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VALIANT FOR THE TRUTH.

BY THE LATE PROF. CHARLES A. AIKEN, PH.D., D.D.

“And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord.”—
JEREMIAH 9: 3.

THE reading of the Revised Version gives us a slight change in the form of the rendering, without altering essentially the conception: “And they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord.”

If the fact be so, and the prophet's arraignment of his people be true, his bitter grief is abundantly justified. The omen is of evil, and evil only. Let it be from ignorance, mistake, moral imbecility, cowardice, or a more positive and flagrant disloyalty, when men are strong, but not for the truth, valiant, but not for the truth, the sign is of present evil and greater evil to come. Therefore the prophet would seek in the wilderness a lodging-place of

wayfaring men, where, his head waters and his eyes a very fountain of tears, he might weep for the slain of the daughters of his people.

You have not forgotten how fine a picture Bunyan sketches in his "Pilgrim's Progress" of one who is "valiant for truth." It is just as Christiana and her children are entering upon the eighth and last step of their pilgrimage that Greatheart and his company overtake this hero. Refusing to join the three who had beset him, Wildhead, Inconsiderate and Pragmatic, refusing also to go back at their bidding, he had fought them and put them to flight, caring nothing for numbers, because "little or more are nothing to him that has the truth on his side"; praying to his king, "who I knew could hear me and afford invisible help, and that was sufficient for me"; using confidently and to good purpose "the right Jerusalem blade in his hand, with which one may venture upon an angel"; at the same time, with the practical earnestness and energy that come of faith, clinging to his sword-hilt with a grip so firm that the blood ran through his fingers; and when he was asked to give account of his former life, summing up all by saying, "I believed, and therefore came out and got into the way, fought all that set themselves against me, and by believing am come to this place." Plainly,

whatever his valor might be he knew and proclaimed that its spring was in his faith. This is the type of character which our text by contrast brings before us. Over such a robust and valorous faith there were no need to weep one's eyes away in the wilderness.

It may be worth our while to study this type of character in four aspects: (1) In its relation to the nature, rights, and claims of truth; (2) in its relation to the highest capacities, dignities, and responsibilities of manhood; (3) in its relation to the just call and sore peril of souls about us that may be saved, perhaps saved by one valiant for the truth while no other strength or valor would help them; and (4) in its relation to our professed loyalty to Jesus Christ.

Let it be borne in mind all along the line of our thought that we cannot come even into quiet possession of the truth without overcoming the opposition of forces, within and without, which would keep us from it; that we cannot, except by a high and sustained valor, bring our own lines into true and full conformity to the truth where so much is to be accomplished in molding character and life into this likeness, and where antagonism is so stubborn; that after we have gained the truth and begun to put on the image of the truth, we are not

to be left in peace in the enjoyment of our possession and its benefits, but must maintain every acquisition at the point of the sword; that we are bound to support actively and aggressively truth's claim to a universal dominion; that even in the sorest exigencies of our own experience we are never for a moment absolved from the obligation to remember and care for others' needs and perils; and that the glorious Captain of our salvation deserves and demands the service of good soldiers, each striving "that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier." And let us further keep in mind that valor is nourished and sustained by truth, for which there is no possible equivalent or substitute.

"Valiant for truth." What, then, is truth, that for it one can be, should be, valiant? Truth is real. Truth is accessible and may be known. Truth is precious. Truth imposes in every direction obligations that cannot be met except by the most genuine and resolute valor.

