

Truth

R. F. Cottrell

There is a vast difference between truth and error; though through the influence of sectarianism many have come to the conclusion that the difference is quite unimportant. It makes no difference, say they, what a man believes, if he is only sincere. But it seems quite evident if we take the Scriptures for our guide in the matter, that men may be left really and sincerely "to believe a lie," and that, as a consequence, they may be damned "who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." All admit that we must worship God in *spirit*, in order to our acceptance; but it is no less required of us that we should worship him in *truth*. And as God's requirements are just, we may, notwithstanding all the jargon of sectarianism, attain to a knowledge of the truth. Very important, then, and interesting is the inquiry,

What is truth? As Jesus came into the world to bear witness unto the truth, we will hear his testimony on the point. In his prayer to his Father in behalf of his disciples, he prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word is truth.*" John xvii, 17.

The word of God is truth; and nothing he has ever uttered through the agency of prophets or apostles can have a higher claim to be called his word than the Ten Words which he spake from Sinai. Accordingly

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the Holy Spirit testifies by David, "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and *thy law is the truth.*" Ps. cxix, 142. "Thou art near, O Lord, and *all thy commandments are truth.*" Verse 151. The ten commandments are the truth, because they are founded on the unchangeable principles of truth, justice, and righteousness. The precept, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is the truth, because there is no other God. And each one of these commandments expresses a great and important truth. The

Sabbath commandments, no less than the rest, tells the truth. It says, "In six days God made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." This truth cannot be abolished or changed. It is a fact-a thing done-and it cannot be undone. And as we are his creatures, we are ever bound to honor him as our Creator, by remembering the day of his rest to keep it holy.

To abolish the law of God, would be to abolish the truth. To change any one of its precepts, would be to "change the truth of God into a lie." To keep the first day of the week as the Sabbath, would represent that God rested on the first day, and then labored the other six, which is not the truth. Hence, David says, "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever." Verse 160. All these commandments are truth and righteousness; and God has declared that his righteousness shall not be abolished. "My tongue shall speak of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness." Verse 172. The Lord says by Isaiah, "But my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." He immediately adds, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness,

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the people *in whose heart is my law.*" Isa. li, 6, 7.

The law of God is the truth; and Jesus says, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." He testifies as follows: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v, 17-19. Our Lord sealed this his testimony by dying for our transgressions of the law; thus attesting in the strongest manner possible, its eternal justice and truth.

Paul agrees with David, that the law of God is the truth. He says, "An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast

the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law." See Rom. ii, 17-20. He is speaking of the moral, and not the ceremonial law, for he adds, "Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" Verses 21, 22.

The truth must be obeyed. Faith in Christ exempts no one from obedience to the law of God. Says Paul, "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon *every soul of man* that doeth evil." Rom. ii, 8, 9. They

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that do not obey the truth obey unrighteousness. What is unrighteousness? "All unrighteousness is sin." What is sin? "Sin is the transgression of the law." Then they that obey unrighteousness transgress the law, while they that obey the truth do not transgress it. And the wrath of God will come upon every soul, Jew or Gentile, who does not obey the truth.

1 Pet. i, 22. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." It may be objected that this text has reference to obedience to the *gospel*, by which their souls were purified. Admit it. But what is the first requirement of the gospel upon those who are convinced of its truth and are "pricked in their hearts?" Repentance. Repentance of what? Of sin. What is sin? Transgression of the law. Then it is impossible for a person to obey the gospel without turning from the transgression to the obedience of the law of God. Repentance has reference solely to the violated law. Hence Paul ever preached the perpetuity of the law of God; for he testified both to Jews and Greeks, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Truth purifies and sanctifies the soul. "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth." Will obedience to error produce the same effect? If it will, it makes but little difference which we hold; but if it will not, it is of vast importance that we have the truth.

