

## Personal Truth

Stand up and be counted the man or woman who knows everything about everything!

We all humbly keep our seats, except for the joker who stands to attract attention, and then promptly sits down again. Anyone who seriously stands and remains standing is seriously deluded.

It is a fact of life that as we acquire more and more experience, and knowledge and (hopefully) wisdom increase, we realise that the more we know, the more there is to be known. Arriving at a full knowledge of the truth is not on the timetable in our lifetimes. Only God knows the whole truth and is perfectly omniscient. We will not even see Him with complete clarity until we join Him in heaven, if that is to be our destiny. (It is the destiny of some, but not all, as will be shown in greater detail elsewhere on this site.)

It is not that fundamental truth does not exist, nor that the edges between truth and error are blurred. The fact is that each one of us builds up a body of knowledge which we consider to be the truth, which is in reality but a tiny part of the whole. Not only that, but as our experience differs, so our opinion of what is true differs from person to person. I am using the term 'Personal Truth' to describe the truth as each of us understands it.

Seeking the truth is highly commendable, and each of us should endeavour to learn as much of it as possible. But I have observed that increasing knowledge of personal truth has two big dangers.

The first thing to note is that some of us can identify too strongly with our personal truth. This is shown as soon as someone

suggests an idea that conflicts with something we hold to be true. Instead of considering the conflicting idea objectively and trying to reach a satisfactory compromise or reconciliation of thoughts, we can all too easily take umbrage, feel hurt, and regard the expressed difference as an attack on us as a person – we may well be taking things far too personally. This causes pain and dissension on both sides, which is obviously best avoided. To anyone susceptible to this danger, I would offer the following practical advice:

Don't take differences too personally. Standing up for the truth is one thing, but defending our opinions is another. This is a typical example of an occasion when love and respect for the other person needs to prevail.

The second great danger is assuming a position, or feeling a sense of superiority, over others who are considered less knowledgeable or less 'spiritual' than ourselves. I have met people who consider themselves to be always right, and anyone who differs in any way from their personal truth must be wrong, almost by definition. They always know what's best, and watch out anybody who dares to suggest an alternative.

More than that, I have come across whole church congregations who consider themselves to be holding fast to the truth, while all others are to some degree in error. It is a dangerous position to consider ourselves to be the cat's whiskers. Such was the sad situation my wife and I faced on our honeymoon. We had attended a church sharing almost exactly the same view of doctrine as we held, but were not allowed to share communion with them because we worshipped at a church of a slightly different denomination. What a pity

that fellowship was so exclusive that it was denied to folk who had so much in common with them.

What practical advice can be offered to such superior people. Well, the Bible is very clear on the issue:

Those who consider themselves to be superior to others should learn humility, even to the point of judging others to be better than themselves. Humility is greatly valued by God.

It is certain that we all need to strive to learn more of the truth, but the closer our Personal Truth matches Fundamental Truth, the more happy, blessed and useful to others we shall be.