

‘What Is Truth?’

1. Introduction

‘What is truth?’ is the question Pilate asked Jesus. He asked this because Jesus had just replied to his question, ‘So you are a king?’ in the following words, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice’. He meant, of course, that those who are in the truth recognise the truth, and this Pilate had not done.

Some have called Pilate ‘Jesting Pilate’, as though he were mocking. It may be better to call him ‘Cynical Pilate’ in that his involvement in politics both secular and religious may well have developed cynicism in him. More probably he wished to evade the truth, as undoubtedly there was little ‘truth in his inward parts’. He was at least honest enough to say he found no fault in Jesus, which was close to saying he found truth in him.

Pilate’s question still stands, ‘What is truth?’. Who can tell the truth, and who can recognise it? These are questions we may well ask. If, as some claim, man cannot even know what sin is because man is so involved that he cannot be rational about it, then however could we know truth, when knowing it is binding on us to the very ultimate of human living and responsibility? The answer is that whilst sin is something which may be difficult to understand because it is of itself irrational, yet truth is that which is totally rational. It is not that we cannot know truth if we will, but that we will not know truth if we can. Its demands, as we have said, are ultimate and total.

2. The Nature of Truth

A person who researched the MacArthy trials in the USA came up with the conclusion that no man can speak the truth, not in totality. In this political witch-hunt for those who were communists or communist fellow-travellers, the researcher pointed out that judges, witnesses, defendants and the lot all had some personal bias or prejudice for or against communism, and in the light of that could not tell the truth. This may well be. To be true and truthful is the nature of God, but fallen man has the shadow of falsity across his whole operation of living. He may, we concede, recognise the truth, from time to time, but to tell it, and to live it, is something of which unaided man is incapable.

(a) Definitions of Truth

(1) Truth in the Old Testament

There are various words in the O.T for truth. They indicate the nature of

truth and being true. To modern man truth is something which can be shown to be factual such as, 'sugar is sweet'. That scarcely reaches the heart of the matter. The Greek word *aletheia* in the N.T. covers the Hebrew words for truth in the O.T., although its meaning in Greek is not quite that of the meaning of the Hebrew words. The Hebrew words **emunah** and **emeth** carry the idea of a quality of being and action rather than the mere Greek idea of cognitive truth. When one is of the truth then one is stable, reliable, faithful, and so on. On this basis the word truth can be contained nounally and adjectivally in the ideas of 'steadiness, stability, soundness, faithfulness, constancy, truth, loyalty, justice' and so on. A glimpse through a concordance, and a reading of the contexts of the words will bring this out clearly. For this reason the *aletheia* or word 'truth' of the N.T. cannot cover the Hebrew exactly, which often in its context can be translated by a word such as 'righteousness', and in many cases the A.V. word 'truth' in the O.T. has been translated by one or other of the synonyms we have used above, and this is agreeable to the true sense of 'truth'.

Whilst we will have to trace many of these uses in their context in the O.T. yet we can come up with a general definition of what truth is within its pages. If then we add the usages of the verb **aman** which means to 'confirm, stand firm, trust' and its noun *amen* which in itself means 'true, reliable, valid' then we can see that truth is the way things essentially are, and so they cannot change. When it comes to God He is the truth and acts consistently with what He is. Truth in regard to man is that he acts in accordance with things as they essentially are. In general he is a truthful person if he is a consistent, stable, loyal and reliable person. This however, in the ultimate, will not be so, will not be really truth if it does not line up with the truth of God.

(2) Truth in the New Testament

As we have said the Greek word **aletheia** does not cover the actual words of the O.T., but in a general sense it does. To the Greek the idea of truth was cognitive, more something one knew, conceptualised, and recognised. To the Hebrew it was something one lived. It has actual being. Both of these elements can be seen in the N.T. In the N.T. dependability, truthfulness, faithfulness and uprightness of character are things which characterise God and the true people of God, as we will see. However, truth is also much wider. To the Greek truth was something which was actually true and not merely mythological, something which really existed and not merely which appeared to exist, or coming into being then passed away. The N.T. would certainly agree with this, but it went further, whilst including that view. Truth is that which is valid because it is part of, and is consistent with, 'things-as-they-really-are'. God is true and truth. His word is truth. The Son is 'full of grace and truth', and the truth is something which is not merely known, but something one does. It is existential as well as ontological. It is the true and eternal reality and anything inconsistent with it cannot be true or the truth.

Whilst we have not given examples or illustrations of truth and its meanings in the O.T. and the N.T., we may now proceed to see the nature of truth throughout the Scriptures, so that what we have said may be substantiated and we will recognise what Scriptural ideas of truth really are.

(b) Truth in the Scriptures

What method can we use to examine truth in the O.T., or, for that matter in the N.T.? Surely we can see the way in which it is spoken about, indicated, and construed. We can see examples of this truth, but do we have a system by which we can understand the import of these statements, occasions, examples and demonstrations? In other words, what is our epistemology? For this reason we need

first of all to take the general thrust of Scripture and gather what truth constituted essentially, how man has approached that (in the Biblical view), and what is his position when it comes to the recognition of truth or the truth.

The method we will take is this:

- (i) God is truth and has created in truth.
- (ii) Man was created according to the truth, and was tested as to his voluntary (or, involuntary) loyalty to the truth.
- (iii) Man has rejected the truth, and will not know it.
- (iv) God has witnessed to the truth both in the O.T and the N.T
- (v) Man may come into the truth and both know and live it.

(i) God Is Truth and Has Created In Truth

The term 'faithful God' in the R.S.V. of Psalm 31:5 is (N.A.S.B.) 'the God of truth'. Jer. 10:10 has it, 'But the Lord is the true God', i.e. true in His being, and not simply true by contrast with the false gods. Deut. 32:4 says 'A God of faithfulness (truth) and without iniquity'. II Chron. 15:3 says, 'For a long time Israel was without the true God....' In this case Israel needed the God of truth, reliance, stability and help. Psalm 100:5 says, 'His truth endures to all generations', and Psalm 146:6 'He keeps truth (faith) for ever'.

What is clear from the creation account is that when God creates His creation is 'very good'. This includes all the elements of moral uprightness (Eccles. 7:29), essential goodness (I Tim. 4:4) and functional harmony (Eccles. 3:11). God creates by His word (Gen. 1:1-3, Heb 11:3, Psalm 33:9, 148:5-6, cf. John 1:1-3), and His word is truth (John 17:17, cf. II Sam. 7:28, Isa. 55:10ff). Hence the creation, including its hierarchy of heavenly beings (Col. 1:15-17) is the truth of God and His perfection in creation (cf. Job 38:6-7).

In Romans 1:19-20 Paul makes it clear that 'the truth of God' can be known by man. Without any doubt Adam knew that truth and rebelled against it, rejecting it for his own 'truth'. What we stress here is that that truth was known, could be known, and indeed can be known. That truth is 'things as they really are', i.e. the essential nature of all things as they proceed from God and constitute His purposes and intentions for what He has created.

