

He That Is True

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From *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 9, “Epistle to the Church of Philadelphia”, 1831

Christ as the True One

Revelation 3

⁷ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things says...He that is true.

THE word here translated *true* is not the simple primitive word, but a derivative, which is perhaps better rendered truthful or real. It is applied by the Greek classics when they would distinguish the real from the fictitious; as the “real horse,” in opposition to the horse in the picture.

1 Thessalonians 1

⁹ ...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

Here God is called “the True,” in contradistinction to idols; and in *1 John* we have it, in the same connection, applied both to God and to Christ:

1 John 5

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ.

²¹ This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Now it will be remembered that the main scope of all this *First Epistle of John* is to preserve the Church from impostors,

false prophets, false spirits, and false professors of the Gospel; and therefore I think it reasonable to infer from these its last words, that the idea which the Apostle would convey by the word *true*, is real, in opposition to all fiction; true, in opposition to all falsehood; truthfulness, in opposition to every shadow of pretense.

The like conclusion have we from considering the first chapter of the Gospel by John, where Christ is set forth as the true Light, in opposition to all pretenders, and even in distinction from those who only reflected the light that was in Him, and in particular to John the Baptist:

John 1

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

⁷ The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

⁹ That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.

This adds another thing necessary to complete the meaning of the word true, as a designation of Christ—to wit, that He, and He alone, of all whom God had sent is the real one, the rest being only witnesses of and to Him, representatives as it were of His Person, but not the real Person Himself; and for this reason it is that in the same context it is said...

John 1

¹⁷ ...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

All that had come before being but types and shadows of that truth which in Him came forth full and clear. When it is said therefore in the text, “I am the true One,” I am inclined to comprehend under that word all which is contained in John’s announcement, “Truth came by Jesus Christ.”

Understanding this, I interpret it to signify that in Him the

whole truth of Godhead stands bodied forth, that, as God is a Person, He is incapable of being expressed truly, but by a person, and though the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made. *Romans 1:20*. Still over all these things, the Head and Lord was a Person, made on purpose to be an image and likeness of God.

Yet Adam was only an image, and not the reality of God. Christ is not the image, but the reality of God. He is the Person in the world who sets out completely and truly the Person of God; who is not in the world, neither can be.

John 14

⁹ ...he that has seen Me has seen the Father.

“I am the true One.” Moses is but a representative, and the Jews but the members of that representative head, the shadow of a people, the form and figure of the truth.

“Therefore, O angel of the Philadelphian Church, heed not these troublers of your peace who say they are Jews, but are not, being of the synagogue of Satan. I am the true One; and there is in Me no pretense, no formality, no apparition, no counterfeit. Therefore be free from all pretense, hypocrisy, simulation, and dissimulation. Be true, for I am true. Put away from you the desire of a name: be filled with the love of the truth, for I am the Truth.”

Living Truth

As we have observed, the temptation of his neighbor the angel of Sardis was, to be carried away with the love of a name, which, in the historical aspect of the epistle, is the temptation of the Churches called Protestant, and especially of the Church in this land which is the head of Protestantism; and above all, of the Church in Scotland, which is the most Protestant of all Protestant Churches. And being so, I hold up this designation of Christ to my brethren, the ministers, pres-

byters, and deacons of the Church, as most worthy of their study and imitation.

Exact truth and sterling honesty do well become men of every name and profession; and without this first quality of a man, the seed of God's verity will not take root in his heart; but, above all others, it becomes the ministers and rulers of the Church, who represent Him whose name is The Truth.

Be done, O brethren, with your forms and formularies of truth, as if it were enough to have subscribed to these with your hand; be the Truth, embody a living epistle.

- Show your faith in God's sovereign and electing love by living, moving, and having your being in Him.
- Show your belief in Christ's universal atonement, by being gracious unto all, and willing to die for the sake of the most worthless.
- Show your belief in the in-working of the Holy Ghost, by speaking as the oracles, and working the works, of God.
- Be ashamed to have written your faith in these things, so long as you possess not the living substance of these things.
- Show yourselves Christians, by serving Christ; Churchmen, by loving the brethren; ministers of the people, by keeping wisdom in your lips and in your heart.

But you are become either zealots, or mere professors of the truth. Cease from these extremes, and become clean and holy through the truth. Truth is a person—Jesus Christ is Truth, and truth never is until it be alive in a person.

It is idolatry to worship truth elsewhere than in a person; and it is promoting the service of idolatry to uphold truth in any form, save that of a living person. You are a base hypocrite if you merely sign a book, and show not the contents of

the book in your person. And what I say to you ministers, I say to all men: become what you believe—live the thing which you believe to be true.