"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Some speak of sanctification as if it were a work of the Spirit, in answer to their prayers,

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without any particular reference to the word of truth. And sometimes they make this sanctification a shield with which to ward off the truth. Speak to them of a duty which they neglect and they reply, "The Lord would not bless me as he does, if I were wrong." This is reversing the order of God. Instead of saying, The Lord hears our prayers, and therefore he does not require us to obey his word, we should rather say, with an apostle, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

The person that is sanctified, in the scriptural sense of the term, is wholly set apart to do the will of God. And he will find his moral duties in the word. Says Jesus, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. iv, 13. Salvation is obtained through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Will the belief of a lie do just as well if we only believe it? Let us see. Commencing with verse 9, we read, "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the *love of the truth*, that they might be *saved*. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should *believe a lie*; that they all might be *damned who believed not the truth*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Those who do not love and believe the

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truth have pleasure in unrighteousness; that is, they have pleasure in the violation of God's law, which is truth and righteousness. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,

and men loved darkness (error) rather than light (truth), *because their deeds were evil.*" The disobedient fear to know what the truth is, lest it should condemn them, therefore they close their eyes against the light, and this very course proves their condemnation. As light increases they ought to hail it with joy; but instead of this, they begin to say, "Our forefathers were good folks, and we believe that we can be saved by doing as they did."

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii, 32. Some avoid the truth as a yoke of bondage; but let him that would be free indeed, seek and obey the truth. Says David, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts." "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

The truth always meets with opposition. "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it." John viii, 44. The Devil abode not in the truth—he broke the commandments of God and became a murderer and a liar. Therefore he and all that hold to his side, hate and oppose the truth. People hold to such parts of the commandments of God as custom and the consent of the community have made fashionable; but present

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an unpopular truth for their obedience, and it will prove them whether they are of God. "He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Verse 47.

Earthly governments oppose the truth; and that one called by our Saviour, "The abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," was most successful in its opposition. The little horn of Dan. viii, is evidently a symbol of the Roman government. Of this power it is said, "And it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced and prospered." Dan. viii, 12. What was this truth, and in what way was it cast down? A reference to chap. vii, 25, will explain. The little horn of this chapter is a symbol of the same

Roman government in its Papal form. Its opposition to the truth of God is thus expressed: "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws." It was the laws of God that he would think to change; and those laws are the truth. To change these laws is to cast down the truth to the ground; or, as Paul expresses it, to change the truth of God into a lie. Rom. i, 25. "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator." The apostle is speaking of idolators-those who worshiped created things, and who "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things." They broke the first and second commandments. The truth, that there is but one living and true God, they changed into a lie, by worshiping the creature; thus denying the truth taught in these commandments.

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Now the fourth precept of this same law requires us to remember the day of the Creator's rest, to keep it holy. If we refuse to do this, or professing to obey, change the day and observe one on which he did not rest, do we not as really change the truth of God into a lie? The Sabbath law is the truth equally with every other commandment of the decalogue. And when we have witnessed the many flimsy theories and excuses by which its claims are perverted and set aside, we have been forcibly reminded of the words of Isaiah, concerning the person that breaks the second commandment, "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isa. xlv, 20.

The truth will be resisted in the last days. The Roman power has fulfilled the predictions concerning it. It has cast down the truth to the ground-changed the times and laws of God, and enforced the observance of a substitute of the Sabbath of the Lord. The example of the "Mother Church" has been followed, and will be to the last. Hence Paul, in describing the religionists of the *last days*, says, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of

the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." 2 Tim. iii, 7, 8. It is in view of the perils of the last days, when men "having a form of godliness" shall deny its power and resist the truth, that the apostle, after affirming the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures to make the man of God perfect, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," proceeds to give the following most solemn charge: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord

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Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, *Preach the word.*" Chap. iv, 1, 2. This solemn charge is not exclusively to Timothy, "ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians," but it rests with special force upon all that occupy a similar position in the *last days*, of which the apostle is prophesying. For he adds, "The time *will come* when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Are we in the last days? If we are, do we recognize the fulfillment of this prediction? Where are the teachers that preach the word, the whole word, the unchanged and unchangeable law of God? If one tittle of that law has failed, the word of Christ has failed. But the fables of the abolition and of the change of that law are heard almost everywhere. There are heaps of teachers who teach these and other fables. But still the solemn injunction, *Preach the word*, has come down to, and rests upon, us in these last days; and the word *will be preached*. And it is not a word that is all gospel and no law. If it were, it could not "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." Though the masses have turned away their ears from the truth, the truth must, and will be, preached to all that have ears to hear, and hearts to obey.

