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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

# Truthing it in Love[1]

(ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ, EPH. IV. 15).

BY PRINCIPAL THE REV. JAMES IVERACH, D.D., ABERDEEN.

IN the New Testament, Truth is used in a very wide sense. It is something to be believed, something to be thought, something to be done. In the Johannine writings in particular truth is something to be done. To do the truth is a frequent expression in these writings. At the same time stress is laid in them on the fact that it is something to be believed, and something to be thought. In our text the Apostle lays stress on the function of truth in social relations. Our Authorized Version brings out that aspect by supplying the verb 'speaking,' but the word supplied unduly limits the wide significance of the Apostle's meaning. The attitude towards truth is universal. It means not only that in social intercourse we are to have regard to truth, it means also that truth is to reign in the inward parts, that it is to rule conduct everywhere and always, that it is to rule our thinking, govern our acting, and inform our feeling. Truthing it, yet truthing it in love, so the Apostle sets forth the right attitude towards truth.

I have chosen this text, in response to the great task entrusted to me, because it briefly and fully sets forth what I owe to my Alma Mater, and what she seemed to say to me when many years ago she sent me forth to my life task, with the seal of her approval on my undergraduate course, when she granted me my degree. I had learned from my teachers to have supreme regard to truth as the mainstay of my feeling, my thinking, and acting. And also that I should never be able to approach truth if I did not love it for its own sake. I was taught by precept and example to recognize that there was a supreme objective standard of belief, of thought, and action.

Nor can I ever forget my debt to one of my teachers, the best teacher I have ever known, who first enabled me to recognize the unity of this universe, who told me and enabled me to see that there was a great objective order, fixed as the stars, deep as the firmament, regular as the seasons, and that it was our business to find that order and submit to it. Peter Guthrie Tait was the name of that great master of mine, and I found it well to follow his teaching as far as I could. It was well for one to know that there is a great objective order, and that the proper attitude towards it was to ascertain what was the particular ongoing of it. So in mathematics and in physics, and in the physical sciences generally, we learned in this university to truth it, and to have regard to the truth of things, and to love to have it so. We learnt to know that our science at its best was simply an approximation to the great reality of the eternal order, and we sought ever to approach more closely to the great reality. But other questions speedily arose, and under the inspiration of Professor Campbell Fraser, happily still with us, we found that there were other questions not so easily answered. We came to doubt, to question, to hesitate, to ask what were the relations of the outer to the inner, what was our own contribution towards the order of things, and we were left with a number of unanswered questions, many of them still unanswered. But with all that process of hesitation, we found our conviction deepened that an answer could be found, that at all events in this mysterious universe we had to make the supreme venture, and that when we made it in faith and love the issue would be so far satisfactory.

What we learned in our classes might be said to be the constant exhortation to truth it in love; but we learned more than that. As we passed through the classes and passed from subject to subject, and from teacher to teacher, we ever learned that there was for each subject an ideal, a standard of worth, a measure of value, which, though varying from subject to subject, yet possessed abiding reality. We learned that truth was not only an objective standard, but also an inward reality. It was a property of things, it was also a spiritual quality. Truth was there in the universe, in the stable order, the

[1] A sermon preached in St. Giles Cathedral at the Commemorative Service of the University of Edinburgh, on 7th July 1911.

reciprocal rhythm of its action and reaction, its constant change and its ordered progress. Yet we learned to recognize truth in the making. We learned that Energy was constant, and could neither be increased nor diminished, yet this universe is in the making. And all the truth about it is not yet. We were taught to look at the great reality of a universe in its making at the hand of man; life in its evolutionary flow rising under pressure ever higher, passing from kind to kind, till at length there appeared a being on the earth who could reach backwards and so far read the story of the world's becoming. Then we were taught to regard with reverence the wondrous achievements of earth's highest creature. Languages, institutions, histories, governments, cities, empires in their rise, growth, decline and fall,—in all these more complex subjects we were taught to look for law, order, and method.

Thus we were taught that there were fixed beliefs of man, related to reality, beliefs which persisted, which no criticism could invalidate, which criticism itself presupposed, and which were, indeed, the very nerve of criticism itself. Then, too, we found that these irreversible, irresistible beliefs seemed to be ingrained in the structure of our intelligence, and without them there was no possibility of real, fruitful thought. Beliefs which at the outset were teleological, fitted to make us at home in this world in which we had found ourselves, subjected to after criticism, turned out to be of the nature of which the world itself was made.