If Horne Tooke was right in his etymology, truth would seem to be one of the most uncertain, unreliable of things, or the instinct to have been in this case strangely at fault by which names are given to things. He tells us that truth is primarily *what one troweth*. To trow is to think, believe, or

suppose. What the word "troweth" is as variable, doubtful and unsubstantial as diversities of power, opportunity, diligence, fidelity, sanity can make it. The best philologists of our own generation, however, refer the word to a root meaning, "to believe," and draw upon the whole group of related languages and dialects to show that truth is "firm, strong, solid, reliable, anything that will hold." It should seem, then, that we ought not to believe anything but what is firm, established, and that truth is what we rightly believe. We are not playing with words. To the Hebrew thought expressing itself in word-building, truth is something that has stability, that is fixed and sure. To the Greek it is the unconcealed reality of that which had been veiled. If this is truth, we have in it something to strive after, something to stand on, something to offer to and urge upon others that is better than a waking fancy or a dream of the night. We accept this judgment of the great mind of the race—Hebrew, Greek, Germanic—and hold that truth is the real, the established, the abiding. For this our highest powers can be summoned into action, while nothing but a poor counterfeit of our best activity can be called forth in behalf of that which is known or seriously suspected to be unreal. The sophist may be adroit, dexterous in disposition and argument,

and selfishly eager for victories. The pettifogging advocate in any profession may gain brief successes by natural powers and discipline, aided by sheer audacity. This is a result and proof of the world's disorder. Man is for truth and truth for man—both real.

And truth is accessible and may be known. No agnostic can be a Valiant for Truth. Quixotic endeavors after the unattainable may supply entertaining reading for idle hours, or possibly suggest curious studies in psychology. Our curiosity, busy and scheming, impertinent and sometimes impious, may direct its adventures toward lofty and distant realms that are not for us. Our real and serious and right concern is rather with the truth that is near, inviting and demanding knowledge, threatening our indifference or neglect with serious loss or heavy penalty. The realms are broad enough the natural reason may traverse, incited by higher motives, cheered by brighter prospects, than ever girded and sent out King Arthur's knights, or any other heroes of the days of chivalry. But natural reason is not the only discoverer of truth, nor is nature its only depository. Fossils buried for uncounted ages in the rocks are not its only prophets. No biological analysis can reach all its elements: no scientific imagination can construct

its entire fabric. The statistician cannot tabulate all its facts. Philosophers, in the endless involutions and evolutions of their speculations, miss much of it. He who gave us reason and nature, whose they are, and whom they should ever serve, has come in pity to the relief of our impotence and bewilderment by the disclosures that his Spirit makes. When we ask for bread he does not answer us with stones and reptiles only, and bid us get our sustenance from them. He comes down to us from above, not always and only up to us from below. To abase the swelling pride that loves to contemplate itself as standing at the top of the long development of being, he tells us of sin and helplessness and ruin, and then of love and grace and salvation. In the Gospel "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men."

Here is truth that is real. Here is truth that may be known. Of all precious truth, truth on which souls can be nourished, truth to which lives can be safely conformed, here is that which is most precious—truth that enters most deeply and permanently into character and takes hold of destiny. Of all truth worthy and suited to stimulate man's highest powers to the most sustained and most intense efficiency, here is that which is worthiest and most suited. Of all truth that is of such kind

and in such relations to us that it is not only worth our while, but in every way incumbent upon us to put forth our highest valor to gain it and to hold it, here is the most essential.

We are bidden, "Buy the truth and sell it not." And this is not a mere appeal to our self-interest. It is not left to the decision of our taste whether truth shall attract and please us or not. It is not submitted to our mere option in any way. The world's wise men might mean no more than this by the proverb. But what the wisdom of inspiration commends, the divine authority commands; thus we gain the truth at whatever cost, and never part with it at any price. Truth, especially this sacred truth, encompasses us with obligations. For this acquisition we do not merely do well to pay the price of toil and struggle; we fail grossly and widely in duty if we withhold the price. And what we have so dearly bought at the price of our humbled pride, at the price of our falling out with the fashion of this world "which passeth away," what we win by the surrender of our self-sufficiency and imaginary independence, by our resolute self-mastery, our vigorous effort, and whatever besides the attainment may cost, we are to hold against all seductions and all assaults, "valiant for the truth."