In Isa. lix, we have a description of the state of things existing in these last days. It is evident that it applies to the last days; for the Lord immediately repays "fury to his adversaries." He is displeased at the state of things described, and puts on the garments of vengeance. And we are plainly told that

"the Redeemer shall come to Zion," or rather *out of Zion*. Verses 15-20. See Rom. xi, 26; Ps. xiv, 7. In what state then will the Redeemer find the world in relation to the truth? Let us hear. "Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies." Verses 3, 4. "In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment." Verses 13-15.

What is transgressing, but violating the law of God? And what is "lying against the Lord," if justifying our transgression by saying that he has abolished or changed his own law, is not? or by claiming to keep the *spirit* of the law, when we will not so much as keep the letter? Truly, truth faileth, and he that departeth from this evil course, maketh himself a prey. If he embraces *all* the commandments of God, the artillery of nominal religion is immediately turned against him. But, blessed be the Lord, some will depart from evil and breast the storm of persecution. Such will soon hear their Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" A time of trouble and persecution is before us, but the saints of God will be delivered out of it; for

The truth is able to save. It will be the shield and buckler of the saints in the time of trouble, their seal and passport to the city of God. The time of trouble,

when the wrath of God will be poured out in the seven last plagues, and the wicked of earth will be cut off, is described in Ps. xci, and the security of God's people at that time is thus expressed: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: *his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.* Thou shalt not be

afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. Ps. xci, 4-10. Such will be the security of the Lord's people in the evil day. The truth will shield them while the enemies of the Lord sink beneath the unmingled wrath of God. Does any one believe that error and falsehood will be as good a shield? Certainly not. *Now* is the time to procure this shield and buckler.

The apostle Peter in view of the coming of the Lord, exhorts us as follows: "Wherefore, *gird up the loins of your mind*, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. i, 13. This is in perfect accordance with what our Saviour said in reference to the same event. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Luke

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xii, 35, 36. What is to be the girdle for our loins? Let Paul answer. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." Eph. vi, 14. The girdle then is the truth, and this is closely connected with the breastplate which is righteousness, or right doing-obedience to the law of God which is the truth.

"Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Isa. xxvi, 2. Ah! here is the grand result. The gates of the city of God will be thrown open, and the righteous nation that keepeth the truth will be welcomed in. And since the law of God is the truth, how beautifully does this harmonize with the last benediction of the coming One: "Blessed are they that do

his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. xxii, 14.

How valuable then is the truth! But while we would exalt the truth of the law to its proper place, we do not detract anything from the mercy and peace of the gospel. How beautifully are the law and gospel blended together! In the language of David, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. lxxxv, 10. God can justify the penitent sinner that believes in Jesus, and yet maintain the justice of his law, and secure future obedience. And those thus reclaimed through faith in Christ, become a righteous nation that keep the truth, and will have a right to the city of God. Since, then, the truth is of such infinite value, it is a question of the greatest importance,

How can we know the truth? The acquisition of this inestimable knowledge is not the exclusive privilege

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of the wise and prudent of this world. The poor may obtain it as well as the rich; especially if they be poor in spirit. No collegiate course of instruction can avail so much toward gaining this knowledge, as a spirit of humble obedience to the will of God. We shall find a genuine and infallible guide to the knowledge of the truth in the word of God.

"Says Jesus, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii, 31, 32. Again, "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. *If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine*, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. Chap. vii, 16, 17. What is the will of him that sent Jesus, if it is not expressed in the Ten Words which he spake with his own voice, and engraved with his own finger on tables of stone? The person that is humble enough to do these precepts, through evil as well as good report, is better qualified to know the truth of a doctrine, than all the "doctors of divinity" in the world who break were it the least of these commandments, and *teach men so*. "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding

than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Ps. cxix, 98-100. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the TRUTH is not in him." 1 Jno. ii, 3, 4.

There is a "*present truth*," 2 Pet. i, 12, for the present time. The present truth is that God is now

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moving out a message, Rev. xiv, 9-12, by which to restore his down-trodden truth to all the remnant of his little flock, in order to prepare them for translation into his everlasting kingdom at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is near, even at the door.

Reader, if you would be of that happy number, *obey the truth*. R. F. C.

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