(ii) Man Was Created For The Truth, In Truth

Man's essential (created) being is true. Admitting man's contingency upon God, man in contingency is reliable, trustworthy, true, and stable. He must be if he is in the image of God, and so is to the glory of God. He was given the opportunity to continue in contingency and relate contingently to things as they really are. Every tree of the garden was good for food and pleasant to the eyes, and so he was denied nothing of the true nature of things. He was prohibited from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this prohibition was for his benefit. He was allowed to eat of the tree of life. He was tested by the serpent as to his willingness or not to continue in contingency. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil had only one difference from other trees, namely, 'it was a tree to be desired to make one wise'. Man's contingency was of such nature that had he continued in it, voluntary, he would have continued to know and live in the truth without being 'wise' in the sense suggested by the serpent (Gen. 3:1-5).

(iii) Man Has Rejected The Truth and Will Not Know It

Adam rebelled against contingency and sought to know good and evil from an uncontingent vantage point which is by nature of the case impossible. Hence he sought his own autonomy. He does not have a true autonomy, but an imagined one. He still has to 'live and move and have his being' in God, whatever, but he refuses to accept the truth as it is.

Romans 1:19-32 is the story of the rejection of truth. These verses state clearly that in history, man has refused to accept the nature of God. He has 'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images...' and 'the truth of God for a lie'. Without doubt man has denied the essential nature of God, the creation and man. This means that he has had to re-rationalise the nature of God, man, and the creation. Everything to him then is a lie. He does not know the truth. Furthermore he does not wish to retain God in his knowledge (Rom. 1:28) and so has a base or reprobate mind. Whilst logic is not missing from his mind he is the object of an unchangeable bias or prejudice. This bias is against truth, or things as they essentially are. Hence he must have a different view of truth from that which is Biblical.

At this point we need to see the system of deceit into which man was drawn, and which operates within the creation, although it is foreign to its essential nature:-

Satan the Deceiver

Revelation 12:9 says of the serpent, or dragon or Satan that he is 'the deceiver of the whole world'. This deception primarily refers to (a) Angels and (h) Mankind. (a) Satan in his rebellion took with him a third of the angelic powers (Rev. 12:4). (b) Mankind. The theme of Satan's deception is repeated in Revelation 13:14 where Satan's protege, the beast, 'deceives those who dwell on the earth'. In 19:20 Satan's protege, the false prophet (prophet of falsity) is indicated as the deceiver. In 20:3 Satan is temporarily restrained from deceiving, but in 20:8 is liberated for a time in which he goes out to deceive the 'nations which are at the four corners of the earth', whilst in 20:10 Satan, the beast and false prophet who are deceivers are all given over to punishment.

This matter of deception extends, naturally, to the system of the world. In Rev. 18:23 Babylon, the world system, is said to have deceived the nations. In Matt. 24:24 a brood of false Christs and false prophets will arise from this system, seeking to deceive - if it were possible - even the elect. In II Cor. 11:3 Paul says the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning. In II Thess 2:3, 9, 11 the most incredible fraud of Satan is revealed, that is his attempt to be worshipped as God in the temple, which we take to be in the sanctuary of God, His own true people. In II Cor. 11:14 we are told that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, seeking to deceive mankind by a false holiness. Jesus unmaskes him as a 'liar and a murderer' (John 8:44). He says 'He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. ' He adds, importantly, 'When he lies he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.'

Man the Deceived and the Deceiver

In II Tim. 3:13 Paul speaks of those who are 'evil men and impostors (who will go on from bad to worse, (being) deceivers and deceived.' In Ephesians 4:14 he speaks of believers who are 'tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful

wiles'. These are spoken of again in II Tim. 3:6f, the people who make their way into households and 'capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses', and these are 'men of corrupt minds and counterfeit faith'.

Sin the Deceiver

Hebrews 3:12-14 gives good advice as it says 'exhort one another daily, as long as it is called 'today', that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin'. Obadiah 3 calls it 'the pride of your heart (which) has deceived you'. In Romans 7:11 Paul says, '... sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me, and by it, slew me'. Sin uses the law, not only to incite provocatively to sin, but also to raise up man's pride to think that unaided he can be good and righteous. This is double-deceit.

The Deceiving Lusts

James speaks of the desires or lusts of the heart. He says 'Each person is tempted and enticed by his own desires' (1:14). Paul calls the desires lusts, and speaks of 'the old humanity' which is 'corrupt(ing) through deceitful lusts'. Proverbs 11:18 describes the illusion lust gives; 'The livelihood won by the wicked is illusory, but he who sows virtue reaps a solid reward' (Jer. Bible), whilst Jeremiah says (49:16) 'The horror you inspire has deceived you, and the pride of your heart...' Man then is caught in his deceiving lusts and cannot see the (moral) truth.

The Deceiving Gods

In Isaiah 44:20 the prophet speaks of the idolater, 'He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, 'Is there not a lie in my right hand?'' Idolatry, of course, derived from the rejection of the true God when man decided he would raise up his own deities or dependencies, and attribute to them the attributes he desired. Strangely enough the gods make no moral demands, and though there be 'gods many and lords many' (1Cor. 8:5) there are no true gods and no true lords (Isa. 26:12-14) so that man is deluded by his gods.

The whole matter of deceit springs from 'the father of lies' who could not recognise the truth if he could see it, which he would not. Therefore the system of Satan, his angelic cohorts, his seducing spirits (I Tim. 4:1f), the world system with its false wisdom (I Cor. 1:20ff), and the deceived and deceiving spirit of man with his sin and his deceitful lusts is too horrific to contemplate. It is against this background that God reveals Himself as truth and as the truth.

(iv) God Has Witnessed To The Truth Both In The O.T And The N.T

Under (i) (immediately above) we have seen that God is the God of truth, that He created in truth, that He is the true God, and that He is faithful to His creation (see I Peter 4:19) and His people. On the other hand we have seen that he spells out the truth, but to a deliberately unhearing, and non-receiving humanity (Romans 1:19ff). Does He then exist within His being of truth, and His truthful order of creation and ignore that which is false, untrue and opposed to the truth? The answer to this is 'No!' He acts in a number of ways, and they are as follows:-

God Never Leaves Himself Without a Witness

Acts 14:17 says, 'He (God) did not leave Himself without a witness'. Paul simply says this witness was His providential goodness. If we followed that up

(say, from Matt. 5:43-48) we would see it means that God gives to man 'life and breath and everything', as against the (false) gods who give nothing but take all. However, it must mean that God has always communicated Himself, and so He has through creation (Romans 1:19-20), through His acts within history which have happened in history and many of them have been recorded in Scripture. He has also communicated by prophetic utterances, by the making of covenants with all men and His special people Israel. 'For all men' are the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants. 'For His special people Israel' are the Mosaic and Davidic covenants. Both 'all men' and 'Israel' may participate in the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34, and Matt. 26:28).

There have been other ways in which God has acted such as through dreams and visions, angelic visitants, and the sending of His Son. The latter is so important that we must deal with it separately. Also God has given a powerful witness through the conscience or the writing of the law upon the hearts of mankind. This is really the witness of law, or the truth, and we must deal with that separately also. The conclusive fact is He has not ceased to communicate, but graciously and insistently has gone on telling out the truth of Himself, i.e. the truth of the truth.

