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That Divine Truth

John 18:37-38

³⁷ Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

³⁸ Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

The divine truth has always existed, it's with us today, and will be in the future. Such truth is the echo of the luminescence of the divine who is, who always has been, and who will always be. This illumination parts the darkness that accompany our lives from cradle to grave. This illumination is the unspoken hope of all of Adam's children who contemplate, who search, who pray. Our entire mankind is destined to move, pushed by an unseen, irrepressible force, to progress toward that divine truth. Regarding the natural wonders of the Universe, and their laws, there is truth in science. Regarding the events of the world that would be sometimes passed on with many errors and made up tales, there is truth in history. Regarding the invisible world of the human soul, and its relationship with God, there is the divine truth in religious faith. And among all, this last one is priceless.

Let's suppose that a prophet, on a divine mission from God, appears among us, and promises us to end all of our doubts, and to bestow upon us the divine truth. A prophet who would grant us the truth of the perfect nature of God, of the creation and the destiny of mankind. A prophet who would hand us all the answers to questions that exhaust our attention, such as questions about the mortal and eternal, and the questions about life after death. If that was to happen, could there be a limit to our joyfulness? Could there be a more uplifting happiness than being in the confidence of someone who comprehends the divine truth? Indeed, such a person's thoughts are no longer tied down by doubts and uncertainties; indeed, such a person no longer has to fight through the dense underbrush and conquer the deep gorges on the path to the truth. That person is already there, reached the summit of the sacred mountain, and breathe in the fresh air without any restraints. However, it is unlikely that we would take part in such a joy in our earth-bound lives. The divine truth doesn't just come to us and

shine its sacred light upon us without any action by us. We have to move forward to it, sometimes by walking painstakingly through boulder-strewn roads of doubts and sacrifices. We have to tirelessly seek it in our own souls, in the affairs of our world, and in the laws of nature.

In addition, we have to combat those adversaries who would prevent us from moving toward the truth, or those who would stop its progress in our souls. The adversaries of the truth are great in number, and they may completely surround the truth, block its advances, and they mock it and damage it with the intention to replace truth with doubts and uncertainties. While Jesus said: "Away from me, Satan", but the real world seems to say: "Away from me truth". Some adversaries of the divine truth left their fingerprint on the world around us, maybe even in our lives, so recognizing them isn't difficult. When I say adversary of the truth, I don't mean those unsightly habits that bribe the heart, blunt the intellect, or extinguish our empathy and affection. Here I want to caution you about more subtle, better disguised adversaries that hide in plain sight.

The first of these adversaries is unassuredness. This adversary gladly puts on the disguise of a poet or a wise man, and seeks out the souls that are unsure in their faith, especially during societal upheavals. This adversary will tell you in the most thought-provoking way that the only truth comes from the Khoran, or the Veda, or from the Pope, or from the Bible. It appears that at the core of Protestantism all opinions have to be accommodated, whether it's the Trinity, universal God, freedom of the will, fatalism, original sin, supernaturalism, progressiveness, or the unchanging order of our Universe. So, where could we possibly search for truth? The divine truth is a fickle construct; we may easily observe it in our dreams, just to slip through the cracks of the real world after we wake up. We see an example of that when Pontius Pilate was asking Jesus: "What is truth?".

Another adversary that attacks us on the path to the truth is indifference. This adversary tempts us to say: why should we compare doctrinal teachings? Why should we strive to understand the findings of science, or new theological developments, or the outstanding achievements of human intellect, or the honorable ambitions of our conscience? It might be easier to accept a few well-worn formulaic answers, or even a few incoherent thoughts. As long as it represents a light mental effort, we can say with derisive contentment, without the slightest turbulence in our inner world, and repeat after Pilate: "What is truth?". Then the burdens and pursuits of our earthly lives elbow themselves right in between us and that divine truth. Never mind that those pursuits don't usually put an unbearable pressure on our souls, never mind that they don't represent an undefeatable threat. But because we all earn a living through sweat and toils from morning till night, as we all fight life's multiple battles, as we all partake in those expected societal activities, as we always move forward without stopping, it's not surprising to hear the common man, exhausted and exasperated by such daily strife, chimes in with Pilate: "What is truth?".

