

# THE RECOVERED TRUTH IN THE LATTER DAYS

BOTHER, sister, do you often, from your vantage ground in the truth, take a look upon the world of a so-called Chistendom lying in darkness profound and unlifting. All around you is this darkness and moral and religious death, involving all in one common ruin. Ignorance of the purpose of God in creation is profound, and enlightenment is refused. The light of truth is lost in that darkness and fails to enlighten that ignorance. Who will rouse them from their slumber of death? Nothing but the judgments of God abroad in the earth will be able to rouse them out of that death sleep.

A gruesome and sorrowful picture it is indeed to greet the eyes and mind of him who lives and moves and has his moral and intellectual being in the light of the truth of Abraham's God. The faith of Abraham and the hope of Israel find no place in the minds of the teeming millions who have a faith and hope bound by the cords of death. Upon such a picture with what terrible force fall these words of Jesus: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find the faith upon the earth?" What means that language? Is it not that while there may be an abundance of abstract faith in the earth, there will be little or none of the faith that embraces the substance of the Promises, the things of the Kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, the faith of the fathers and the prophets and the apostles of the Lord? There is no other interpretation to be put upon these words. They mean that the true and saving faith will be as scarce upon the earth as righteousness was in Sodom and Gomorrah.

With such a picture before the mind, what is the duty of him who stands in and looks out from the saving light and blessed promises of God's truth embodied in the Gospel of His dear Son? Is it not to let the light shine into the minds of a benighted people, to sound forth into their ears the things that constitute the true and saving faith, whether they will or will not hear? No one who is of the light can be silent without being disobedient. Remember the "candle" and the "bushel." Who would want to be silent when he is the possessor of such light and the world groping in the darkness of a false faith and dead hope? A selfish and disobedient person alone could think of shutting up the light in himself before a world perishing for the want of the bread of life.

While it is true that each child of the light should be light to a world sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, yet there is a more pressing duty resting upon each one in this "the time of the end." There is an ecclesial and a personal work to be done that is of greater moment. Whilst the enlightenment of the world should not be neglected, and the fishing in that world for children for Abraham should be pushed energetically, yet there are fish already in the net that require preparation for the assortment of the Great Fisherman.

Putting figurative language aside, let us plainly look at the work before the children of God. This is no longer a time for discovering the truth. That work has been done, even done in the days and by the labours of Dr. Thomas. Since then it has simply been a work of sounding known and established truth into the ears of all who will hear to take out of the world by its power a people for the seed of Abraham, or heirs with Christ Jesus to the promised inheritance. The day for that work is now far spent and another work is about to take place on the earth, even a work that begins with the household of Christ and ends with the nations of the earth. That work is the work of judgment.

The greatest drawback to the preparation of a people for the Lord at his coming to complete his work upon the earth is the failure of some to recognise the character of the work now being done. As a consequence of this failure, the ecclesia has been caused to pass through great turmoil and many critical phases of its existence, to the sorrow and anxious solicitude of those who have fully recognised the character and the phases of the work the Lord has been doing in the earth during the past half-century or more.

The work the Lord has been doing is susceptible of two great divisions, to wit: The recovery of the truth to mankind and the preparation of a people for the Lord at his coming. The first was completely accomplished through Dr. Thomas and his faithful coadjutors in his days. The second has occupied the time and labour of the faithful and wise of the household during and since the days of Dr. Thomas. Since his days it has been and is the sole aim of those who know the truth to do the work of taking out of the nations and preparing, by the power of the truth brought to light, a people for the Lord. This work has been hindered time and again by those who failed to recognise the fact that the whole truth had been recovered, and who were constantly searching out this and that crochets to the dismay of the faithful, distress and embroilment of the ecclesia, and injury of the truth. Instead of there being that peace, communion and fellowship of the truth in the ecclesia, so essential to the development of character and the preparation from the Gentiles of a seed of Abraham to

inherit the promises, turmoil, selfishness, backbiting, crotchetmongering, confusion, and all manner of evil work were brought into the ecclesia, to the sorrow of all who had the work of the truth and welfare of the ecclesia at heart. In truth, it has been a repetition of apostolic days.

Another erroneous idea has found lodgment in the minds of some respecting a journal devoted to the spread and defence of the truth and the upbuilding of the ecclesia. It is claimed that such a journal should give a hearing to both sides in doctrinal matters. The idea would be true enough if it were a matter of searching for or discovering the truth; but when the truth has been already discovered in its entirety, as is the case, it is a mistaken idea to make a journal devoted to it the battlefield of opposing views in matters of doctrine. To state a false teaching for the purpose of showing its falseness and establishing the truth to all is permissible, and often desirable, for the welfare of the ecclesia; but to permit false teaching in its pages, in the form of controversy, when known to be such in the face of established truth, is neither discharging one's duty towards the truth nor the ecclesia. The truth does not permit it. Duty does not permit it. The wise of the household condemn it. No one having a clear understanding of the truth would demand it.