Our second question was to be: What is the manly valor that can find any fair and proper field for its exercise—its fairest and most proper field in connection with truth? What is the relation of truth on the one side to valor, and on the other to manhood? Valor, a word that carries us back so easily to the days and the deeds of knightly prowess, adventure and achievement, starts with the primary idea of health and strength. It is not mere boldness, bravery, courage, but moves in a higher plane, and is instinct with a loftier inspiration. These may have their source chiefly in the physical and animal, that which we share with the bull-dog and the gorilla; while valor is a knightly grace, and makes account mainly of the ideal. Medieval chivalry was sometimes fantastic in its manifestations. Yet in those centuries which intervened between general barbarism and our modern civilization it did much to lift men out of their grossness. It was a fighting grace; yet it had much to do with the whole character. To be a valiant soldier was more than to be robust and fearless. Of course we recognize different types and degrees of valor, as well as different spheres and occasions for its exercise. We shall esteem that the truest valor in which there is the fullest consciousness and manifestation of manhood, with

the clearest conception and the most persistent adherence to worthy ends of manly endeavor. There can then be nothing forced or unnatural in the phrase of our text, "valiant for the truth."

For what should a true man be valiant rather than for the acquisition, maintenance, and service of the truth—truth known as real, judged to be important, valued as precious? And what estimate must we put upon the manhood that can be "strong in the land, but not for truth"—energetic, daring, resolved, and persistent for lower and grosser interests, but not for the truth? The manhood that is most sound and healthy recognizes most promptly and broadly its relationship to truth, knows its affinity for truth, responds most heartily to the claim and challenge of the truth, enlists with the least of hesitation or reserve in the search for the service of the truth. "A man who will take the world easily will never take it grandly," we are told. An ambitious manhood sees in connection with the truth prizes most worthy of its ambition. A courageous manhood, if it might choose its sphere, would ask to show itself in behalf of so good a cause, where the difficulties and perils, and the success, mean so much. For this it will most patiently and thoroughly discipline itself, and toil most strenuously. It knows

that it is vindicating and honoring itself by the same activities by which it is most exalting truth. It can most easily, gladly and completely forget itself and make least account of toils and pains and cost when maintaining the cause of truth or promoting some interest of our fellow-men in connection with the truth. And this choice and devotion find a quick and large reward, as truth ministers to the manliness that offers its best in its behalf, the richest rewards coming, of course, from the highest moral and spiritual truth. The truth that stands nearest to Christ has the best right to say, "Them that honor me I will honor."

But looking beyond ourselves, beyond results anticipated for ourselves, beyond obligations that bind us in our own behalf, by what call from without does truth most authoritatively and effectively summon valor to its aid? This was to be our third inquiry. "Victory in a tournament" of olden time, the historian Hallam tells us, "was little less glorious, and perhaps at the moment more exquisitely felt, than in the field, since no battle could assemble such witnesses of valor." This does not mean that the display of valor before the assembled beauty and rank of courts was valued above valor itself. The valor must exist to be displayed. And before we condemn the

motive as wholly ignoble we should recall to mind the appeal with which the twelfth chapter of Hebrews opens: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." These displays of valor on the tented field were accounted an augury of triumphs to be won on fields where graver issues were at stake; where some imperiled life or treasure was to be rescued, some essential but questioned honor to be vindicated, some great wrong to be redressed, some grand right to be gained or defended. It was not mere and weak sentiment that strove to recover the Holy Land or some sacred shrine from the hands of the Paynim, or that followed the banner of one's liege lord or the standard of the cross to new conquests. It was worth much to all coming ages that high ideals should be brought down into the gross lives of men and made efficient there.

The first appeals which truth makes to us, the first obligations which it imposes on us, are in its own behalf and our own behalf. We are first to make this rich endowment our own. Here is a treasure that we gain by finding it and submitting ourselves to it. We do not command, but surrender. Our command is consequent upon and proportionate to our obedience, our success to our

submission. And the valor that is called into requisition before this result is reached is real and of the finest quality. We have the truth only when it possesses us. All other mastery must be dislodged, all other dominion cast off. The effort by which we gain, and the grasp with which we hold the truth, or rather with which it holds us, mean the overcoming of many natural and moral difficulties and opportunities. Indolence is to be mastered, and all the bias of one's nature to evil and error. Stubborn habits are to be broken up, riotous and groveling tastes subdued. Many a breach is to be made and carried in the walls of prejudice and evil association, many an abstraction swept away, many a foe vanquished. A good soldier he will have proved himself who has surrendered and subjected himself fully to the truth. But we are not at liberty to look no further than to our own enrichment with the amplest treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and enlargement of our own natures, and invigoration of our own powers, the manifold satisfactions, enjoyments, and dignities that come to us with and by the truth.