It's bad enough that our daily problems, scattered attention don't allow us to acquire the inexhaustible treasures through learning and comprehension. Even worse, we have philosophical doctrines that grew out of learning and comprehension, but those doctrines aim to deny us the path to the truth. Those doctrines allow the search for the truth in the realm of the visible, but they forbid our search in the invisible realm of the soul and conscience. They forbid the mention of a God whom our ears can't hear, and our eyes can't see. They forbid the mention of providence and eternal life as their existence can not be proven. So, in a modified form, they, too, chime in with Pilate: "What is truth that is not material?".

However, the most malicious adversary of truth is not misguided doctrines, unassuredness, or our daily burdens. The most malicious adversary of truth is selfish interests. This adversary can be recognized in each historical epoch, and in every societal structure. This adversary defends itself by slandering, shaming, ridiculing, by persecution, insults, beheadings and burning at the stake. Selfish interest may be honest or shameless, intentional or unintentional.

The selfish interest from a societal order, from historical past, from the intent to protect or improve the standing of a societal class, from religious beliefs, and from God's sacred plan has battled the truth frequently throughout history. In the 17th century the discovery that Earth moves and the Sun is stationary remained largely unknown, except for a few scientists who kept their discovery locked up in books that very few others read. During all that time the Vatican showed no concern, as the matter was discussed only as a curiosity by higher ranking officials. However, when Galileo, who was dismayed by how such piece of knowledge was hidden, raised that discovery out of the dusty books of universities, and started openly discussing it, perfecting it, popularizing it among the youth, and calling it the truth, then the Vatican became concerned. Why did they become concerned, you ask? Why would the mighty Vatican be interested whether the Earth moves or not? During the dark ages Vatican was the final arbiter of the working order of the Universe, and that included the movement of the Sun, and the stationary nature of Earth. Because the Vatican was infallible, it could not have made a mistake, and the natural order had to be subjugated to the declaration of the Vatican. The selfish interest of Vatican resulted in the disapproval of the discovery. Indeed, the Vatican wasted no time in denouncing the discovery, and that teacher in Florence was forced to sacrifice the truth on the altar of the Vatican's selfish interest. It's astonishing that even recently in a Protestant state, in Berlin, based on this very same topic, we witnessed excommunications for the selfish interest of the infallibility of the Bible, even though in our time the discover of the moving Earth has become accepted knowledge taught in all secular schools.

In the 16th century there was widespread desire to improve the leadership, the doctrines of the Catholic Church, so Reformation began. But then kings, emperors, priests became fearful that the ambitious goals of Reformation will turn into a threat to their crowns, their privileges, and their usual social order. They didn't examine whether

the truth is in Wittenberg, in Zurich, in Geneva, in the bible, or in the soul. They thought only about their selfish interest, and they started long and deadly wars to aid Rome whether it be fighting on a battlefield, imprisoning people, or by burning opponents at the stake. They didn't aid Rome, because it was the guardian bastion of the truth, but rather because they thought Rome would protect the rulers' selfish interests from the threats of Reformation.

It wasn't only in the 17th or 16th century where selfish interest slapped the truth in the face. Wasn't it selfish interest that raised the cross on Golgotha, and made the crowd scream "Crucify him, crucify him"? Wasn't it selfish interest that wanted to erase the words spoken in Galilee, Jerusalem, or on the Mount of Olives? Wasn't it selfish interest that with burning hatred sealed the tomb, thinking that they may be able to bury the truth in it? The very same selfish interest explains to us that the death of Jesus was a necessary sacrifice to appease an angry God, and to open the path for the coming of God's glory and mercy to Earth. I say to that, no way, no how! God didn't need to shed the blood of an innocent just so he can now show his love and mercy, and to lend a helping hand to mankind.

Let us render into God the things that are Gods, and let us render into Caesar the things that are Caesar's. It was those adversaries of the divine truth that raised the cross on Golgotha; it was that blind and cruel selfish interest of the existing laws and traditions of the temple and the sanctuary, and of the high priests and Pharisee. That selfish interest didn't want to accept the prophet of Nazareth, didn't want to accept his humility, his mercy and his truth.

