**BROOKS BY THE TRAVELLER'S WAY - ADDRESSES BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**13. DYING, WE LIVE by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."*

*John 12:24*

"Except a grain of wheat"--a germ of life, a promise, a potency, a possibility--"fall into the ground,"--enter into fellowship with other forces, merge itself in the dissolving, evolving powers of the broad earth--"it abideth by itself alone"--it never gets any further, it never enters into a richer realization; it remains a promise, a mere potentiality, a bare possibility, and does not discover the wealth that lies enshrined in its own heart.

Except a human soul--the germinal promise of unutterable wealth--enters into fellowship with other souls, loses itself in the larger interests of a broad humanity, buries itself in the common ground of the race, "it abideth by itself alone," an unfulfilled promise, a sleeping possibility, never realizing the wealth of its own endowment. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die," its powers remained unpacked, and the joy of harvest is unborn. Except a life is buried in the common life all manner of autumn glory is imprisoned and unsprung. Resurrection is subsequent to burial: maturity waits upon communion. The powers of a life never ripen to their prime until the life is lost in the interests of a wealthy fellowship.

"Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth by itself alone." Then the cure of loneliness is death. "It abideth by itself alone." That is a most chilling and impoverishing loneliness. It is the loneliness of incessant self-remembrance. It is the loneliness of a life that is always with itself, that never loses itself, that never forgets itself, a life that never bleeds for others, that never expends beneficent energy for others, that never satisfies itself in thoughtful sympathy for others. It is the loneliness of a life that never occupies the common stand-point, and never loses itself in the crowd. "It abideth by itself alone." It is the loneliness of the egotist, of the man whose world is himself, who never gets away from himself, who never dies to his little sphere that he may live a larger life in the wider spheres of the race.

There is a nervous disease know to physicians as chorea, and in this distemper "the patient sometimes turns round and continues to spin slowly on one spot." Egotism is just an incessant spinning on one spot. Sometimes we spin slowly round about our own particular talent. Or perhaps the centre of our egotism is our suffering. How prone we are just to spin round about our own pains and complaints! An ailment is apt to make us think ourselves interesting to other people, and we move as the craving absorbents of the world's sympathy. We all know the sufferer who ever pilots the conversation round about his own pains, and if it appears to stray for a moment from the line of the recital of his sombre symptoms, he sharply turns it back again to his all-engrossing centre! We are apt to find a melancholy pleasure in "tearing the lint from our bruises and the bandages from our limbs," and moving in fascinated contemplation of our own complaints.