But beyond these fixed irreversible beliefs, and beyond the fixed order of things, which our mother taught us to recognize, we found that she insisted on the recognition of other orders of things, no less real, no less worthy of our admiring study. She taught us to recognize the great world which man has made, and which man was making. She not only taught us, in the sciences, to recognize and submit to an order which we did not make, but she taught us to see a world in the making. She not only showed us the world of principles, she taught us to see what ideals were, and how they were to be realized.

In her progressive evolution our Alma Mater has, increasingly with the years, recognized, and embodied in her teaching, these new worlds of human worth, of human purpose, and of the realization of human ideals. She had always recognized these in the teaching of the humanities, and had made us acquainted with the glory of Greece and the splendour of Rome, had caused us to know the achievements of the human mind in the philosophies of the world; she has added to these other and equally important departures, in which she recognizes the ideals which rule human thinking in the worlds which are being made by human effort to-day. Music, architecture, art in general, history of human endeavour in all departments of effort, are being ever added to the wide culture of the university. But the main addition she has made lies in the fact that she trains men to recognize ideals, and to recognize that ideals are the ruling guides in the world which is being made by the work of man. Energy we can neither increase nor diminish, Gravitation works on ever and always without consulting us, Chemical elements abide, combine and recombine only on their own conditions; no efforts of ours can make contradictions true; the laws of true reasoning abide, and we cannot change them. Nor can we alter the fixed necessities which gird us around on every side. But under these conditions, and largely by the use of them, we are free to work out a world of our own, and it is in this world of purpose, of effort to realize ideals, that the freedom and the glory of man are really potent. So that we can see necessity is the mother of freedom, and because of fixed necessities results are free and ideals may be realized. If there were no fixities, if there were no necessities, no abiding laws, then there could be no rational beliefs, no game of progressive thought, no controlling action on the part of man. But within the rigid outline of these necessities we find room for ideals, for purpose, for the making of worlds which express our meaning, and fulfil our purpose. Gravitation works with us in the building of our palaces and our homes, Chemistry guides us to make new combinations which it will faithfully carry out to completion, Colours lend themselves to the making of those pictures which express the highest artistic meaning, and the light which streams in on us constantly, working in ways which can be expressed in absolute mathematical formulæ, suggests to the mind which grasps it that light which never was on sea or land, the consecration and the poet's dream.

On looking back across the years and trying to measure the debt I owe to my Alma Mater, I place first what she taught me regarding the fixities, the

necessities, the order which underlies all our thinking and acting, and constrains all our believing. To recognize these is the first step on the way to freedom, or rather they prescribe the sphere wherein freedom is to be realized.

But the university did not stop short with the description of these necessities; in her teaching she called on us to realize that the world is making, and that we are the people to make it. She taught us that in the clash of human wills, in the striving of men towards the realization of themselves and of the world in which they live and are to live, we were in the presence of a creative force of the most magnificent kind. Thus we learned that while there had been evolution in the world, guided by pressure from without and from within, up to man, there was also another kind of evolution, controlled not by pressure from behind, but guided by purpose, by ideals, by the adaptation of means to ends. So our Alma Mater led us into history, and though that history, so far as I was concerned, was only within selected periods, she gave me the principles on which all human effort within history was to be construed. She showed us a world in the making, a world ever taking on new meanings; that there was a record of these meanings in the languages, the literatures, the poesies, the philosophies, the sciences, the institutions of the world, and that these could not be understood if we did not add to the principles of explanation, drawn from the physical world mainly, that other principle which recognizes the creative energy of man, and his native power to new make the world in which he found himself, and to give to it a deeper, wider meaning.

Part of the function of a university is to make her sons and daughters aware of this newer world which has grown up within the older world disclosed to us by the sciences, and to enable them to discern the laws, principles, and meaning of this newer world; in a word, to make them able to recognize the worth of ideals as these are involved in the spiritual world in which man lives, a world made by man himself in interaction with the world given to him. The ideals are there in art, in science, and in literature; and the university teaches us to note these ideals, to recognize them, to test them, and to act on them. But we are taught also to recognize that these ideals are themselves progressive, that they have had a growth and an evolution in the past, that this literature and that have contributed towards an evolution which we can see, but which has not yet come to its climax. It may be, too, that each race and nation has only contributed some element to the complete ideal, which in the true, the beautiful, and the good will form the highest ideal for man universally, in which event it is our business to ascertain what abiding elements of worth there may be in the culture of the past, and to help to set these forth in harmonious combination with all the other elements of worth, so as to form a whole which will commend itself, not to this race or to that, but to man universally. What are our ideals to be? and how are they to be realized? It is easy to ask these questions, and hard to answer them. But it is the part of a great university to ask them, and to answer them; at all events, to endeavour to answer them in such a way as to keep the question alive, and to keep the torch of truth ever burning.