Observe the cross, this sign of eternal damnation of the enemies of the truth. Now, consider Jesus Christ who gave his life for the truth. Consider then the legions of people who defended the sacred virtue of the divine truth against the ignorance and moral deprivation. Consider the truth of the Jewish prophets, of Socrates and his like-minded followers, of the apostles of the Gospels, of all the heretics, of the once conquered but now victorious Reformers, of the martyrs of enlightened thought and science, and follow their example in being friends and witnesses of the divine truth. Give your own sacrifices for the truth, although I recognize that today it's rare that such sacrifice would demand your life or your livelihood. Still, offer on the altar to end your own unassuredness, end your own indifference, end your own selfish interest. Your love of the divine truth will bring that truth ever closer to you. The truth will readily come to those who are starving and thirsting for it. To those who in their souls desire to hear the heavenly harmonies, and to create true peace in their souls. To those who pray earnestly and honestly when they seek the truth in the inner sanctuaries of their souls. When all things inside you demand the truth, the truth will come to you. When your mind feels the need of science and knowledge, when your religious faith presses you to be on the side of truth, and not of the falsehoods, when, as children of God, your own self-respect forces you to adhere to the truth that brings salvation to us and maintains our society, the truth will come to you.

Experience tells us that when the forced and tyrannical doctrines contradict the articles of faith, those actions will make us feeling dissatisfied, uneasy, filled with doubt and indignity, even though those doctrines proudly appear to be part of an ancient and sacred heritage. All things inside of you cry out for the truth. Love the truth and it will come to you. You may find it through the enlightened world around you. The truth has made inroads into education and affected many branches of human achievements, thoughts, actions, interpretations and emotions that surround you every day. I so wish that everything around us would be enlightened. However, there remain many unenlightened areas even within the realms of our celebrated protestant religion. How few of us are truly knowledgeable about this sacred book, even though we may open it every day. How few of us know the history of those biblical passages that are rammed down our throats, and explained as the essence of Christian religion, whereas, those passages are nothing more than late additions to the scripture. Why do we accept that Christian teachings should be as mysterious as the secret knowledge of the ancient Egyptian priests? Isn't a clear knowledge about this book as much a right as seeing the rising Sun's blessed light? Oh come blessed light and on your rays bring the truth into every soul.

We may find the divine truth in our conscience. Conscience is able to tell good from bad, and the same way it can distinguish between truth and falsehoods. Your conscience may serve you well in spiritual matters, in matters of faith and of salvation. In our souls God's words have the sacred mission to explain us and show us the truth. For the longest time our conscience was forced to exist on a diet that sapped its powers. Our conscience has been ridiculed and silenced by those who decided that conscience can not be beneficial to them. Now is the time for our conscience to regain its rightful place for dignified consideration; after all, conscience is nothing less than the part of our soul that embodies our connections to God.

Truth appears not only on the pages of the scriptures, where we see the words of our faith in several time periods, but perhaps even more pointedly in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Oh, those words of Jesus do refresh the soul, cleanse the mind, console the heart, renew our determination and our powers despite the fact that those words were in a language that's no longer in use and despite that those words were from a culture that no longer exist. The words of Jesus is in sacred harmony with everything that is kind and divine within us; his words are the truth. Oh, the life of Jesus, this glorious extension of God's life into mankind, adds to his words. His love of God, his love of people, his placidness, his morality, his perfect holiness, and his acquiescence to God's will, are expressions of the truth. Trust Jesus when you thirst the forever life, as Jesus is the path, the truth, and the way of life. You may find traces of such religious and moral truths in your own life. The force that sustained you when you fight against wrongdoings, the consoling that lifted you up during life's ordeals, the hope that brightened your heart in the middle of a painful disappointment, the forgiveness that you received that filled your conscience with new courage, that allowed you to receive the heavenly mercy of God, now those are parts of truth. There were times when there was

a murky darkness inside and around you; there were times when everywhere you looked all you saw was menacing doubts, questions, and uncertainties. Then a bright star appeared on our overcast horizon, and at once it dispersed the depressing darkness. This star has shone the light on your path to follow, as that was the light of truth. We can recognize divine truth by its graceful looks; there is an unmistakable consonance between grace and divine truth.