God Has Gone on Judging in Truth

Psalm 96:13 speaks of 'the lord' coming to 'judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.' The same thought is repeated in Psalm 98:9 where 'truth' is 'equity'. This is prophetic. That is what God will do. However in history it is what God is doing continually. This principle is clearly revealed in Romans 1:18. God is revealing His wrath upon 'all ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress (hold down) the truth in unrighteousness

We gather (A) Men know what is truth and yet seek to destroy it by counter-acts of wickedness (i.e. untruth), and (B) God acts in wrath towards these. Some passages (such as Psalm 96:13, I Thess. 1:10, Romans 5:9) speak of 'the wrath to come', but others of present wrath. Hence in Genesis 6 God sees the evil of man which is practice of untruth or counter-truth, and He brings the judgement of the Flood. Likewise there is local judgement at Sodom and Gomorrah. All of this relates to the fact that his law is written on the hearts of all men (Rom. 2:14-15). Hence they can suppress the truth in unrighteousness whilst knowing that 'they that do such things are deserving of death' (Rom. 1:32). The fact is, however, that God witnesses by judgement. Another aspect is that judgement releases man from untruth, if that is what he desires, but it is a subject on its own (cf. Isaiah 30:18).

God Has Gone on Acting In Truth

The truth is something one does, as indeed suppressing the truth, or doing evil is something one does. That the truth is doing is expressed in John 3:21, 'He who does what is true (i.e. the truth) comes to the light that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God'. I John 1:6 has it that some 'lie and do not the truth (i.e. do not live according to the truth)', whilst Ephesians 4:15 is literally 'truthing it in love'. As we have seen, the negating of doing the truth is to expressly hold down the truth by counter-acts of unrighteousness.

God goes on being, and goes on doing the truth. We have seen that He sends forth His truth (Psalm 57:3), that 'His truth reaches to the clouds' (Psalm 108:4) and that 'He keeps truth for ever' (Psalm 146:6). In Psalm 119:89 we read 'Thy word, O God, stands fast in heaven'. Psalm 119:142 says, 'Thy law

is the truth', and Psalm 119:151 'thy commandments are truth.' A Rabbinic commentary is 'As Thou art truth, so is Thy Word truth, for it is written, 'Thy word, O God, stands fast in heaven'. Psalm 119 takes law, word and truth to be of the one piece, (cf. Psa 119:43-44), so that as God's word goes out in creation, through the law and the prophets God is continually good, whilst in Hebrews 1:2-3 it is the word which upholds creation in providential and purposeful care.

That truth is extant continually, dynamic and positive is shown by the constant work evil has to do to try to quell and suppress it. Things must go on being as they are essentially. Evil may attack this order, but that order is constantly cared for by God. Hence, if men will they can see the truth continually. If truth were not there the whole universe would become lethal.

(v) God Has Ultimately Revealed The Truth In Christ Jesus

'The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ¹¹. This is a significant statement. It follows, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' The latter statement must mean that in Moses we saw law, and by him received it. Without doubt truth was there but not in incarnate form such as in Christ, nor in the same grace form such as in him. In Christ grace and truth are incarnate.

All of this holds together very well. Jesus said 'If you continue in my words, then are you my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.' He surely meant that to hear and obey his words is to come into living action of the truth and so to know it. Of course to be in the way of truth is to be in the way of 'things as they really are', and so to be free within them. Man was both created and then redeemed for that sort of freedom. This is why Paul can use the statement 'The truth as it is in Jesus' (Ephesians 4:21).

(a) The Need for Christ as Truth

We have seen that God has always been the truth, sustained the truth, that is the creation as it is in Him, and resisted Satanic and human efforts to change the truth, essentially, into a lie. Satan, his kingdom, and rebellious man oppose the truth, and seek to live a lie, and not to do the truth, nor to acknowledge it. Instead they seek to foist their deceit upon creation, and cover themselves in it. In this sense the task seems hopeless, i.e. to break through with the truth.

The need for God to do this is apparent. Until His creation sees and acknowledges the truth, deceit and its chaos will continue to be parasitic upon the essential truth of creation. Suppressing it at every possible point they will withhold the truth from creation's beings. Whilst the God of truth is ever 'truthing it' in His creation this evil is stemmed, but His must not simply be a holding operation. His truth must destroy the evil. His truth must break through as revelation to blinded man. It must triumph in the ultimate and so show its true nature in finality. This God had always purposed in Christ. The truth not only embraces creation, but also redemption, and redemption must embrace the ultimate restitution of all things, and the glorification of man and the creation.

All the truth, then, is contained in Christ. In him are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, and in him dwells the Godhead bodily. As all created things have come from him and have been upheld in him, so they will be unified in him. In this sense 'grace and truth' come by Christ. He is the Son reflecting the Father 'full of grace and truth'.

(b) Christ as the Truth

Jesus' own statement was, as we saw 'For this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth'. It has to be seen that no one had ever borne witness to the truth, as did Jesus. No prophet, priest or king had ever been able to do this. Since the heart of man is 'deceitful above all things', and no servant of God had ever been perfect or complete, in this sense none could ever have borne complete witness to the truth. It is true that in Romans 3:2 Paul says that 'to the Jews were entrusted the oracles of God', and the oracles are the very truth or truths of God. They are pure. In this sense then witness had been borne to the truth, yet the uttered or written oracles of God have to 'become flesh', as they did in Christ, in order for men to understand the Truth. Jesus Christ was the true oracles of God, since in him were contained all the 'treasures of wisdom and knowledge', and 'the fulness of the Godhead bodily'.

In the New Testament God is spoken of as the God of truth, or of truthfulness (Rom. 1:25, 3:7, 15:8), whilst in John's Gospel He is 'the only true God and 'is true' (John 17:3, 7:28). However it is His Son, Jesus Christ, who comes as the truth. Perhaps no more significant statement of his incarnation is there, in this respect, than Romans 15:8, 'Christ became a servant to the circumcised in order to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.' The significance of this is, (a) God is the God of truth, (b) His truth prophetically uttered will be fulfilled in Christ for both Jews and Gentiles. We conclude then that the coming of Jesus Christ as the truth, or to bear witness to the truth is in accordance with the truth of the written Scriptures and (so) the plan of God. Now let us see how the N.T. bears this out.

In John 1:14 Jesus is shown as the incarnate Word, but also as Son of the Father, and he (as the Father) is 'full of grace and truth'. The law came by Moses but grace and truth by Jesus Christ. In John 5:33 Jesus says, 'You sent to John and he has borne witness to the truth', meaning to Jesus. Jesus in the same context goes on to say that he has an even greater witness (i.e. to himself as truth) in the Father.

In John 18:37 he said that his purpose for coming into the world was to bear witness to the truth. This accords with Romans 15:8. In John 7:28 Jesus says, 'You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true, and him you do not know.' He is saying clearly that he has been sent by the God of truth. They of course do not understand for they do not understand the truth, that is the truth which is God, or the God who is true.