Now, the egotist is exceedingly lonely, and becomes increasingly so, and that by the eternal law of God. It is a dry, parched, arid loneliness, for the genial springs and currents of the soul have never been unsealed. Incessant self-regard imprisons a life in the wintriest impoverishment. If I would attain unto a life that is bright, genial, fruitful and interesting, I must cease to spin upon a point and move in wider fields. I must die to self and be born in brother. I must be born into another man's life, into his interests and affairs, into his joys and sorrows, his pains and disappointments, his conquests and defeats. I must be born into my brother's world, and stand at his point of view, and contemplate the landscape of life from his window. How does life look through the eyes of the poor? I must be born into their world and gain the sympathetic vision. How does life appear through the eyes of the rich? I must seek to gain their point of view and survey the hills and the vales, the slippery slopes and the dangerous crossings which fill the line of their sight. The old man must not forget the world of the young man, and the young man must think himself sympathetically into the world of the old man. The sectarian must sensitively interpret his brother sectarian who worships over the way, and the political partisan must seek an intelligent apprehension of the other partisan who sits on the opposite bench. Health must seek to realise the glooms of sickness, and sickness must strive sympathetically to apprehend the glowing vistas which stretch away in the land of health. We must die to self, and be born in one another's worlds. We must call out and employ, in sanctified exercise, the elevating faculty of the imagination. Egotism is born when imagination is dormant. The man of little imagination is always the victim of large conceit. Small imaginations are always creative of petty worlds, and in the tiny world the little self looks colossal. What is the function of imagination? Imagination is the exploring faculty prospecting other worlds. It exercises itself in the unseen. It seeks to realise what is proceeding behind the blank and unsuggestive wall. It strives to pierce the veil and vesture of the flesh, and to interpret the mystic life behind. It endeavours to enter into another man's thoughts and feelings, and to gather up the significant movements of his spirit. It is imagination, lofty and sanctified, that takes me out of myself and places me in the home of another self. Where imagination is weak, or listless, or asleep, other selves become obscurities or nonentities, and our own swelling self fills the entire scene. And so we have John Ruskin making the startling assertion that "an unimaginative person can never be reverent or kind." The assertion is self-confirmatory. The imagination is just a refined, discerning sensitiveness, and where this is absent there can be no perception of the venerable, and where man does not perceive the venerable, he cannot be reverent, and where there is no reverence there is the spirit of harshness and cruelty, and man can never be kind. Imagination delivers me from incessant self-regard--from merely looking upon my own things,--and enables me to adopt the Apostolic counsel, and to "look upon the things of others." When imagination lifts me into the world of my brother, there arises a need of a new vocabulary. New things come into existence for which new terms are required. The old lonely life had no need of the terms, because the things themselves did not exist. Now, with the death to self, beautiful intimacies are born, and I require such great and wide-reaching words as these--sympathy, fellowship, communion, co-operation, and the whole vocabulary of brotherly speech which rings in the Kingdom of God. When a hallowed imagination is at work, egotism dies, and with the death of egotism, loneliness is destroyed. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone."

"But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Then death to self is not only the cure of loneliness, it is the secret of fruitfulness. "It bringeth forth much fruit." "To die"--to bury yourself in others--is the secret of personal fruitfulness. Impartation is the clue of multiplication. We must get away from self if we want self-treasures to be beautified. To give a thing is more really to possess it. How is it with a truth? Here is a truth which has been given to me. What shall I do with it? Shall I merely lock it up in some strong secret room of the mind? Then I shall lose it, or retain it only as a dim and corroding treasure. How, then, shall I keep it? Impart it, and in the very act of imparting I shall more truly possess it. There is not a Sunday School teacher who does not know how a truth which has lain dull and unattractive on the floor of the mind for years, has shone resplendently while he sought to impart it to his scholars. He said he never really saw it till he began to teach it. Truth never puts on its most beautiful garments until it is being given away. The disciple never sees the superb glory of the truth until he becomes an apostle. If we bury the truth in self it soon appears tarnished; if we share it with a brother it shines like a star. While we give we all the better possess; if we die, things germinate into richer loveliness; we "bring forth much fruit."

It is not otherwise with the Church. If the Church shrink into a club, self-contained, self-sufficient, it "shall abide by itself alone," unconscious of its own heritage, imprisoned in chills and infertility. But if the Church dies she "bringeth forth much fruit." The Church must get out of herself, must die to herself, must become apostolic and missionary, both at home and abroad. For her own sake the Church must be apostolic, going out to prospect among men with the word of her great evangel. The Church will lose the grip and beauty of the truth if she fail in her commission. The Church never really claims a truth until she has proclaimed it. When she takes a truth, and gets away from her comfortable self, and enacts the truth before others, the truth is lifted up before her own vision, verified, clarified, glorified. She stands in the midst of her mission with her own treasures burnished and refined. But if we drop the mission, and sink into a cosy club, if we drop the apostolic and become self-centred ecclesiastical egotists, we shall abide by ourselves alone, and the winter of our isolation will rob us even of the bloom we bear, and we shall lapse into moral and spiritual sterility. This is the explanation of much of the spiritual barrenness which prevails among men and Churches. We spin too much on one spot. Life would become more fruitful if we shifted our ground. It is when life becomes self-forgetful that our powers are raised to their highest significance. Graces speedily germinate in the atmosphere of sacrifice. The life bringeth forth much fruit.