



THE BEREA PAGE

"Examining . . . to see if these things are so" ~ Acts 17.11

Christ versus Caesar

"The lordship of Christ would likely have been viewed (especially to a Roman centurion [Cornelius]) as antithetical to Caesar's purported lordship." ~ Brandon D. Crowe, *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles* (Baker Academic, 2020), 43

"My argument throughout has been that the fact of the early church, its 'faith' and 'proclamation', which are attested gratuitously in sources (the letters) close in time to Jesus, demands congruity between that 'faith' and 'proclamation' and his own person. In my view, the onlookers from the Roman world of the time understood this logical connection. It was precisely this link between the 'Christ' and the 'Christians' which was so unacceptable to them. He was 'another king', an alternative to their Caesar, and in the eyes of the Christians, superior to Caesar. To the Romans these were 'messiah-people' a society-hating *superstitio*." ~ Paul W. Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History* (InterVarsity Press, 1997), 159

"You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." - James 4.4

"Forcing Them Back to Truth"

David Anguish

In 1987, Alan Bloom wrote:

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That anyone should regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question $2 + 2 = 4$ The danger they have been taught to fear from absolutism is not error but intolerance. Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating.... The study of history and of culture teaches that all the world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all (Bloom, 25-26).

In 2000, Douglas Groothuis referenced postmodern theorist Richard Rorty who "considered himself a neo-pragmatist in the school of John Dewey" (1859-1952) (Groothuis, 104). In 1989, Rorty had written of "redescrbiing" situations with a new vocabulary to convince others to accept one's ideas. He advocated an "ironist" view of truth to replace the "metaphysical" view that searches for objective truth.

The ironist's ... method is redescription rather than inference....An ironist hopes that by the time she has finished using old words in a new sense, not to mention introducing brand-new words, people will no longer ask questions phrased in the old words (Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* [Cambridge University Press, 1989], 78; in Groothuis, 104).

Also in 2000, Os Guinness published a small book (just 125 pages) in which he noted that the question in the postmodern world "is no longer 'Is it true?' but rather 'Whose truth is it?'" In practice, Joseph Goebbels's declaration has become standard operating procedure: "'We do not talk to say something but to obtain a certain effect'" (Guinness, 12). Thus,

Lying is no longer lying if you are "telling your own personal

Blindsided by Suffering?

“... I would venture to argue that the ‘Health-Wealth’ Christian movement (the one that says it is God’s will that you never experience sickness, poverty, pain, or loss) represents the largest movement in Christianity today. How unfortunate is this?

“And you don’t have to formally be a part of this movement to be a part of this movement. What I mean is that the average person sitting in the average Evangelical Christian pew implicitly has a theology sans (without) the book of Job. Sure, we have all heard of it. Sure, we may have read it. Sure, we feel for the guy. But we don’t for a moment think that it represents anything near what the average Christian should expect. This is why we get so confused by suffering. When it comes, it’s as if some strange thing is happening to us. When we are blindsided by suffering, we are really blindsided. We begin to question everything for the first time. Our entire worldview goes through the crucible of our current reality.”
- C. Michael Patton, “Embarrassed By the Book of Job,” [Credo House Blog Post](#), May 29, 2021.

Article: Works Cited

- Alan Bloom. *The Closing of the American Mind*. Simon & Schuster, 1987.
- Douglas Groothuis. *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism*. Inter-Varsity Press, 2000.
- Os Guinness. *Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype & Spin*. Baker Books, 2000.*
- C. S. Lewis. “Christian Apologetics.” *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970. pp. 89-103.*

* Especially recommended

truth” or speaking for the “larger truth” of your group.... As Friederich Nietzsche [1844-1900] wrote typically, “Truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.” Not surprisingly, what remains in the West is a world of lies, hype, and spin (Guinness, 12-13).

The ideas expressed above are familiar today. For many, however, the familiarity doesn’t come from reading the statements of theorists, but from hearing them echoed in schools, news, and popular culture: “Your truth/my truth”; redefining (or “deconstructing”) words to justify criticisms of entire groups of people and/or policy proposals; and so on. None of this gained prominence in an ideological vacuum. As Bloom noted, relativism is prevalent because of the successful—and ongoing—inculcating of the notion that, “truth in any objective or absolute sense ... no longer exists” (Guinness, 11).

In 1945, C. S. Lewis addressed an assembly of Anglican priests and youth workers on “Christian Apologetics.” Among several still relevant insights in his address is this one:

One of the great difficulties is to keep before the audience’s mind the question of Truth. They always think you are recommending Christianity not because it is *true* but because it is *good*. And in the discussion they will at every moment try to escape from the issue ‘True—or False’ into stuff about a good society, or morals, or the incomes of Bishops, or the Spanish Inquisition, or France or Poland—or anything whatever. You have to keep forcing them back, and again back, to the real point.... (Lewis, 101).

Lewis’s specific matter of concern—that many want to steer the conversation away from the ultimate question of whether the claims of the Christian faith reflect reality, regardless of whether some have failed to live up its standards—is not absent from our world. But it is now secondary to the challenge of convincing a populace in whom relativism—whether moderate or radical (Guinness, 12)—is so ingrained that they are uncomprehending should someone suggest there is an alternative view (see Bloom, above).

Influencing a culture to change its fundamental worldview is not impossible (see Jesus’s disciples, ca. 30-330 AD), but neither is it easy. Merely declaring, “Of course, absolute truth exists!!!” (or something similar) will not suffice. Neither will neglecting the importance of the reality that, since we disciples also reside in this culture, a concerted effort to educate about truth’s nature should begin with us.

www.davidanguish.com

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