This is seen even more clearly in John 8:31-47. Jesus has said to those who believe on him, 'If you continue (walk in, obey) my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' What he teaches is not merely correct doctrine, but the truth of God, so that submitting to this and living in accordance with it, they will have a life of freedom. However they oppose this principle, stating that they are already free. Jesus has finally to say that the freedom they should know with the (heavenly) Father, they do not know because they are subject to the evil (lying) father, the Devil. He shows that the Devil knows nothing of the truth. Likewise they know nothing of the truth. He says, 'Because I tell the truth, you do not believe e He adds, 'Which of you convicts me of sin?' meaning, I live the truth, for the truth is something you do.' This he had pointed out long before; 'Everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.' Now he is saying, 'I stand before you as one living the truth. You cannot show me I have sinned which would mean not living the truth.' He had also said, 'He who does what is true (lit. 'does the truth') comes to the light that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.' To do the truth is to do what God demands, and to be in the

truth, i.e. in God. (John 3:20-21) Again, in John 8:46-47 Jesus asks, 'If I tell you the truth why do you not believe me?' His question means, 'I tell you the truth to set you free, but you do not know the truth because you will not know the truth.' He concluded by giving this principle, 'He who is of God hears the words of God: the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.' It reminds us of John 7:17, 'If any man's will is to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.'

This is consonant with John 18:37, 'I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.'

In John 14:6 Jesus goes as far as human language can in claiming to be the truth. He says, 'I am the truth'. However he is saying in the context of the passage, 'I am the truth of the Father'. He verifies this by adding, 'He that has seen me has seen the Father.' Hence John 1:18 has it, 'No man has seen God at any time. The Son who is in the bosom of the Father he has declared him.' The Son is not the Father, but he is the truth of the Father. He reveals the truth, and so revealed the Father.

The purpose of showing the Father as the truth, is that men may come to eternal life. Thus John 17:3, 'This is life eternal, that they know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' In I John 5:20 John amplifies the point, 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true: and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.'

The truth of the Father must mean all that God is, especially as Father, and what His Fatherhood has determined to accomplish. Hence the incarnation of Christ is the Father's means by which He shows Himself. That is, Christ spells out in human terms what is Sonship, and so what is Fatherhood. However he keeps on insisting that what he does he does not do on his own authority, and what he says he does not say from himself (cf. John 5:36, 5:19-24, 8:28-29, 10:14ff, etc). Hence the truth must mean everything that Christ does. It is the embodiment and the enactment of the Father and His will. Hence the birth, life and ministry, death and resurrection of Christ, and no less his ascension which is the truth of the Father! This understanding is quite stunning. It means Christ has become the truth of God before men, and in particular the truth of the Father. No wonder he says, 'I am the truth of the Father.'

Eternal life then is the outcome of knowing the truth. With it also, is the new Worship into which believing man is inducted. John 4:23-24 gives the principle. 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him. God is spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.' This surely means that those who do not live in the Father do not live in the truth, and cannot know, and so worship Him. The Spirit is the Spirit of (the) truth who enables men to know and live in the truth, and so they are one with the Father and may truly worship Him.

Further to this we see that the word Christ utters, being from the Father, is the truth. Hence in John 17:17 Jesus says, 'Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.' The truth and the word which is the truth cannot be separated. The disciples are made holy by this truth. Nor is this all. Jesus says on many occasions that he is that which is true. When he says he is the true vine, or the true bread (John 15:1ff, 6:32ff) he is saying that only the true vine is living and life-giving and fruit-bearing

if it is from heaven. All other vines or bread are imitations. Likewise when he says he is the 'good shepherd he is really saying he is the true, the essential shepherd, or a shepherd according to the truth. Hence his work as shepherd will be authentic and dynamic as against shepherds of animal sheep or false shepherds of the true flock, or shepherds of false flocks. The true bread is from heaven and gives true life, and so on. That is, in every way, and in every action Jesus is the living, palpable truth of God, especially of God the Father.

(c) Christ as the Truth Not Easily Understood

We have seen that the Son being the truth of the Father is not easily understood. We will see later that the truth polarised the nation of Israel. The truth crystallised their attitudes and fixed them in that for which they had to decide. However this was not until they could really understand the truth. On the night of his betrayal Jesus told his disciples three things, and they related to the Holy Spirit:-

1. The Holy Spirit would bring back to their remembrance, later, all that he had told them, and this presumably through all his ministry.
2. There were many other things (of the truth) which he wished to tell them but they could not bear them at that point.
3. When the Spirit of truth would come, then they would understand the truth, understand all things, for the Spirit would lead them into the truth.

In fact it was profitable for them that Jesus should go away for the Spirit of truth would have to come and bring the truth which Jesus had brought, which he had lived, and which he had accomplished, to their understanding. This, of course was what happened at Pentecost and continued from that point onwards, and indeed obtains in action today.

(vi) Truth Is Communicated and Received and Known Through The Holy Spirit

We have already seen that Jesus predicted that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all the truth. Doubtless he does this in many ways, both objective and (for us) subjective. We simply know that on the day of Pentecost, with his coming, men and women came to know the truth, 'the wonderful works of God', and so much so that some thousands entered into what had been revealed to the faithful 120 who had been baptised in the Spirit. That is they entered into the truth by repenting, having their sins forgiven and receiving the Holy Spirit. Likewise it could be shown in Acts 8, 10-11, and 19 that others had similar group experiences, whilst single persons and others also had similar experiences of knowing the truth through the Holy Spirit.

Later we will see more thoroughly that to live in God is to live in the truth. In this widest sense the Holy Spirit goes on leading us into the whole truth of God as we repent, believe, receive forgiveness, worship, serve, pray, and so on. All that we do, if it is true, is the truth, and is done through the Spirit of truth. However, unless one is born of the Spirit one can neither see nor enter the Kingdom (John 3:3ff). One needs the application of the truth, that is the work of the Son, which in fact is the work of the Father. This application (as seen for example in Romans 8:1-3, I Cor. 6:11, Titus 3: 3-7) means that the 'truthfulness of God' as indicated in Romans 15:8-9 is made by the Spirit within the elect. In I Cor. 2:9-14 we see that only through the Spirit can we understand 'the deeps of God'. The natural man does not know these things. Likewise in I John 5:7 we have a scripture which tells us, 'The

Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth.’ As we say, this is significant, because apart from the Spirit no man can know the truth.

We saw in John 15:18-26 that the Jews could not receive the truth of the Son and the Father, and so they hated both. Jesus said that when the Spirit came he would witness to him, that is he would show the world, even in spite of itself, the truth. Thus in John 16:7-11 the Spirit convicts or convinces of sin, righteousness and judgement because of the truth of Jesus. He is not only the Spirit of truth, but even the truth, as Jesus is not only the True One, but the truth of the Father. John also adds (I John 3:24, 4:13) that the only way in which we know we abide in God is by His Spirit who lives in us.

