

THE ROAD TO REASON

Lesson No. 6: Supreme Goodness

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By

GENEVIEVE BURNELL

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From
A course of
private lessons
given for a youth
named David.

Lesson No. 6

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SUPREME GOODNESS

At this point in our study it is a very important matter to establish surely whether truth is good or evil. If it should turn out to be evil, really, the less you know about it, the better off you'll be, isn't that right? But if it is good, then the more you know about it the better off you are. So before we go on to establish any other point, it is very necessary to establish without doubt that truth is either good or evil.

Can truth be both good and evil?

David: "No."

And why not?

David: "Because truth is not divisible."

Truth is all. It cannot be divided, so it has to be either all good or all evil.

Perhaps we had better stop for a moment and review the points we have already covered in our lessons up to now--the steps that we have taken one by one, to arrive at the place where we can test good and see whether or not it is equal to what we have found out about truth.

These things we have found truth to be, without any doubt:

Truth is what is.
Truth is all.
Truth is indivisibility.
Truth is unchangeableness.
Truth is eternity.

Now we are going to find out whether we can add to this another building block in our structure of reason--the statement: Truth is good.

If you were asked offhand, "Is truth good, or is it evil?", what would you say? Would you say that it is good, or that it is evil?

David: "Well, I'd say it is good."

You would say it is good. You've had a fairly satisfactory life, and you would be quite willing to be persuaded that truth is good. As far as you have discovered, life has been good to you.

If truth is good, that would mean that all is good; wouldn't it? But, you know, there are people who have had so many misfortunes that it seems to them as though they've never had anything good in their lives. So, if they were asked that question, they might answer that truth is evil; because all the reality they have experienced would have been something they didn't like. Do you see?

We can't just accept your opinion based on the life you know about, or the whim of your mind or my mind, or what we like. It can't be just wishful thinking that we accept as the foundation for our belief that truth is good. The mind is easily persuaded because it wants to believe that truth

is good. We are much happier in believing that truth is good, and it is easy to be persuaded that way.

But if something should happen in a person's life that would make him lose faith in that goodness, he might become very pessimistic and say, "Well, I think that there is only evil in the world; it seems to me that the whole world is evil." In fact, many people would be more apt to believe that they are sure of the existence of evil. So we really have to know, we have to be sure, we have to prove our steps as we go; we have to be thoroughly convinced.

One of the ways to approach the subject is to use the kind of arguments that are used in mathematics. We do not have any equipment at hand, so we'll just have to use our imaginations. Imagine that I have a pencil. We won't say what it is like, but I have a pencil; and you have a pencil that is exactly like my pencil, and your

friend has a pencil that is exactly like my pencil. You can't see your friend's pencil, and she can't see your pencil, but both of you can see my pencil.

If you have a pencil that is exactly like mine, and your friend has one that is exactly like mine, then, how would your pencil and your friend's pencil compare?

David: "They would be just alike."

Yes, they would have to be alike. You might have a high wall between you, and you couldn't see what the other pencil was like; but if your friend said, "My pencil is just like the teacher's pencil, and you said, "My pencil is just like the teacher's pencil," then you would say, "Well, our pencils must be just exactly the same." Do you see?

So we will adopt that way to present the argument about the goodness of truth. If we set up something, and we find that truth is equal to that, and goodness also

is equal to that, then we've proved that truth and goodness are the same. That's the way we go about it. Do you understand what I mean?

One of the first things we found out about truth was that truth is that which is; we discovered and proved that, without any doubt, to be so. We have found out certainly that truth is; so now, let's see how goodness relates to that which is.

If a thing was just an illusion or an imagination, would that be satisfactory good to you--just a dream or an imagination of good--would that be what you would call really good?

We want to find out whether true goodness is equal to reality as well as to truth.

Do you think that an illusion of good would be really satisfying to you? If you dreamed that you had something that you thought was extremely good, and

it was only a dream, wouldn't that be very dissatisfying to you?

David: "Yes. I wouldn't like that."

Suppose you had a picture of something good; would that be as satisfying to you as to have the reality of it?

David: "No."

If it was to be satisfying good, you would demand that it be real, not just hallucination or imagination. Those wouldn't satisfy.