Truth is imperial, not only in the quality of the authority which it asserts and the richness of the bounty which it dispenses, but also in the breadth of the dominion to which it lays claim. We have

made our first obedience when we have yielded ourselves to the truth. We are to go on proclaiming truth's rights, and helping it to gain rule over others. We vindicate the rights of the truth while we secure blessings to our fellow-men through truth's ascendancy over them. And this obligation and opportunity subject our manhood to some of the most searching tests by which we are ever tried. Are we capable of taking larger views of truth than those which connect it with some prospect of advantage to ourselves? Do we esteem it for what it is, and not only for what it brings us? And what is the measure of our discernment of the rights and needs of others—and what is our response? His is a poor starveling manhood that cannot be stirred to interest and effort and sacrifice in the assertion of others' rights and the promotion of their good. The knightly spirit prompted as much as this; shall the Christian spirit be content with less? There is a natural largeness of soul that can appreciate others' jeopardy, and stir itself to avert or relieve it. A low and common nature is dull of sense to all these calls from without. It puts narrow interpretations on those obligations which it cannot wholly disown. The manly and Christian spirit has large conceptions of right and duty.

And then truth, while imperial in its rights, is sometimes imperiled by denial and attack, and that at the hands of the very men whose allegiance it claims. Its rights are contested; its very credentials are challenged. It encounters not merely the negative resistance of ignorance and dullness, of low tastes and sensual and earthly preoccupations; it is met by a more positive impeachment. He who is valiant for truth will no more suffer it to fight its own battles than a true knight would have resorted to any such evasion in a cause to which he was committed. And the response which we make to the summons of assailed truth gives opportunity to display some of the finest qualities that belonged to the old knighthood—unswerving loyalty, courage, endurance, self-sacrifice.

Both New Testament and Old Testament emphasize this part of a good soldier's duty toward sacred truth. "Fight the good fight of faith," "knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel." "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." "Stand, therefore." Across an interval of many centuries more, perhaps from the time of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, come those stirring words of the forty-eighth Psalm: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the

towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks." She needs and has her towers and bulwarks, and there is for us a post of duty there at the defense of truth. If Paul the aggressive evangelist is an example for study and imitation, Paul the apologist is no less so. Our broader study of questioned truth brightens many an evidence, confirms many a conviction, kindles a new enthusiasm for the assertion and defense of truth's claim, and subjects to new tests our professions of devotion. It puts to the proof our aptness, while it calls forth our energy. But truth is never content to stand long on the defensive. The defense is soon turned into attack. Error may be content with compromise; truth is satisfied with nothing less than established dominion.

But there is another call for valor in behalf of Christian truth higher than that which comes from our fellow-men and their claims upon it. What Christ is on the one side to the truth and on the other side to us, and what the truth is to him, supply a new inspiration and strength, and add a new quality to Christian endeavor—a personal quality that was wanting before. He who is valiant for the truth because of what it is in its reality and reliableness shows his discernment. He who is valiant for the truth because of what it is

to manhood shows a wise self-appreciation. He who is valiant for the truth because of the claim his fellow-men have upon it, and upon him if he has it in his possession, shows that he knows his place, his obligation, his opportunity as a man among men. He who is valiant for the truth for Christ's sake shows that he knows and honors his Lord, and would make him indeed Lord of all.

Consider what Christ is to the substance of the truth; what he is to the authority and efficiency of the truth; and what the truth is to him in the assertion and manifestation of his Lordship.