3. The Nature of Truth As Man Lives It

Of two things we can be sure. Creation as God has created it is essentially true and authentic. Whilst the fall of man, the curse, and the incursions of evil upon it may have done much apparent damage to the creation, yet it is not essentially, innately, intrinsically altered. That is the first fact. The second is that ultimately it will be totally renewed, and will display perfectly ‘things as they really are’ or, ‘the true state of affairs’. In other words, ‘the truth will be out’. What is true cannot be destroyed. Hence all that is false will be destroyed, not only the Devil, the Beast, the false prophet and the false system (Babylon), but also all of mankind who have played false to God and their creation in His image. Only what is true shall remain. What interests us then is how we may live in the truth now. John in his third epistle can say, ‘I greatly rejoiced when some of the brethren.... testified to the truth of your life, as indeed you do follow the truth. No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth.’ In the same breath he speaks of his ‘fellow workers in the truth’. How then does one live in the truth and follow it, and work in it?

(a) Man and the Great Lie

‘They exchanged the truth of God for a lie’. (Romans 1:25) We have seen that the great truth was exchanged for the miserable lie. The truth of God was rejected for man’s supposed autonomy, his independence of God. We saw that prior to his temptation Satan had succumbed to his own lie that he could be like the Most High God, and obtain his ambition although he too was essentially a creature, contingent for being upon the Creator. Man followed this lie and so became part of a system of falsity, the system of the corrupt age or aeon, led by Satan, equipped by fallen angelic powers and vast demonic forces. Since they opposed the truth all they have ever done has been false. Man falls prey to the deceit of his own heart (Jer. 17:9), the deceit of sin (Heb. 3:13), the deceit of his own lusts and desires (Ephes. 4:22, James 1:14) and the deceit of Satan (Rev. 12:9, etc.).

In experience man has to lie to himself about God, man, and the whole creation if he will not love and obey God. He must rationalise creation along lines which are not its essential and true being. Hence to live a lie is to go counter to God’s true way, the way of living which is truth. In fact he must come to the point where he suppresses the truth in (acts of) unrighteousness. In this state man is perverse, and in the anguish which comes from opposing the truth, the dreadful world of unreality where light becomes darkness, darkness light, and sweetness bitterness, and so on.

Hence in this world man does evil and will not come to the light, i.e. the

truth, to see whether his acts are Viable, and true acts. He increasingly becomes the object of his own lying, his own evil living. His very own heart deceives him until he may ask, wearily, with Pilate, 'What is truth?'

(b) Man and the Truth

We have seen that, having rejected the truth, man cannot know it. However we have also seen that if man would read creation he could see the truth of God. As is his conscience or attitude, so is his understanding. Psalm 18 says, 'To the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure, and to the perverse Thou wilt show Thyself froward', meaning that as a man thinks in his heart so he sees God. We have also seen that God has always been the truth and revealed His truth, through the prophets, through His actions, through heavenly visitants, through His names which He has given to humanity, and through the Scriptures themselves. Man has rarely responded to this since, 'There is none who understands or seeks after God'. Even in his religions man has shaped his thinking so as to accomplish salvation (or, truth) by his own efforts, or to deny that it is needed or can happen.

We have seen that God has actually shown us the truth of Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ. He has not only shown us how a man walks in truth, but He has shown us His truthfulness in fulfilling His plan for His creation. This must not be seen as a special part of truth, or an expedient created later in time to meet sin's happening, but rather that this was His being, His truth from before time. Hence when it appears in time it is only a widening of the revelation of Himself as the truth.

What concerns us is how we understand and live in that truth. If truth is in fact something we do, then we must come into it, and we must learn how to do it.

(c) Living in the Truth

In Psalm 51:6 David says, 'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.' David had been caught up badly in the deceit of sin. He had committed adultery with Bath-Sheba, and had really murdered her husband Uriah. Psalm 32 shows that David hid his sin, and actually suffered deeply until he was prepared to confess it. Psalm 51 shows us that when David's heart was impure he was in a state of sin, and that he desired to have his heart thoroughly cleansed. Only then could he have truth in the inward parts. This strengthens our idea that sin is something false, opposed to truth, and this too is further confirmed by Romans 1:18 where sins suppress the truth. To say it again, 'Sins are acts against the truth. Sins are something we do. Truth also is something we do in conformity with God, His laws, His universe, and our own (true) nature. Hence our sins are untruth, defiling us, issuing as they do from our being which is itself untrue.'

This being so, man can never have 'truth in the inward parts' until certain things have happened. He must have a revelation of God and his truth come upon him. This must be 'the truth of the Father' in all its elements. He must have conviction of sin, be brought to repentance, faith, and the reception of forgiveness with the fact of justification and the gift of the Spirit. His eyes will have been opened to truth, and may thus remain open to truth. In all of this he must receive the total cleansing of his heart and so the impartation through regeneration of 'the new heart', and by this have

‘truth in the inward parts’. Then he will be able to live in the truth and follow the truth.

(i) The Truth of the Father

We have seen that Jesus claimed to be ‘the truth of the Father’. In truth God has always been Father. Even though this truth was partially known in Israel, and only came into its full revelation with the coming of Christ, God was always Father. In fact He was Father-Creator. Before the foundation of the world He had planned His family (Ephes. 1:4-7, I Cor. 2:6ff, etc.), so that His Fatherhood intention towards His creation was a fact before creation itself. When we add to this the fact that God as Creator was not only Father in His Being, but also Redeemer, since He had also planned redemption before creation, then we see that the God Whom man rejected was essentially Father-Creator-Redeemer before He began His work of Creation and providence. In other words, man knew he was rejecting God as Father-Creator-Redeemer.

Romans 1:19-20 says that through creation the invisible things of God can be known, and says these are ‘His power and His deity’. His deity cannot be in part, any more than can His power. It must include all elements of His being. In creation, even in fallen humanity, we see certain elements of fatherhood, redeemerhood, and creatorhood. Man procreates, and this gives us some clues as to creation. He redeems, if possible, where his children go astray, and he fathers his children, even if that fatherhood is deficient. For example, Jesus could say, ‘If you (fathers) being evil know how to give good gifts to your children. ...’ So certain elements of God are seen - if we will - even in fallen mankind, although they can only be seen imperfectly.

When, then, man ‘exchanged the truth of God for a lie’ he exchanged the whole truth of the nature of God for something which God is not. Paul seeks to explain in Acts 17:24-30 that ‘we are His offspring’, that is that God is Father, as against the idolatry of the Greeks. It is noticeable in Romans 1:20ff that idolatry immediately replaces the true God, and represents dreadful falsity. Likewise in I Cor. 8:5-6 idols are contrasted with the true God - the Father - and the true Lord - Jesus Christ. This again is seen in I John 5:20- 21. We assume then that man has refused the full truth of God for his lie of idolatry and total deception.

The coming of the Son was to show the truth of the Father. The truth of the Father was what he was, and what he did as Son, and in fact it included the Cross and Resurrection by which man is redeemed, regenerated, and given sonship under the Father. It is this effective truth which redeems man and gives him filial status which changes his heart dramatically. He now relates to the Father in love, and the Son (as Lord) in obedience. He is now motivated to live in the truth. His is the obedience of a loving son to the Father. He is in the context of the family, or the people of God. He is thus kept warm in the living truth.