In fact, many people chase will-o-the-wisps, you know, just imaginary good; and they never catch good; they are never satisfied because they never find reality in their good. They may have a dream or an ideal of something good; but unless it can become reality to them, it is very frustrating. Don't you feel that it would be that way?

David: "Yes."

Whatever it was, it would really have

to be something true, and it would have to have a substantial being, or it wouldn't be satisfying good to you.

Of course we have already proved that truth is reality--that which is. So truth and goodness are seen to be alike in that they both demand reality. They really are the same because they are equal to the same thing.

In our second step in these lessons, we found that truth is all. Well, now, do you think that you would be satisfied with a good that was only partial, or just a part of good?

David: "No."

Suppose you had an apple, and half of it was good and half of it was bad; would you call that a good apple?

David: "No."

No, you wouldn't; because right away the defects in that apple would interfere with your feeling of satisfaction in it.

If you ask for a good apple, you mean that you want a whole apple that is good all the way through. You don't want just a part, and you don't want any part of it to be bad. You want it to be all good apple.

Well, you see, we have already proved truth to be equal to allness; and so again truth and goodness are found to equal each other.

Our third step was to find that truth is unchangeable. Now, let's see about goodness--whether it is changeable or not. Do you think that you would be happy about good that you thought was going to change?

David: "No."

No, you would not. If you had something good, you wouldn't like to have any idea that it ever could change and be anything else. Just the very idea that it might change and be less good, would take away from your sense of satisfaction in it even at the moment when it seemed good.

So we find that truth is equal to unchangeableness and to goodness or real satisfaction. I am talking about real good, not just a little idea about good, but what would be really good, really satisfying. Good is satisfying. We find that truth and good are both equal to unchangeableness. Therefore truth and good equal each other in the fact that they demand unchangeableness.

Then in the next step we considered whether truth is subject to a beginning or an end. We found that because truth does not have a beginning or an end, truth is equal to eternity; truth is eternal. Beginning and ending are among the greatest changes anything can have.

Now let's see about whether beginning and ending would be good. Would you feel that you were perfectly satisfied with good that you thought could ever end?

David: "No."

You wouldn't like to think about its ever ending; would you? If you have something good, and you think, "Well, tomorrow I won't have this; tomorrow it will be gone," right away your happiness and joy in the good that you have is spoiled, tainted, and diminished just by the thought of its coming to an end. So, real good demands eternity. And truth, we have already seen, demands eternity. Therefore they equal each other.

As our next step we found that truth is indivisible; didn't we? Well, now, let's see about whether good is like truth, indivisible, or if it can be divided. Do you think that you would demand that your good must be undivided?

Let us suppose that you are walking along the street--perhaps it is Christmas Eve, and it is cold and dreary--and you see a poor little girl standing in front of a toy shop window. In your own life

you have all kinds of toys as well as everything else good; your life is happy and full of satisfactions. Wouldn't you feel that you would be more satisfied if you could divide your good with that child?

David: "Yes, I certainly would want to divide with her."

You would feel that the goodness that you had would satisfy something in you and make your good seem better if you could share it with her?

David: "Oh, yes."

Well, now, suppose that instead of being poor in toys and other things, it was a matter of health. Suppose you were wonderfully robust and healthy, as you are, and you saw some little sick child. Would it be satisfying to you to divide your health with that child? Would it be satisfying to you to be half well and half sick, and she be half well and half sick?

David: "Well, I would divide it."

But would that be satisfying to you?

David: "No."

Would that be really satisfying health--to divide it with her; you be half sick and half well, and she be half sick and half well?

David: "No, it wouldn't."

No; that wouldn't be satisfying at all; would it?

When we think about material things like money or treasures of any kind, we are quite willing to think, "Well, I would like to divide that." That is a great mistake in the minds of people all over the world today--they think that the solution to the problems in the world, the poverty in the world, would be to divide everything equally. But it is said that if all the money that is in the world were divided, each person would get about twenty-three cents--

or something like that. That wouldn't be very satisfying; would it?

So division really is not the answer, you see. What really is the answer to that would be for everyone to have everything; isn't that right? If you could give that child all health, and you have all health--that would be really satisfying; do you see?