The truth is not only Christ's as its great Revealer; the truth is Christ as its great revelation. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." If we invert each of these phrases, we are not unsound in logic or false to fact. To him who asks, What is the way? we answer, *The way* is Christ. To him who would know, What is the life? we make reply, *The life* is Christ. And we proclaim, as that which is of the highest concern to man to know, *the truth* is Christ. He is the great embodiment of truth—truth incarnate. What he was, over and above all that he said, teaches us what we should seek in vain to learn elsewhere. He was the chief revelation of the nature, the power, the love, the saving grace of God. What is God?

What is holiness? What is redemption for sinners? He did not simply speak as never man spake on these high themes. We look to, we lay hold upon, himself, and find that he is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. This is not bold metaphor merely; it is assured fact. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We are "complete in him." "In whom" (not merely by receiving and following information that he supplies) "we have our redemption through his blood, and forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." He did indeed bear a witness above all other witness to the truth. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." But his witness was more in what he was and what he did than in all that he said. "Grace and truth came" (not "were given" as the law "was given" by Moses) by Christ. How this adds to the authority and to the efficiency of the truth! And see what use he makes of the truth. By it he tests and measures men: his disciples, "He that is of the truth heareth my voice," the voice of the Teacher, the voice of the Truth; his enemies, "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." They reject in one act the truth and him, and show

what they are. When he shall enter on his high and awful function as judge, peopling two worlds as he says, "Come, ye blessed! Depart, ye cursed!" it is according to the treatment of the truth that he makes his award. "Unto them that are factious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish."

Meanwhile it is largely by the instrumentality of the truth that those who are his are made holy—"Seeing you have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth." His Church, "the Church of the living God," is declared to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." This it can never be by a mere passive support and upholding of a truth imposed. The Church (*ἐκκλησία*) is a body "called out" by God's heralds, his Spirit, his Son, to abide, to stand, to be established. But however stable, the living Church of the living God, intrusted with the upholding of his living truth, must have in exercise all that is active, forceful, courageous, and aggressive in the Christian life.

And therefore, because of the fullness and significance of the several representations of what Christ is to the truth, and the truth to Christ, it is all the more manifest that they who are loyal to Christ will be for this reason and in this measure

valiant for the truth. We do no violence to the words of the sixtieth Psalm when we give them this specific application: "Thou [O Christ] hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." The banner is a symbol of union and allegiance, a rallying-point for the mustering or moving host, a continual source of inspiration. Moses, after the battle with Amalek, built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi ("The Lord," i.e., Jehovah, "is my banner"). Those whose banner is not only the Lord's, but the Lord himself, cannot need any higher summons or motive to be valiant for the truth. This will be to the grateful, loving, loyal Christian the motive of motives—that Christ, his Lord, is what he is to the truth, and that the truth is what it is to Christ.

In our day, however, many influences are at work to neutralize the effect of all these considerations and appeals. There are subtle and plausible philosophies in vogue, and not among the learned only, that would make it absurd and preposterous to be very confident, or much in earnest in behalf of the truth. Pilate's question is popular: What is truth? and it is pressed upon us persistently from many sides with a sinister emphasis. For there are those who doubt, and there are those who

teach men to doubt, whether there are any reliable criteria of truth—whether there is for us any certain truth. And there are others whose materialistic faith reduces to a paltry minimum the worth of truth. Then there is the theoretical secularism and the practical secularism, that would have us waive these doubtful and fruitless questionings in view of the reality, the nearness, the urgency of those material necessities and interests that demand, for ourselves and for others, all our thoughts and all our efficiency. It is not the hoarse clamor of the commune only which insists that the ideal and the spiritual must wait until more practical problems are solved. The infatuation of pleasure, the idolatry of gain, stifle in many more even the power of appreciating enthusiasm and earnestness in behalf of truth.