(ii) The Gift of the New Heart

Going back to David and Psalm 51 we see that David recognises untruth in that he has sinned. He sees this as falsity in the inward being, and longs for it to be expunged and a new heart to be given to him. ‘Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,’¹ he prays, ‘Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.’ This is the cleansing. Then he adds, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.’ His prayer is really for that act which will

set him on the life of truth, of doing the truth. Hence in Ezekiel 36:24-28 where God gives the promise of cleansing ‘from all your idols and all your uncleannesses’, the promise is also of ‘a new heart will I put within you, and a new spirit’. This means that God will effect ‘truth in the inward being’. Man will be cleansed and renewed. This is exactly what the Father initiates, Christ mediates, and the Spirit applies in the full work of redemption.

All that remains now is for man to walk in the truth.

(iii) The Gift of the Word of Truth

If the O.T Scriptures are truth, being the very ‘oracles (utterances) of God’, then so are the N.T Scriptures. In fact they contain not only the account of him who was ‘the truth of the Father’, but they are actually called the truth. We saw that Jesus said, ‘Thy word is truth’, and prayed that his disciples might be sanctified in the truth. We need not, then, distinguish between the uttered and the written word. What is uttered is written, and in that sense always remains uttered. II Timothy 2:15 speaks of, ‘rightly handling the word of truth’. Paul undoubtedly is referring to the O.T Scriptures, but then as they relate to Christ. Christ had already spoken of those Scriptures as referring to himself (Luke 24:26-27, 44ff).

At the same time the word of truth is the Gospel. If this is so then there is a wide scope to be observed in the matter of the truth, since the Gospel is at once the Gospel of salvation and the Gospel of the Kingdom. In Ephesians 1:13 Paul speaks of those who have ‘heard the truth, the gospel of your salvation’, and again in Col. 1:5 of ‘the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing..’ In II Thess. 1:8 Paul speaks of those who ‘believe not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ’. To obey the Gospel is to believe it, i.e. to obey the truth and live in conformity, with it. Hence in Gal.2:5 Paul speaks of ‘the truth of the Gospel’, and in 2:14 observes those who were ‘not straight- forward about the truth of the Gospel’. This is very much like not ‘obeying the truth’ of Gal. 5:7, that is not living in the grace and truth of the Gospel. In Romans 1:5, 15:18ff, and 16:26 Paul speaks of ‘the obedience of faith’ which is really ‘obeying the Gospel’ both initially in coming to Christ, and continuously by living in conformity with its truth.

This word of truth cannot be understood apart from him who is the truth of the Father, and who has the truth in himself.

(iv) Jesus the Truth

We have dealt partly with this fact in our study above. However there are some terms in the epistles which we should examine. In II Cor. 11:10 we read of ‘the truth of Christ’. Paul says this truth resides in him, as though in fact Christ were residing in him. In Ephesians Paul talks about what ‘the truth is in Jesus’ not ‘as it is in Jesus: which seems to indicate it may be somewhat different in him from other contexts.

We have seen he is the truth of the Father, and bears witness to the truth by what he is and does, and in fact tells out the truth. In the Revelation he is called ‘the Amen’ which is the closest we can get to saying ‘the stable truth’, for this Hebrew word is from the verb aman to confirm, or make stable, reliable. Hence in Revelation 19:11 he is called ‘Faithful and True’, words which are almost synonymous and which again remind us of II Cor. 1:18-20, ‘As

surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ... was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.'

Since as Romans 15:8 tells us, he is servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, and mainly by his fulfilment of the promises, we can see that in every way Christ is the truth to us. It was this truth by which we were saved. Paul says in II Thess. 2:13, 'God chose you from the beginning to be saved by sanctification by the Spirit, and belief in the truth.' Likewise it is the continuing obedience to the truth which is in Jesus, by which we live. We may now proceed to complete the point we began above, namely 'Living in the Truth'.

(d) Living in the Truth by the Truth

The 'truth of the Father', the 'truth in Christ' and 'the truth of the Spirit' all combine to bring us into the truth and to cause us to live by it. The gift of the 'truth of the Father' conducts us to the Father. In Ephesians 2:18 we see that we have access by him (i.e. the Son) through the Spirit to the Father. Likewise in Galatians 4:4-6 it is the Son who redeems us, and brings us to sonship, whilst the Spirit of the Son enters our hearts and makes our sonship effective and experiential. This is the Spirit who shows us the things of the Father and the Son. (John 16:15, cf. I Cor. 2:12)

The gift of the new heart (Ezekiel 36:25-26) causes us to walk in the way of truth (Ezek. 36:27-28) for forgiveness releases us from the way of untruth into the true knowledge of God (Jer. 31:31-34). Likewise the gift of the word of truth is the lode-star by which we pilot our vessel, the truth by which we walk. Yet this truth is the 'truth in Jesus'. How this is so is seen by looking at Ephesians 4:17-32.

In this passage Paul points back to the way the Gentiles walked as they were 'darkened in their understanding (cf. Romans 1:21ff)'. Hence they were morally insensitive, and in fact callous. They gave themselves over to every kind of fleshliness. Paul says, 'You did not so learn Christ!' He says that being taught 'the truth in Jesus' you put off your old humanity and put on the new, and 'You were renewed in the spirit of your mind', which is really David's equivalent of 'truth in the inward parts' and 'a new heart and a new spirit'. The new man is the man-of-truth 'created after the likeness of God in true righteousness (cf. Romans 1:18) and holiness'.

Paul then gives us a beautiful and distinct picture of the way the untrue and the true work in practice.- .. putting away falsehood, let everyone speak truth with his neighbour... .be angry and sin not; let not the sun go down on your wrath... .no longer steal; but let him labour, doing honest work. . . to give to those in need. . . .no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying....' This principle shows us that the truth is practical goodness which is the very antithesis of practical evil. To live this way is to walk in the truth, to do the truth (cf. John 3:20, Ephes 4:15) and to follow the truth as we live in the truth (III John 3, 4, 8).

(e) Witnessing the Truth by Living the Truth

As we saw, one researcher suggested that no man is truly capable of telling 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. He may take an oath to do this, but he can only attempt to do it. The only way we can live and tell

the truth is by living in the truth, a principle shown in John 15:1f, that is by abiding or dwelling in Christ, which means being obedient to his word, and obeying his power. In the latter part of this chapter Jesus speaks of the total inability (or, willingness) of the Jewish hearers to understand him. They hate him and the Father. However when the Holy Spirit comes he will witness to Jesus. What witness will he give? The answer is in John 16:7-15. He will show Jesus is the Son of the Father. He will bring through the truth because the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Also the disciples will bear witness.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus says they will bear witness to him when the Spirit comes upon them. To bear witness is not a bare recounting of what Jesus is, but rather a dynamic manifestation of Jesus himself. If we follow the word witness through ('testify' and 'witness' are the same, verbally and nounally) we will see, for example, in Rev. 1:9, that John is on the island of Patmos 'on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus'. He has been effectively testifying to Christ (a) By the word of truth, and (b) By his own life of truth. It is even better to say 'The life which Jesus lives in and through his servant'. This same thought is contained in Revelation 12:17 where the dragon is enraged by those who 'keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.' In Rev. 14:12 this is called 'who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus'. In Rev. 6:9 the martyrs are those who 'had been slain for the word of God and the witness they had borne'. We can see then that to 'have the testimony of Jesus' is to live according to 'the truth in Jesus', and so to evoke rage and opposition as did Jesus when he bore witness to the truth (the truth of God) by what he was, by what he did and said. Likewise the world will hate the truth when it is confronted by it. Hence 'all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution'. Nevertheless the truth will be witnessed to.