Let us now compare the Universe of the divine truth with the Universe of the canonical doctrine. The Universe of the canonical doctrine is our planet covered with a tent-like blue sky, and on it the Sun shines brightly like a million light bulbs. The Universe of the divine truth is endless space whose borders are farther away than our limited thought would mark it; in that space there are countless Suns and planets and other celestial bodies that have been performing their enchanted dances since time immemorial, and continue into the unending future. It's infinite vastness, that is life, not restricted to a planet of a grain of sand, but life on an unmeasurably large scale.

Let us now compare the God of the divine truth with the God of the canonical doctrine. The God of the canonical doctrine applies himself only periodically, he appears only to one group of people, implying that he has abandoned all the rest of humanity. Frequently he appears with weapons of revenge, and he demands human blood, and he threatens us with the eternal suffering in hell just to ensure the acceptance of his truth. The God of divine truth toils endlessly, he continually reveals himself in daily events, and in our conscience. His mercy is as wide ranging as his truth; he forgives the remorseful, and he embraces all humanity, all his children. He is our father in Heaven.

Let us now compare the Christ of the divine truth with the Christ of the canonical doctrine. The Christ of the canonical doctrine is part of God, but not quite God. He is a man, but also more than a man. We are not certain if he has sacrificed himself, or not. We are not certain if he suffered or not. We are not certain if his life is our life, or a life unlike us. We can never be certain if he died or not. The Christ of the divine truth is with us and for us. He has the noble goal of establishing God's world in mankind. His life and his words are his own. When he rejects temptation, it is his thoughts that does that; when he is praying, it is his person who is doing it. When he is grateful, it is his own gratefulness, and when he cries, it is his body that cries. He freely fulfills in its entirety the will of his Heavenly Father. His words are sermons from a life of truth, and those sermons inspire our faith. His life is a model for mankind's life, and his death foreshadows mankind's salvation. Even from a distance of nineteen centuries when we kneel at his cross, when we contemplate his life and his death, when we are in those moments of deep meditation, our inner voices can loudly exclaim: Indeed, here was a true man. God lived in him, and he brings us salvation.

Now, let us compare the Bible of the divine truth with the Bible of the canonical doctrine. When we read the Bible of canonical doctrine we have to give up the freedom of thought about "all are tried and the good is saved"; we have to struggle to accommodate

serious contradictions, we have to struggle to explain the imagery of a fallible God, struggle to explain the prejudices and ignorance that comes from the distant centuries. When we read the Bible of divine truth we gain the freedom and the responsibility to distinguish the certain from the uncertain, the mortal from the eternal, we no longer have to be consumed by the struggle to comprehend the conflicts of the spirit of the Bible with the text. We are able to appreciate the beauty of the Bible, easily absorb the teachings, admonishments, statements, and hopes. This is how this book, this unsurpassed source of knowledge of God and of Jesus, and of holy and true life, will truly become the book that guides our lives.

Finally, let us compare the faith of the divine truth with the faith of the canonical doctrine. The faith of the canonical doctrine is nothing more than symbolic events of faith that are used to cover up and muddy the Christian truth, and these symbolic events offend the intellect and upset the conscience. The faith of the divine truth is a collection of uplifting ideals that make our hearts beat faster. Ideals such as the love of God, the love of our fellow human beings, the limitless and unending love that exists in the present, as well as in eternity. This is the faith of Jesus, the faith that established God's world on Earth. This is the faith that emerges when we follow the spirit of Jesus, and we remove the heavy and suffocation cloak of the canonical doctrine. This is the essence of our religion, the historic authenticity of the divine truth.

Love this truth! Embrace this truth and practice this truth, so this Christian truth may strengthen your souls throughout your Earth-bound life, may it console your soul, may it be the salvation of your soul, may it be the prelude to that perfect truth of eternity.
Amen