David: "Yes."

People have been trained to believe this false idea of having to divide things. Little children don't want to share things--probably you have noticed that with your little sisters; they don't want to share things; they want to have it all for themselves; isn't that right?

But as we go on following the ideas of the false mind, we get to feeling that we ought to be unselfish, you know. And that's right. I mean, that's the principle in the world, and it is perfectly right.

But the real secret of it is that in truth the real satisfaction, the real goodness of things, is where everybody has everything.

With our mathematical minds we are so used to thinking that we have to divide things that we can't imagine what it would be like for everybody to have everything. But that is the real action of goodness. Everybody should have all good because good doesn't have to be divided materially. Good simply is bestowed upon those having the truth. Because if you have the truth, you have all good.

One of the great teachers, Saint Thomas Aquinas, goes through a whole list of things that people think would make them happy. They think that if they had riches, or if they had wisdom, or if they had friends, or fame, or glory, they would be happy. Then he shows that those things, even added together, wouldn't

really make a person happy. He would always be looking for something else; because the only real satisfaction is when there is nothing left to desire. And the only way you can have that is to have truth, which is in itself allness, with nothing left out.

When a person has truth, he has all good because truth is all, and truth is good. Our minds get caught in the idea that we have to divide our good, because we can't imagine how everybody could have all good. It is one of those things we have to have faith in, rather than to see all worked out for us in a mathematical design. If a person has truth, it means that he has all health, and he has all happiness, and he has everything; because truth itself is indivisible; and if you've got truth, you've got all.

Well, those are the arguments that are given to show that truth and goodness are really the same.

Now we will delve into the problem of evil. Evil is supposed to be the opposite of good. As we have proved that truth is all, then if there were any evil, it would have to be equal to truth.

I think that I asked you the last time we had a lesson, how you would define evil. Give me some examples of evil.

David: "Somebody stealing something."

Yes; and what is that, if somebody steals something?

David: "Robbery."

Yes, it means he is taking something away. It means there is something there, and he takes it away. Stealing is an example of evil.

What about a person's health; what if one says, "Well, I've lost my health"? Again, it's something being taken away; it's a minus, a subtraction of health. A person says, "Well, I don't feel equal to that, I don't feel able to do that, I feel

depleted, I feel weak." All those words are negative words; they're minus quantities. They mean that you feel a lack in yourself; they mean that your good health has been taken away.

Can truth be minus? Can truth be lack? Can truth be a privation of anything?

David: "No."

Why not?

David: "Because you can't divide it."

Because truth is all; it can't be divided. And as the definition of evil is "lack" or "privation," we see immediately that it is not like truth.

So, right in the face of it then, when you begin to reason, you find that in every respect evil does not measure up to the same things that truth measures up to. And because they are not equal to each other, therefore truth is not evil.

We've already found out that truth can't be both good and evil. We have very

conclusive arguments that truth is good. So the more truth you know, the more good you are going to know.

Now, there are some other ways of proving that truth and evil are not equal. Theologians (those who present spiritual subjects in the science of God) say that evil is not just a pure nothing; it isn't just a pure privation of something. One of the definitions is that evil is a privation in the proper good of being. In other words, evil is not something, but is a lack of something that should be present.

For example, it isn't evil for a stone to not be able to see. But for you it would be an evil if you were not able to see, because you are constructed in such a way that you are supposed to see. So that evil is a privation in your proper good of existence. Because evil is totally negative, it can't be reality. It is

only like obscuring some of your perfection.

There are several words that can be used that mean the same as goodness; and in every way that they are used, they measure up to truth. Goodness is perfection. Perfection means that there is absolutely nothing that can be added; it is completely and entirely good. Well, that would be what truth is; isn't that right? Because truth is entire, it is whole, it is complete. And so truth and perfection are the same.

And then there is another word that we use often as a synonym for goodness, and that is "purity." If you go to the store to buy good sugar, what would you get?

David: "Good sugar, pure sugar."

You wouldn't get sugar that was mixed with salt or sand.

If you see in the store a sign that reads, "pure orange juice," that means that

it is just orange juice and nothing besides orange juice. It isn't mixed with anything; it isn't diluted; it isn't adulterated.