Holiness and Truth are Inseparable

Christ, in thus addressing the angel of the Philadelphian Church, puts a stamp upon honesty in a minister of religion; which I desire devoutly to possess; which the fear of man and the power of public opinion are ever seeking to destroy in my heart, and which nothing but you, O Spirit of Truth, are able to continue there.

O, he that would be true in such a time as this must convict many men of being liars, and should be prepared for the opprobrious name of insolent and presumptuous fellow, the fate of being cast out and crucified every day in those members of affection and loving-kindness which are dearer to a man than the flesh of his body.

O, it is a feeble voice that I can lift up amidst the whirlwind of the public voice: but for the sake of the multitude, tossed and tempest driven, I will lift it up from the high place where God has stationed me; and some mariners, wiser than the rest, may hear my warning voice.

Hear then, all you people; and give ear, you ministers of the people, He who is holy and true has witnessed that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And without truth there can be no holiness; for He has testified again in His last prayer:

John 17

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth: Your word is truth.

And that Spirit who is the quickening principle of the new life is ever denominated by these two names, the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Truth, because truth is holiness in the mind, and holiness is truth in the members: they are inseparable.

To have dared to separate them is one of the infinite enormities of the mother of abominations, who dared to sanctify a lie by maintaining that the end justified the means.

And following her example, the evangelical system is fast bringing religion into the same bondage. I believe in my heart that as foul things, before heaven, have been done for the promotion of our religious societies, as great concealments, yea, and misrepresentations of the truth, as dishonorable and dishonest methods of gaining popular favor, as were ever employed by the regular and mendicant orders of the Church of Rome. And it would have proceeded to much greater length than it has, had it not been resisted by the honest and upright character which the religious and political institutions of this kingdom had impressed upon that worldly society which our evangelical system is continually affecting to despise.

The Right of Private Judgment

The way by which you will recover yourselves from this snare of the devil is to resume your personality; and, while you give all reverence to other persons, and all diligent study to natural things, you must remember that in order to constitute a responsible person before God, before the Church, and before the State, you must sit the arbiter of your own thought, word, or act. And only in so far forth as you exercise this sacred right of private judgment are you a man at all.

If you do not, you are a thing, a piece of human mechanism, wrought by some spirit of another man, or of a devil, but a man you are not, neither a member of the body of Christ, nor yet acted on by the Holy Ghost.

For the Church of Christ, if it be a building of many stones, these stones are every one alive. If it be a body of many members, these members are every one made free, and acting by no law, but the royal law of liberty.

The Church's unity stands, not in the extinction of personal liberty, but in the regeneration of it; so as that each man shall show himself to be the work of one God, the member of one Christ, the inspiration of one Spirit, by working to the same one effect in all diversities of time, place, and circumstance.

God redeems man by making him free, and he expects man in his freedom to bring forth the free-will tribute of a whole life devoted unto that Christ who has redeemed him. God overbears no one; the devil overbears every one. Christianity overbears no one; the Papacy overbears every one. They are not men, they are stocks and stones, who will out of any reverence yield up their personal liberty.

It is not religion to be in bondage to any man, or to any system of men: it is religion to be free.

O God! how You have ennobled man.
O with what nobility You have entrusted him,
For You do reverence Your own image,
You do love Your own offspring.
All nature is combined
To chain him down upon the naked rock,
And to tear out the vitals of his peace:
You alone consult for his peace.

Therefore if you would escape out of the region of untruth, into the region of truth, you must first cease from being bondsmen of the Evangelical system, or of any system, Calvinistic, Arminian, Pelagian, Utilitarian, and become free men, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

O what a redemption was needed to make such bondsmen free: being made free, let us not again become entangled with the yoke of bondage. Be all law abolished, but the law of the Spirit, the royal law of liberty.

O man, seek the freedom of the will, and in your free love

of goodness behold the present God:

- there is no presence of God, but in the will to do good;
- there is no presence of Christ, but in the way to do good;
- there is no presence of the Spirit, but in the act of doing good;

And goodness in the will, in the way, and in the acting, is man redeemed, man united to Christ, man inhabited by the Spirit, man glorifying his Maker. This is holiness, this is truth, this is dignity, this is blessedness. There is no God like unto our God, and there is no creature like unto a man renewed in the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. Well has the wisdom of man said:

“Honesty is the best policy.”

And well has the poet written:

“An honest man is the noblest work of God.”

These designations of the great Head of the Church, convey to man the very essence of God, and constitute Him the great center of holiness in the creation of God, the hope of every groaning sinner seeking righteousness and finding it not, the joy of every seduced, misled, and lost creature, showing him the way back again to truth and honor.