In this walk of witness we are to 'have our loins girded with truth'. This means we must adhere to the truth of the Gospel, the fruits of which are walking in the truth. In I John we see that 'If we say we have fellowship with Him whilst we walk in darkness we lie and do not live according to the truth (lit. 'do not the truth').' In Ephesians 5 to walk in the light is so to witness to truth that darkness is rebuked. Paul says, 'The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true'. This then, is part of the full witness which comes through the Spirit, and it witnesses to Christ.

Related to the problem of telling the truth, Paul says in Romans 9:1, 'I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit'. This is a remarkable statement. He can only speak the truth in Christ. His conscience, enlightened by the Holy Spirit witnesses that what he is saying is true. We conclude that we cannot tell the truth out of Christ, and that apart from the Holy Spirit it is dangerous to trust our conscience, or, rather, its witness! In Romans 1:9 Paul says, 'God is my witness...' He means God Himself witnesses to the truth of what he is claiming. He repeats this in II Cor. 11:31, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.. knows that I do not lie'. In II Cor. 2:17 he says that it is 'in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ'. In the light of this he can say (II Cor. 4:2) 'We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practise cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God'. In I Thess 2:5 God is a witness to the way they lived amongst the Thessalonians, whilst later in verse 10 both God and the Thessalonians are witnesses to their true behaviour. In I Tim. 2:7 Paul says 'I am telling the truth, I am not lying', and in Gal. 1:20, 'In what I am writing to you, before God I lie not!' These show us that keeping in the truth is a meticulous exercise and is lived consciously before God, in Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We see then, that the principle of witnessing to the truth is to live in it. Jesus said he came to bear witness to the truth, and he did by living (or, doing) the truth. He said he was 'the truth of the Father' so he lived in truth as the Son. We are under the Lordship of Christ and so, in and by obedience, we bear witness to the truth. The truth is not only refraining from that evil which suppresses the truth, but doing that truth which is truth. The effect of this is to suppress unrighteousness anyway.

This principle is very clearly shown in John 7:18, 'He who seeks the glory of Him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood (unrighteousness)'. When Jesus witnessed to the truth he simply sought to show the glory of God. Hence his actions were true. Thus we are seeing increasingly the nature of truth as being the doing, doing righteousness which is doing the truth. In a rather tragic way it can be seen that all that evil is doing amounts to nothing, since what is untrue is not viable, and not genuinely existent and so genuinely true, or actually authentic. The righteous man has the propensity for truth, but the truth is what he does as it issues from what he is.

4. The Man of Truth

We are now in a position to see what the Gospel has produced - the new man in the truth. Jesus had said, 'If you continue in my word, then are you truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'. Ephes 4:20-24, Col. 3:9-11 (cf. II Cor. 5:17, Gal 6:15) show that the man who obeys the truth (i.e. the Gospel) has put off the old humanity, i.e. his part in the rebellious, untruthful Adamic humanity, and has put on the new man, i.e. he now participates in the new humanity which is Christ himself. Hence he is now a man of the truth, or of the Way. Because we have shown (a) How he came, and (b) Having come he witnesses to the truth, we will now try to set out both these elements succinctly, and see what the new man in Christ is, and how he acts. This requires some contrast of the new and the old:-

- (i) **The old person in Adam has participated in the great lie.** In Adam, and also personally, he has rejected the true nature of God, the universe, and himself. Hence he has lived in a (ontological) delusion, and so his life has been in disjunction, disorientation, and not in conformity to things as they really are. He cannot see the truth of God.
- (ii) **God has never ceased through various media to communicate himself,** but man cannot see the truth, primarily because he cannot bear it. However, in the ultimate God has (a) Sent His Son to bear witness to the truth, i.e. the truth of God which covers His Being as Creator, Redeemer and Glorifier of man and the universe. Again because man cannot bear this truth He has also (b) Sent the very Spirit of truth, who convicts (convinces, rebukes) man concerning the truth, and leads the repentant into the truth.
- (iii) **The one who sees, understands, obeys and accepts the truth of God in Christ,** by the revelation of the Spirit, now puts on the new humanity and becomes part of it. As such he has a new way of life. He rejects the old (the lie) and lives in practice in the new (the truth). This gives him a different moral way of living. He has come to 'acknowledge the truth', i.e. he has come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4, cf. Heb 10:26), and has actually been born of the 'word of truth' (James 1:18) since this word of God brings him into being as a new creation.

- (iv) **From now on he will have only that which is true.** Hence to him grace is ‘the true grace of God’ (I Peter 5:12). He is interested only in the true riches (Luke 16:11). He only thinks on ‘whatsoever things are true’ (Phil. 4:8). He will have none of the false things.
- (v) **Since he knows the truth he can discern what is false.** I John 2:21 - ‘I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth.’ Yet what he knows to be false he rejects as a way of life and espouses the new, the true way of life (Ephes. 4:17-32). See also I Tim. 4:1-3.
- (vi) **He now worships in spirit and in truth** (John 4:23-24). This is because he is a true worshipper (John 4:23), and worships by the Spirit (Phil. 3:3, John 4:24). The Spirit is of course the Spirit of truth and has led him into the truth (John 16:12-15). He draws near to the throne of God with a true heart (Heb. 10:22). This is right because he worships in the true sanctuary (Heb. 8:2) in contrast to the mundane sanctuary of the old covenant.
- (vii) **He witnesses to the truth¹**, which in fact is witnessing to Christ. Acts 1:8, Rev. 1:2, 9, 6:9, 12:17. True witnessing is to abide in Christ (John 15:1ff) which is to live in the truth and to follow it (III John 3, 4, 8), i.e. ‘to follow the truth’, ‘to work in the truth’. It is to be ‘girded about with truth’ (Ephes. 6:14), ‘to speak the truth in love’ (Ephes. 4:15), for love is not love without the truth, or truth truth apart from love. This witness of love issuing from the truth is seen in I Peter 1:22, ‘Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently from the heart.’ It is also speaking the truth to one’s neighbour (Ephes. 4:25) where before one spoke lies.
- The deepest level of witness is really to live the truth in Christ. This means not only good moral living and loving, but in fact the truth which is God and His Christ being worked out by participation in what the Father and the Son are doing. In other words, the truth of God in His creation, redemption and ultimate glorification of all things is the whole truth so far as man is concerned, and to witness to it is to have part in it.
- (viii) **He lives in the truth.** This may be taken from different points of view but all add up to the context of the truth.
- (a) He is in Christ who is always the truth. Christ is the truth of the Father, and as Mediator-Creator not only upholds the ‘real state of affairs’ (the truth), but brings them to successful conclusion (Ephes. 1:9-10).
- (b) He is in the Spirit who is the truth, or, better, the Spirit of truth (John chs. 14-15, I John 5:7).
- (c) He is in the church which is ‘the household of God. ... the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth’

¹ For this whole matter of ‘witness’ see Living Faith Study No. 7 ‘Prophecy, Its Meaning, Scope & Significance.’