When any one is now invited to enter the ecclesial fold through a belief and obedience of the truth, it is not asking him to identify himself with an ecclesia of searchers for the truth, but an ecclesia that has found the truth and is built upon it; it is not inviting him to enter upon the arena of controversy with the members of the ecclesia in matters of truth, but to be one and harmonious with the ecclesia in the upbuilding of all in the most holy faith of known and established truth. There is no controversy in the ecclesia with the members thereof in matters of doctrine or truth. That controversy was thoroughly carried on and exhausted by Dr. Thomas, while identified with the Campbellite body, and was consummated in the discovery and full establishment of the whole truth of God as revealed in the Bible. Ecclesial controversy in matters of truth is thus at an end. This is fully recognised by those who clearly understand the truth. This fact may not be pleasant or palatable to those who dislike the idea of Dr. Thomas being ahead of them in the discovery and establishment of the whole truth revealed in the Bible. Nevertheless, they would display a commendable wisdom in submitting to it with that humbleness and joy of heart which the truth alone can beget in rebellious human nature.

A failure to recognize the foregoing duty to the truth and the ecclesia has led to much bitterness of personal feeling, and has torn and distracted numerous ecclesias. A true and humble and faithful child of God should see that the Lord will never approve a work that injures His truth and His children. To throw open the pages of a periodical devoted to the spread and defence of the truth for the airing of false doctrines and hurtful crotchets would meet the condemnation of the righteous Judge when judging the works of His people in the day appointed.

If a journal devoted to the spread and defence of the truth may not permit the entrance of false teachings and hurtful crotchets into its pages, in the form of controversy, neither may the ecclesia be a battlefield for the same; and whoever would seek to make the ecclesia such a battlefield has sadly mistaken the purposes for which the Lord called His children out of the world into an ecclesial fold. The ecclesia is the Lord's vineyard. Each of His children is a worker in it. The work is the upbuilding of all in the truth, the growing into the full measure of the stature of the Christ. The fulness of that measure is consummated at the judgment seat. Such being the work of the ecclesia, as an ecclesia, who would wish to mar or interfere with its work by making it the arena of controversial work in the airing of crotchets, false doctrines, and matters of doubtful disputation?

Let me say a few words relative to Dr. Thomas and his continued communion with the Campbellite body after he had advanced far in the discovery of the truth. I have heard condemnation meted out to him on that score, and his course offered as a plea for controversy within the ecclesia on doctrinal matters. First, it must be borne in mind that many years passed by before the Doctor discovered that his early baptism into the Campbellite faith was not a baptism into Christ. This would justify his continued identification with that body, so far as his knowledge of duty extended. This blindness of the Doctor to the validity of his baptism was essential to the work before him, as it held him in the Campbellite body. Second, he had a work to do which could only be done in that or a similar body, and by being a member of it. Had not Dr. Thomas been subjected to the terrible antagonism he experienced in his search for the truth, he would never have found it. Had not that antagonism arisen in the Campbellite body and through his continued connection with it, he would equally have failed. There was an overruling providence in the whole matter.

The peculiar mental and moral organisation of Dr. Thomas admirably fitted him for the work he accomplished. His sterling honesty, great faith, resolute will, utter disregard of human opinion, and what seemed a reckless independence of leadership of men, enabled him to do a work that would have failed under other conditions, and it was only through identification with a so-called Christian body taking the Bible alone as its rule of faith and hope and practice that the above qualifications could have full play in the discovery of the truth. There was, therefore, a providence in the whole course pursued by Dr. Thomas from the time he set out to find the truth till he discovered it in its entirety, and whoever condemns him in any part of that course condemns the providence overruling all. This is all clear to those who have attained to the same understanding of the truth.

Where the great mistake is made by those who take the course of Dr. Thomas as a criterion of judgment, and make it a plea for the same kind of controversial work within the ecclesia, is in not recognising the fact that the conditions are now not the same. Then it was an ecclesia of searchers for the truth, and now it is an ecclesia, a true ecclesia, built upon known and established truth; then the truth could only be discovered through the channel of stubborn controversy, often spiced with acrimony, but now the need for controversy has ceased in the presence of the whole truth fully searched out and established. The work is now, as before stated, one of spreading and defending established truth before the world and the upbuilding of the ecclesia in the most holy faith of that truth. The ecclesia is therefore no longer an arena over which the storms of controversy may sweep and leave behind them angry feelings, heart burnings, bitterness of mind, divisions, and the biting frosts of enmity. No; it is now, or should be, a true ecclesia of God, all of one mind and one spirit, and all drawn together by the cords of love begotten in each heart by the sweet influence of that truth which was recovered from its burial in tradition, and recovered amid the storms of controversy bitter and long waged.

