

## TRUTH WITHIN MAN I

by Lester J. Start

Undated

It is curious that those things which are closest to us are at the very things we overlook and seek elsewhere. We have all heard the story of the man who left his property seeking riches, only to find that on his own land were acres of diamonds that he had overlooked. Too many of us are like this man; we seek in the world about us those values for which our souls are thirsting only to find in the end that our thirst is never really quenched and that our seeking ends in despair. [lives of quiet desperation] But if we look in the right direction we will find what we are seeking.

Jesus gives us a hint of where to look in John 4:14 where he says, “Whosoever drinketh of the which I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water, which I shall give him shall become in him a well springing up into everlasting life”. These are the words Jesus spoke to the woman of Samaria as she was drawing water from Jacob’s well. He told her that the water from that well would not quench a man’s thirst for long, but that the living water of Christ shall become an unfailing fountain in man springing up into everlasting life. Notice where this well is. It does not reside in some external source, as Jacob’s well from which we dip ladles of spiritual power as we need it; rather it is found in him, as Jesus said, in you, in me, in all of us when we drink of the living water of Christ. [Story of well in Scotland]

To find the water our thirsting souls need, then, we need to turn our eyes from the “Jacobs wells” of tradition and popular opinion to the inner source of the water which satisfies, which is found, as their text tells us, within man.

What is it that we do feel ourselves closest to the divine source of power? When Jesus was suffering anguish before his crucifixion he turned to God and prayer alone in the Garden of Gethsemane for the comfort and strength he needed. And so we, in times of travail, go into our chambers and shut the door to seek the voice of God within in prayer. When we pray together in worship, we close our eyes and shut our minds to the distractions about us to look within. The music in the worship service acts to clear our minds of cares and distractions, gently obliterating disturbing thoughts to give us a sense of inward rapport and intimacy with God. We find God, too, when we are absolutely alone. We tap the inner resources, when in our solitude, we are deprived of the insulation afforded by the thoughts and company of others, when, alone in the country, for example, with the wind and the sky for companions, we are forced to view our inner selves in all their nakedness, and can truly say of God, “Wither shall I flee from Thy presence?”.

I once asked an old farmer of my acquaintance why it was that country people believe so firmly in God. He said, ” Well, I guess it’s because when you’re out in the fields all day, you can’t very well miss him.” And so it is; it is much harder to find God when we are distracted by the frenzied activities about us, but when we look deeply into our hearts, we cannot very well miss Him. The kingdom of God is within you, if you but look to find it there.

Because the Spirit of Christ is within, the crowd often prevents us from finding it. When we become a part of the crowd, we are all too likely to become merged into the social context to

such an extent that our individuality is destroyed and submerged. We no longer think according to our inner convictions; we think as the crowd thinks; we act as the crowd acts. The crowd is all too likely to become a tyranny, which destroys creative endeavor. Hence we dare not believe what our hearts tell us if it does not correspond to what the crowd believes. And the daily affairs keep our minds busied with distractions.

This does not mean to imply that we should shun social relations. The social consciousness which springs from the ethical requirements within us making us cooperating agencies toward a common ideal is the outward manifestation of the Kingdom of God. But the crowd spirit which strangles the individual's inner feelings of relationship to God by making him conform to external standards which may not be good constitutes a real danger. Danger of forgetting to think, losing sight of God. It is the pressure that makes us find our values in extremities, in worldly reputation, wealth and power; and in the more extreme cases, the spirit which makes a group of law-abiding man into an avenging Ku Klux Klan. Remember, it was a mob that spat upon Jesus; no individual could have done it. And it is the voice of the mob engrossed in the petty diversions and activities that scorns the voice of God, because in the clamor it cannot hear Him.

This inward spring of living water is outwardly expressed in terms of love, friendship, cooperation and mercy. Our great social works have this source for its impetus. However, sometimes we lose sight of this inner source of the good life and think we can regulate the social order in such a way that we can create the ideal world. We put our great rational minds to work on the disorder of our social order, make a final synthesis of integration, and say, "here is the Kingdom of God." But if we have left out the vital source in the inner experience of the living water of Christ, the magnificent system becomes, as in the words of Shakespeare, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". We cannot become Christians by regulating habits outwardly. The result is our modern Pharisee, who contributes heavily to the Community Chest, so that his name may appear in the papers; who goes to church every Sunday, to gain the reputation of being decent, who works for better conditions in this factory, so that he can get more work from his men. Outwardly this man has all of the appearances of a Christian, but in his heart is not one drop of the milk of human kindness; he acts ethically only because it is to his own material advantage. We must look to the source of our ideal world order, not in such habits says this man parades, but in the unfailing well of the Spirit of Christ within us, from whence comes love. [World after war-love must rule]

An ancient adage attributed to the seven wise men of Greece reads "Know Thyself". This is a motto Socrates, the father of philosophy, used. He always insisted that he could not teach because he knew nothing. He was, as he described himself, a spiritual midwife bringing out the truth which is within each man. This is the method we must follow to find spiritual truth. To become a Christian we must reveal ourselves to find the wellspring of the eternal within choose it, and to live by it. It is not a choice between alternatives, between different types of theology or social theories. It is a decision of faith to choose what our highest ideals dictate. Look within to find your real nature and follow it. Listen to the words of Jesus as he says, "Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not". The water which he gives you

becomes within you a well springing up into everlasting life. Know thyself first and then choose thyself.

Thou must be true thyself

If thou the truth wouldst teach;

Thy soul must overflow if thou

Another's soul wouldst reach;

It needs the overflow of heart

To give the lips full speech.