Well, do you think that truth can be diluted with anything? Can truth be adulterated; can it be mixed with anything?

David: "No."

Why not?

David: "Because it is all."

Yes, because it is all. So truth and purity are alike, you see; and goodness is purity. You mean, really, the same thing if you say you want good sugar, or you want pure sugar, or you want true sugar, or you want perfect sugar. You really mean the same thing, because all those words mean truth.

Another word I have been using in talking to you about goodness is the word "satisfaction." Only that which is all and complete and unchangeable and indivisible is really satisfying to you. You

demand all these things in what you consider to be good.

So, in every way that we look at it, whether it is from the viewpoint of a persuading of your mind, or with these arguments, we find that truth and goodness are the same. We can verify these arguments by many authorities.

All through the study of the Axioms, you will hear the name of Saint Thomas Aquinas. He is considered to be the greatest authority on theological subjects. In the first volume of his "Summa Theologica" he has one axiom after another. He doesn't call them axioms, but he speaks of them as self-evident truths. A self-evident truth is an axiom.

Many of the arguments he presents are the same as those we have gone over in these lessons. He discovered these self-evident truths in the thirteenth century. Our Axioms were discovered in the nine-

teenth century and published early in the twentieth century. It is wonderful to see how the same truth has been uncovered in our Axioms as was uncovered so long ago by Saint Thomas Aquinas. When you get older, you will probably have an Axiom Book of your own, and you'll see how very rational it is. And if you go on to study Saint Thomas Aquinas, you will see how one Axiom after another that we have here, is confirmed in what he wrote so many years ago. He gave these self-evident truths in lectures before they were incorporated into his writings.

Saint Thomas says that truth and goodness are the same. It is one of his statements that truth and goodness are identical. But he says they do present different aspects to the mind because the mind, your own mind, your intellect, seeks truth as its perfection.

You see, all the way through your life you're going to be seeking truth. Whatever

field of work you enter into, you're going to find that the perfection of your mind is in attaining truth. That's what the entire educational system is for. The mind demands that it attain truth, and a person tries in every way to attain to what he thinks is true about things.

If a person is a truly wise person, he wants to find the truth by which all other truths are true. The perfection of his mind is truth. A person wouldn't have a perfect mind if it was all cluttered with a lot of lies and misconceptions and erroneous ideas. You wouldn't consider that a perfect mind, would you? A perfect mind is a mind that has attained truth, and knows truth. The mind seeks truth as its perfection.

We have something else to consider, also, and that is the will.

You know, you have in your make-up, in your standard equipment, a mind; but you have also a will. That makes you a

rational person, that you have both mind and will. When you have mind and will aligned, you have a very satisfactory life.

Your mind, as we have already learned, seeks truth; truth is the perfection of mind.

Your will seeks good. Your will is drawn to everything that presents an aspect of being good. It is just as though you were drawn to a magnet. Whatever you find that you feel is good, you will desire.

Your will seeks good; and your intellect, your mind, seeks truth. Those are your highest faculties--intellect and will; they're really the strongest functions within you.

Now, suppose truth and goodness were not the same; just imagine that they were not the same. What do you think would happen to you? You'd just be torn apart; wouldn't you? Your will would pull one way, and your intellect would pull another, and it would be just as though you were

torn right down the center of your being.

Many people are that way. That condition is called "frustration" because the person is scattered--he has not discovered the fact that truth and goodness are the same. Such a person seeks good in what is not true, and seeks truth in what is not good.

It's a wonderful thing---- You begin to have a coordination within yourself when you discover that truth and goodness are the same. Then your mind and your will can attain the same thing, and each receive its perfection because truth and goodness are the same. Do you see?

David: "Yes, I do."

So the more truth you have, the more you're drawn to the good. And the good is constantly drawing you on, the more you attain truth. The result is that you have more and more truth and good because they are really the same.

We find that it is very practical for us to know truth and to know that truth is good and that good is truth, because then we can begin to achieve our perfection of mind and will. That is why Jesus said: Walk before Me, and be thou perfect. He also said: Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Do you see how wonderful this is--
that the good and the truth are identical?

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