So when in the great function of to-day, when our Alma Mater sends forth her sons and daughters, whom by academic test of a stringent kind she has found worthy to bear her name, and when she has recognized the worth of those who have successfully passed the tests of life, as they formerly passed the academic test in this or in other universities, and has graciously declared by the conferring of her degree on them that they have borne themselves worthily in the race, may I venture to say that she sends them forth to begin their life-work, or to continue it, in the spirit of our text, to truth in love. So she sends you forth to feed the high tradition of the race, to conserve whatsoever in the past is found worthy, but specially to exercise the function of creative evolution, and to take the inevitable next step for the evaluation of the ideal and the realization of it, which shall help in the making of man, the building up of character, and the realization of true social well-being. You who go forth to-day crowned with the approval of our Alma Mater form part of that small percentage of the human race to which we rightly look for light and leading, for stimulus and direction in the years to come. Trained, educated, and crowned, you go forth with the seal of approval on your university work, but you go forth to meet a more stringent test than that which you have passed. The test of life differs greatly from the academic test, yet

the one should prepare for the other; keep that disinterested love for the ideal which has been fostered here; keep that recognition of the necessities which guard belief and thought and action; maintain in all their freshness, purity, and lustre, those high hopes and great ideals which are your possession to-day; descend not to second-rate ideals of life or work, which are absolutely fatal to both. Never let work out of your hands less well done than you can do. Never say to yourself, this is not up to the mark, this is not so well done as I could have done it, had I taken more pains, but it will do, it will pass. Above all, despise not the dreams of your youth, nor the high visions of work for man which you cherished in the past. Joseph's dreams were prophetic of future reality. So are the dreams of every one, and the best work ever done by man was done in the fulfilment of the dreams of youth. Let it never be possible for you, when middle age comes, and when you review your past, to say, I was young and foolish then, I dreamed of great things to be said, thought, and done, but I have learned common sense since then, and have learned to be content with common things. That is the tragedy of human life, that is failure in all the higher issues of life, and, though many have counted it success, yet in the sight of the eternal values it is the greatest failure possible. Truth is great, and to truth it in love is the highest achievement of man.

Nor can I conclude without a reference to Him in whom grace and truth became, whose life was truth in love, who is the way, the truth, and the life, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, who is the realized ideal of humanity. Nay, He is more: He is set for the making of men, for the help and the strengthening of the weak, for the raising of the fallen, for the quickening of men into the higher life; who can and does pour into our broken lives the fulness of His own gracious life, who can make us men indeed.

# The Great Text Commentary.

## THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE PSALMS.

PSALM CIII. 1, 2.

**'Bless the Lord, O my soul;**
**And all that is within me, bless his holy name.**
**Bless the Lord, O my soul,**
**And forget not all his benefits.'**

THE 103rd Psalm is written in the form of a monologue. It is a meditation. The Psalmist is alone with himself; he is speaking to his own soul. He is laying down a method for each good soul to examine itself. It is a Psalm of thanksgiving and of recollection.

### I.

THANKSGIVING.

**'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.'**

1. '*Bless the Lord.*' It seems perhaps at first a strange thing that we should call upon our souls to bless the Lord. It is a fitting and natural thing that we should call upon the gracious God to bless us. But what can we give to Him? Herein is a great mystery, even the mystery of love! Love is a great want—God's love is a great want; love can only be satisfied with love. God had finished the earth; He looked upon it all in the freshness of its beauty; He saw it had just come forth from His hands. But He was not satisfied. He looked at it, and said of it all, 'It is very good.' Then He waited, and then He stooped and fashioned man. You see, there was not one creature in the world who could take hold of all its beauty and turn it into praise; there was not one creature in the world who could feel the great throbbing of His love and love Him back again; there was not one who could commune with Him, walk with Him, and enter into the mysteries of wisdom, and feel its power, and find its uses, and turn all these things into blessings to God. So our God stooped again and fashioned out of the earth a man; and then, when the man saw the worth of things, he thanked God for it; he found the uses of things, he blessed