(I Tim. 3:15). In this context the believer lives with the constant renewal of his mind. Christ lives his life in him (Gal. 2:20, Col. 1:29), whilst the Spirit leads him into all truth, teaches him in the truth (John 16:12-15, I Cor. 2:12) and the church is that family which maintains the truth as it teaches the word of truth. Yet living in the truth is not only being renewed in reality continually (cf. Ephes 4:21-24, Col. 3:9-11, cf. Rom. 12:2), but it is being renewed 'after the image of its creator'. That is to live in the truth is not only not being false, but is spiritual growth in maturity, the maturity being the full-bodied truth of God Himself, and so the believer becomes, increasingly, like Him.

(d) Nevertheless living in the truth has the actual experience of obedience as its core reality. We have seen that 'the Word of truth' is also 'the law of God', and in fact that man is guided in what he must do so that he can conform with things as they really are, i.e. 'the real state of affairs'. It is clear from Romans 1:18, and 25 that the word reveals to man what he must do, and must not do. He needs this revelation. What, then, he obeys from the heart (Rom. 6:17) he knows the truth by actionally living in it. Hence I John 1:6 says that if we claim to have fellowship with God while we walk in darkness 'we lie and do not live according to the truth'. In 2:3-6 he adds, 'And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, 'I know him' but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'

(e) The outcome of living the truth is truthfulness of life, which, as often in the O.T can be translated as faithfulness. Hence he who is girded with truth (Ephes. 6:14), and rejoices in the truth (I Cor. 13:6, i.e. righteousness) and so bears the fruit of the Spirit, particularly faithfulness (Gal. 5:22).

(f) Finally to live in the truth is to discern the false. This is shown clearly in I Tim. 4:1-3. Here seducing demons seek to distort the nature of truth. Certain foods are wrong, so much so that they seem morally evil whereas Paul is convinced that nothing is evil, of itself. How can it be if it is created by God? Also the demons forbid marriage as though it is 'unclean'. Paul affirms that everything created by God is good, i.e. true (Gen. 1:31), and so can be 'received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.' We have seen already from I John 2:22 and 27 that the believer has that 'anointing' which is the Holy Spirit (of truth) by which he can know the true and discern the false. Thus the man of truth begins by being born anew of the word of truth, and being renewed after the image of Him Who created him, grows up into the truth. This leads us to consider the ultimate of the truth.

5. The Ultimate of Truth

Truth is the personal Being of God. It is the outworking of His Being in creation, redemption, and the glorification of all things. The truth of God has nothing added to it in, or by, history. History is part of that truth, both its revelation and actuation. 'The real state of affairs? or things as they really are' issue from God and are substantiated by Him. Hence the ultimate of truth, whilst a climax within the time-space sphere that we know, is

not contingent upon time-space dimensions but is expressed within them. Man, and indeed all creation, is permitted to see the truth.

As we have seen the attempt by Satan, and then his captive man, in concert with the whole evil system of the world-aeon composed of fallen angels, demonic powers and subverters of the truth has sought to present the truth as the lie, and the lie as the truth. This attempt has been thwarted, and ultimately will be shown to have been thwarted for ever. God has never ceased to communicate Himself, and the truth of Himself by many media. The fact that lying spirits and men living the lie have not wished to see the truth does not minimise God's grace in revelation. Such grace further judges impenitent creatures, including the one made in God's image, man.

The Cross and Resurrection, sealed by the Ascension, is the supreme revelation of truth, and its dynamic confrontation to evil. At the same time it is the total actuation of truth, for truth as man may know it begins with the God of creation and is the acts of creation, redemption and glorification. Hence if these fail then the truth is a lie, and it is possible that the lie is even the truth, i.e. God has failed in His universe.

Prophetically the truth of God (the oracles) has always been uttered. In various ages the Word confronts man through the prophet. Collectively the deposit of the prophets is intended to confront man. However it is the substance of the oracles who is Jesus himself, for 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'. In him are contained all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he is made these to us in righteousness, sanctification and redemption (Col. 2:3, 9, I Cor. 1:30). Because prophetically it has been prophesied that truth will triumph and evil be vanquished then it is the faith-understanding of the believer that the incarnate truth, Jesus ('full of grace and truth') will ultimately destroy that which is evil and seal that which is truth.

Christ has already defeated the powers of darkness (John 12:31, 16:11, Heb 2:14-15, Col. 2:14-15), the world (John 12:31, Gal. 1:4, 6:14), the flesh (Gal. 5:24, cf. Rom. 8:11-12), sin (Rom. 6:10-14, Rom. 8:3) and death (I Cor. 15:55-56) and so what he does from the point of the Cross-Resurrection-Ascension event is simply the outworking of that victory. Hence the passages of I Cor. 15:24-28, Phil. 2:9-11, Rev. 11:15 with the thrust of the Revelation chs 5-22 is his completion of the victory already won in principle.

These chapters of Revelation show us the attempts by Satan, the beast, the image of the beast, the false prophet and the foul spirit to deceive the nations. As we have seen the attempts to deceive the nations are many and prolonged. However at the end these deceitful creatures and their kingdom of darkness are defeated.

Who, then, defeats them? The answer is 'Christ the Truth'. Whilst the Father is called 'the Alpha and the Omega' in Rev. 1:8, it is Christ who is called this in Rev. 22:13. It is this one who is called 'The Amen, the true and faithful witness, the beginning of God's creation' in 3:14. In 15:3-4 the Song of Moses and the Lamb is sung and it is said of God, 'Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages', and in another song, 'Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are thy judgements'. Yet it is Messiah who brings these 'ways' and 'judgements' to conclusion. In chapter 17 the seven kings, through the beast make war on the Lamb, but it is said of him (v.14) 'The Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.' In chapter 19 the heavens open and there is a white horse. 'He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war'. He is also called 'the Word of God', and 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. This one conquers all the foul enemies of the truth

and causes them to be cast into the lake of fire. This then is the end of the Great Lie, and all deceit.

The last two chapters of the Revelation and corresponding apocalyptic passages in the Gospels and Epistles depict a new heaven and a new earth, or, a renewed heaven and a renewed earth, and in this 'dwells only righteousness 'Nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practises abomination or falsehood.' Already in Rev. 21:8 we have read of those who will be cast into the lake of fire, and among them are 'murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolators, and all liars'.

The positive side of all this is that all things are new, that there is nothing of deceit or evil in the regenerated heavens and earth. What God had promised, and what He had planned from before creation He has now accomplished. Thus the truth of His Being has worked out in His history, through creation, redemption, and the glorification of all things.

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