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[Backus, Isaac], 1724-1806.

Truth is Great.

Boston, Freeman, [1781]. 36, 8 pp.

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TRUTH IS GREAT, AND
WILL PREVAIL.

Buy the TRUTH, and sell it not.

King SOLOMON.

Speaking the TRUTH in LOVE.

Apostle PAUL.

By Isaac Backus of Middleboro.

Sold by PHILIP FREEMAN, in Union-Street, Boston.

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* * At JAMES ARNOLD's, in Providence, and at
* * PHILIP FREEMAN's, in Boston, may be had the Au-
thor's *Baptist History of New-England.*



Truth is great, and will prevail.

THIS maxim has been asserted to in all countries, and in' all ages; but the grand question has been, WHAT IS TRUTH? Pilate asked it, but waited not for the answer. So far from it, that the fear of man moved him to give sentence against the eternal SON OF GOD, who came into our world on purpose to *bear witness unto* THE TRUTH. Jews and Gentiles were confederates in this hellish act, and all nations and denominations ever since have been more agreed in opposing the truth, than in any other point: Yet truth prevails still.

That there is one supreme BEING, whose kingdom ruleth over all, is the first and capital article of truth, which no nation upon earth were ever able to erase entirely out of their minds; for no government could ever be established among themselves, without appeals to HIM for the truth of what was asserted, and to avenge injustice, and the violation of contracts and engagements.

That it is the indispensable duty of every man to love his creator and preserver with all his faculties and powers, and to love his neighbour as himself, is a truth inseparably connected with the other: For while JEHOVAH remains infinitely and unchangeably good, and we remain his offspring, our obligation to love him can never be disannulled or abated; and his command, to love our neighbours as ourselves, is as immutable as his perfections are.

That all mankind, in their natural condition, are in a state of revolt from this heavenly ruler, is a truth as evident as the other; what need else could there be for these
these

these appeals and restraints? The attempts that have often been made against this truth, have always confirmed it, and have demonstrated the corruption of the authors of those attempts. Nothing can discover a more mean and dishonest disposition, than for a person to steal the property of another, and then to labour to adorn and exalt himself therewith, while he tries hard to sink the credit of the true owner, so as to set self above him: Yet this is the very practice of all those who set up their reason above divine revelation. The writings of the greatest men in Pagan countries are full of the intrigues, adulteries, thefts and murders, of their imaginary deities; which, by God's righteous judgment, and from their natural tendency, have produced like abominations in their worshippers; because *they changed the truth of God into a lie.* Rom. i. 18—32. And those who were favoured with the oracles of God, and yet did the *same thing*, thereby brought upon themselves a much greater condemnation than the others did. Rom. ii. 1—24. If so, then what advantage can it be to have those oracles? Answer, *much every way: For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? The thought is to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.* Rom. iii. 1—4. This is the exact state of the controversy. Men have assumed the judgment seat, and have arraigned the *sayings of God* to their bar. This practice began near the forbidden tree, Gen. iii. 1—6; and from that day to this men have been *ever learning*, and yet, of themselves, were *never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*; and that because the judge is the criminal, who cannot live in that way any longer than he is kept in darkness;
for

for whenever the authority of truth takes place in his conscience, *sin revives, and he dies*; and his only way of relief is by faith in the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of our great surety, who *offered himself without spot to God*. Rom. vii. 1—12, Heb. ix 14, and x. 1—14. Unassisted reason could never go any farther in this respect, than to move men to imbrue their hands in the blood of their own children, by offering the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul: Yet many are now guilty of stealing a finer dress for human nature, from the oracles of God, and then of improving the same against the authority of the book they took it from; so that instead of saying, let God be true, but every man a liar; their argument is, that every man is not a liar, therefore in several points God does not speak the truth! And it is a common thing for these reasoners, to claim a power for themselves which they deny to JEHOVAH; and daily to practise that, under his name, which, with reverence be it spoken, was never within HIS POWER to do! Num. xxiii. 19, John x. 35, 2d Tim. ii. 13, Heb. vi. 18.

They often insult upon it, that men cannot deserve praise for doing right, nor blame for doing wrong, unless they have power within themselves to act with motive or against motive, as they please. If their voluntary actions are not determined by what is within them, they say they are not free. Yet the same men are positive, that God's choice of some to salvation, while he leaves the rest to perish in their sins, must be determined by what he sees in them, and not in himself; or else, say they, he would be a respecter of persons. Thus self-determination is claimed for man, but is denied to God; directly in the face of Christ, and the inspired apostle. Matt. xi. 26, Rom. xi. 33—36. The evident cause of this horrid impiety, is a secret conceit,
that

that there is a good to be obtained which is better than truth, and for which truth may be dispensed with, and contradicted; therefore, though it is impossible for God to lie, or to deny himself, yet men often do it, in hopes of obtaining that imaginary good. Indeed Christ, calls us to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross daily; but it is only that corrupt and delusive self, which is set up against the revealed will of God. He requires us daily to cross our lusts, and self-righteous conceits; while Satan tempts us to cross the truth, and the light of our own consciences; and can any rational soul hesitate a minute upon which of them is to be regarded!

