to be steadfast and immovable, both in the confidence and rejoicing of this hope. It is only for a short time that it requires to be a matter of hope; in the end hope will be swallowed up in glorious and everlasting and ecstatic sight.

Finally, when we look abroad upon the hapless state of man upon the earth, his bad social arrangements, by which the bulk of the race are doomed to joyless poverty and

grinding toil, and all the blights and evils that accompany such a state; when we look back upon the terrible history of darkness and bloodshed; when we contemplate the ferments of hatred and strife and evil that destroy his life in all countries and states; when we think of the failures of every form of government, all the injustices and oppressions that wring tears and blood from millions; when we consider the insane spectacle of earth's industry being mainly lavished in the maintenance and training of fighting men in countless multitudes; and when we see as the net result of all these confusions how ignoble and abortive a thing is human life in all cities, towns and villages, what heights of elegant folly with some, and what depths of hideous misery with many, we feel exercised in two ways. It is impossible not to share the distress and indignation of that class of political agitators who advocate the equal rights of man, the overthrow of monopoly, and the establishment of socialism. At the same time, discretion tells us how futile are their claims and how disastrous would be the experiment they recommend. Good judgment tells us there is no hope in any human direction, and the knowledge of the gospel comes in as a healing balm in the midst of all the woe; while it explains to us the reason of man's misery, it also gives us the joyful information that God Himself has a plan for the ending of human woe; that He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by Christ, and that that judgment will be so effectual that mankind will abandon war, and be compelled to accept a law that will bring light and life to all their ways. He will judge for the poor and needy, and break in pieces the oppressor. He will end all monopolies, and send the rich empty away. He will distribute the earth's boundless blessing of earth's teeming populations, and establish goodwill among men, on the rational basis of glory to God in the highest. Well may we shout with David,

“O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for Thou wilt judge the people rightly, and govern the nations upon the earth.”

Meanwhile, our prayer with thanksgiving must be his—

“God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.”

“Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, for ever and ever, Amen.”

Taken from: - “Seasons of Comfort” Vol. 2

By Bro. Robert Roberts