In another quarter another class of untoward influences is at work, and the issue of the working is not yet in sight. A belief is professed in higher things, in the reality and importance of truth, in respect to which one may possibly have deep and strong convictions, *provided* he does not in any way by word or deed give too vehement or repeated expression to it. The air is full of the praises of catholicity and toleration. Some hold it presumptuous, others grossly discourteous, others

schismatic, that confidence should be expressed and earnestness manifested in anything that goes beyond the commonplaces of truth. Platitudes are admissible to any extent. Clear-cut faiths firmly held, vigorously defended, energetically urged upon others, are unfashionable. We know, however, of a Broad Churchism, that is tolerant not merely of diversities but of contradictions, that would remand zeal of a type exhibited by prophets and apostles to the centuries that are well left behind. We have heard pleadings for a thing so good in itself, and in measure good for so many practical reasons, as Christian union, which we find ourselves compelled to watch with double scrutiny since they would reduce to such a minimum the truth that we may be allowed to profess and proclaim, and for which we are permitted to be valiant, and since from that minimum so much is excluded that has been in the past so inspiring to Christian hope, so sustaining to Christian strength and heroism. This is an evil day for polemics and scholastics, and dogmatists and denominationalists. The only man who may be valiant without falling into disrepute is the irenic; he may be as dogmatic and combative as you please. We involuntarily call to mind the unpopularity of Elijah, the troubler of Israel, with Ahab. In the view of some there

are no other troublers of Israel like the persistent, aggressive believers in truth.

And on still another side constant pressure is put upon us to suppress part of our witness to the truth. The world is a great believer in the doctrine of the invisible Church—the Church that does not show the power of the truth and its own unswerving loyalty to the truth by the conformity of its life to the truth. We may be allowed to believe what we are constrained to believe—or what we please—if only we do not let the truth too much change our conduct. Our creed may be the longest and the hardest and the most obnoxious, if we will conduct our business according to the maxims and methods of the world—entertain ourselves with its amusements, follow its capricious and imperious fashions. If there is no very noticeable difference in life between the Church and the world, the world will not so much trouble itself about our belief, except now and then slyly to propose the pertinent question, how we reconcile our conduct to our creed. Here, again, is a field in which Christian valor has an opportunity to show itself, in vindicating the right of truth, and illustrating the power of truth to rule the life. In some social circles this is the severest test to which Christian valor is subjected.

In view of all this we ask, Has “Valiant for

Truth," then, had his day? May we say for him no more than "Peace to his ashes"?

In our national and social affairs a wholesome, timely, and needed reaction has begun to set in against the false catholicity that was undermining the public welfare. Patriotism and statesmanship have begun to deal at various points with the question whether we have not swung open somewhat too widely the doors of our national hospitality. Our loud invitation—"Ho, every one!"—has gone beyond the limits of public safety. We are watching somewhat more closely the immigrants across the two great oceans. We begin to question whether we are equal to the entertainment, government and assimilation of such a mixed multitude, who fall a-lusting so soon and so grossly after liberties and indulgences that are so strange, intolerable and abhorrent to us. We object to the emptying upon our shores of the poorhouses and prisons and slums and lazarettos of the Old World; we send back the imported refuse, and hold the importers responsible. Economists, and not demagogues of labor only, are writing on our statute-books restrictions upon the unlimited importation of foreign labor. Propositions are pending, or are awaiting introduction in our national Senate, against the free admission of anarchists and the

deluded converts of Mormon emissaries. We have been stirred to a new vigilance in behalf of our Christian and Puritan Sabbath, our social purity, our temperate temperance. Our religious press, our home missionary societies, our Evangelical Alliance, are arousing us to consider what a vast work we have already accumulated upon our hands.

Let the good work go on. Let it make us watchful in the sphere of our religious life. The sons of Covenanters and Pilgrims and Huguenots—and these were they that laid the foundations both of Church and State among us—should not too readily and cheaply sell their birthright, or sleep while it is stolen from them. What would they have been, what should we have been, but for this love of truth and this valor for the truth? We must learn how to enlarge our love without expense to our faith; how to find and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace without the surrender of truth. And in proportion as needs are multiplied and intensified we must be only the more loyal to the truth and its Lord, and valiant for it and for him.