Whenever an ecclesia of Christ is not of the character stated above, a great fault lies at the door of some of its members. That fault could assume, and probably has assumed, one or all of three leading phases, to wit:—Either some have been admitted to the ecclesial fold believing it to be an ecclesia of searchers after hidden truth, and they soon proceed to introduce the controversial feature, or else some have been admitted to the fold who do not believe that the whole truth has been discovered, and soon the angry storms of controversy arise within the ecclesia by reason of their efforts to promulgate various winds of doctrine; or else there has been admitted to the ecclesia those who cannot crucify their jealousies, envies, love of pre-eminence, applause of men, and itchings for controversy, whereby they are continually disturbing the peace and harmony and unity of spirit of the ecclesia by bringing in doctrines and crotchets new and strange.

Alas, that such is the case! But why complain? Had not the ecclesia of Apostolic days the same misfortune? Did they not get rid (as far as possible) of the disturbing elements after due efforts to reform them? They were certainly commanded to do so. If, after the same manner, false teachers and the disturbers of ecclesial peace and harmony and purity are withdrawn from, who will complain save themselves and those of like mind? A true child of God will never complain. Purity in doctrine and practice is greater than any man, yea, greater than all men, for it is from and of God.

In conclusion of this article, let me press home to each heart and mind the preceding matter treated of. Are there some in the ecclesia who still believe that it is an ecclesia of searchers after hidden truth as revealed in the Bible? Then, if there are such, those who do not believe the truth has been discovered in its fulness, let me say that they should withdraw from the Christadelphian ecclesia and organise one built upon and in harmony with their belief, for the Christadelphian ecclesia is not such an one. It is built upon known truth and the whole truth as revealed in the Bible, and is not a searcher after unknown truth in that Book. You cannot bring the plea of Dr. Thomas's course to bear, for then it was truly the case of an ecclesia of searchers after the truth, which was completed in the finding of it.

While it is true that there is such a thing as ever learning and never being able to find the truth, yet there is such a thing as learning and finding the truth and being established, rooted and grounded in it. The latter was the case with Dr. Thomas, and is the case with those who have laid hold of the truth he found. So, if you are not in harmony with it, you would best withdraw from the Christadelphian ecclesia; and especially so if you cannot bring yourselves into harmony with it in doctrine and practice.

Surely this is not a time for searching after unknown truth, on the very eve of the Lord's coming to judge character built out of the truth. Nay, rather, it is a time for each one to be searching into his character to see of what manner it is; to see how he stands with the ecclesia of God; to see if he is in harmony with it in doctrine and practice; to see if he has crucified the lusts of the flesh, got rid of his envies, his jealousies, his ambitious fleshly desires, his hatreds, his evil surmisings, his rivalries; to see if he loves the brethren with an unfeigned love and out of a pure heart, in honour preferring them, rejoicing with them in all humbleness of mind in hope of glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore right all wrongs as far as we can, cultivate brotherly love, be of one mind in the things of the Spirit, seek to build up the ecclesia in our most holy faith as becometh faithful and true workmen in the Lord's vineyard, not disturbers of ecclesial peace and harmony and purity, that we may be prepared to give to the Lord of the vineyard a good account of our stewardship in matters of truth and love and practice, and of the manifold blessings of the Lord towards His people as they have flown to them through the ecclesia.

This is written in the spirit of love towards all who have named the name of Christ through obedience of the faith, and by one whose greatest joy would be in seeing all saved and blessed in the Kingdom of God. I have no fault to find with any particular one, as each must be the judge of his own faith and actions in this life in the presence of the truth till the Lord comes for judgment of all; for, if we judge ourselves by the standard of the teachings and commands of the truth, and be honest and faithful and loving and forgiving of heart, we will all speedily place ourselves in harmony with the truth and ecclesial peace and purity and unity of doctrine and

practice. How urgent is the need of such self-judgment and obedience to all the commands of the truth in faith and practice, as we see the clear and multiplying signs of the coming of the righteous Judge for the impartial and infallible work of the judgment seat! There is no righting of past wrongs; no placing of ourselves in harmony with the precepts and commands of the truth after the call to judgment has gone forth from a descended Lord and Master and Judge. This is our day for making our calling and election sure; but then it will be the Lord's day for the purpose of that judgment which begins with His own household. If we would not be condemned then, let each judge himself now by the light of the truth, even that truth which will either justify or condemn us then. Oh, that the Lord would set His people to a self-judgment by and before His truth! To forgive and love those who wrong us is to display the spirit of Christ; and the display of such a spirit is as much the duty of the suffering body as it was of the suffering head of the Christ of God.

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