That all men have a power within them to act in every case as then seems best to them, is a truth as fully given into by the advocates for divine sovereignty, as by any free-willer on earth. Perhaps Dr. Owen opened and defended the great doctrines of sovereign grace, as well as any man did in the last century; and he says, “to suppose that in all things of spiritual and eternal concernment, men are not determined and acted every one by his own judgment, is an imagination of men who think but little of what they are, or do, or say, or write. Even those who shut their eyes against the light, and follow in the herd, resolving not to enquire into any of these things, do it because *they judge it best for them so to do*.*” And the greatest writer against a self-determining power in man, that our age has seen, says, “liberty is the power, opportunity or advantage, that any one has to do as he pleases, or to conduct in any respect according to his pleasure.” And says he, “it is demonstrable, and I think has been demonstrated, that no necessity of men’s volitions that I maintain is inconsistent with this liberty.”

With

* *Original of evangelical churches*, p. 101.

|| *Edwards on the will*; third edition, p. 28. *Appendix*, p. 2.

With which I fully concur ; for we can as easily put an end to our existence, as we can keep from choosing what we at present view or imagine to be best. Pharaoh did so in all his attempts to hold Israel in bondage ; and so he and his people did, when they *were glad to let Israel depart, with rich treasures* : And the Lord's design therein was, *that they might observe HIS statutes, and keep HIS laws.* Psalm cv. 37—45. Yet how unwilling are many, even in this land of gospel light, to yield their souls to this authority ? Being called by our churches to act as their agent in this great affair, I have had cause to know more of the aversion of many thereto, than most others have ; of which take the following plain account.

When a new plan of government was formed for the Massachusetts State, which took in their old taxing laws for religious teachers, I was called to meet our committee at Boston upon it, in February, 1778. And finding that said plan was to be established or set aside by our next General Court, we drew up a petition, directed to them, that it might be fixed, “ as a fundamental
“ principle of our constitution, that religious ministers
“ shall be supported only by Christ's authority, and not
“ at all by assessment and secular force.” This was signed by many, in various parts of the State, which alarmed the ministers who were supported by tax and compulsion ; and one of them, who was called to deliver the election sermon to that Assembly, said therein,
“ the fear and reverence of God, and the terrors of
“ eternity, are the most powerful restraints upon the
“ minds of men.—Let the restraints of religion once
“ be broken down, as they infallibly would be by leav-
“ ing the subject of public worship to the humours of
“ the multitude, and we might well defy all human
“ wisdom and power to support and preserve order and
“ government

8. *Truth is great, and will prevail.*

“government in the State*.” And a gentleman who had been one of our legislators, hearing that some of his townsmen were going to be baptized, on the 26th of June following, went at the head of a large mob, and violently interrupted their worship upon their own lands; for which breach of the public peace he was so far from receiving any punishment, that he was one of the Convention that formed our present plan of government, and is a member of the first legislature which has acted thereon. In September, 1778, a minister of the first church in Boston, hearing of the defeat of our army on Rhode-Island, delivered a lecture before many of our rulers, from the seventh of Joshua, wherein he tried hard to persuade them, that one of the *accursed things* which caused that defeat, was because a new law had not been made and enforced, to help ministers about their salaries. This sermon being printed, a writer appeared in Mr. Gill’s paper of October 8, with a high commendation of it, and declaring that the representation made therein, of the case of ministers, “was with
“ that noble plainness and fidelity which are among the
“ distinguishing characteristics of that gentleman. But
“ (says he) although the General Assembly has now
“ been sitting for some time, no motion (as I can learn)
“ has as yet been made, or is likely to be made, for this
“ purpose.—Are the † clergy then to submit to this
“ treatment? Are they to remain subjected to injustice
“ and fraud!” Now observe how God takes the wise
in their own craftiness. Ten years before, the same minister saw such danger of having his party all taxed to bishops, that he said, “we are in principle against
“ all

* *Payson’s sermon, p. 19, 20.*

† *The word clergy signifies heritage; and to avoid the censure of lording it over the church, officers have usurped the name to themselves. See Dr. Gill on 1 Pct. v. 3.*

“ all civil establishments in religion. It does not appear
“ to us, that God has entrusted the State with a right to
“ make religious establishments.—Hath the State of
“ England been distinguished by heaven by any pecu-
“ liar grant, beyond the State in other countries? If it
“ has, let the grant be produced. If it has not, all
“ States have, in common, the same authority, in esta-
“ blishments conformable to their own sentiments in re-
“ ligion; what can the consequence be, but infinite da-
“ mage to the cause of God and true religion! and such
“ in fact has been the consequence of these establish-
“ ments in all ages, and in all places †.” These, and
other words of his, I, as agent for our churches, pub-
lished in Mr. Willis’s paper, the very day that the above
complaint against our legislature was published by Mr.
Gill, in the same street, in Boston; though at that
time I knew nothing of the publication of said sermon.
A few days after I published the unanimous vote of our
churches, wherein they say, “ we solemnly declare for
“ ourselves, and believe we safely may for the whole,
“ 120 Baptist churches in New-England, that we want
“ nothing more in this respect, than to have what the
“ before-named Dr. Chauncy says is their principle,
“ concerning religious liberty, established in fact, and
“ reduced to practice.” And there has never been
the least degree of proof advanced since, to discover
any want, either of consistency, or of sincerity, in this
declaration, though the united craft and rage of learned
teachers and lawyers have been vented against us there-
for, to an amazing degree. Crafty and bitter pieces,
in ten different news-papers, have since been published
against me by name, by writers who have kept their own

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names

† *Chauncy against Chandler*, 1768, p. 152, 153.

