

# Trashing the Truth

By Todd Pruitt

“It is as much a crime to disturb the peace when truth prevails as it is to keep the peace when truth is violated...At no time is there a time for truth and a time for error, for it is written that God’s truth shall abide forever. That is why Christ has said that He has come to bring peace and at the same time that He has come to bring the sword. But He does not say that He has come to bring both the truth and falsehood.”

Blaise Pascal

We are living in a day that has left virtually no place for truth. Western culture, influenced by the modernity of the enlightenment era, sought to dominate the truth and mechanize it the way it had mechanized the engines of civilization. The idea of man being dependent upon divine revelation for ultimate truth was dismissed as a relic of the past; mere superstition. Theologians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were quick to deny the deity, miracles, and resurrection of Christ. In the thinking of the famed German theologian Rudolf Bultmann, it was unrealistic to expect people living in the age of the electric light bulb to believe in the resurrection. In our own day, modernity has given birth to its latest incarnation: postmodernity. This time, instead of seeking to control the truth, the postmodernist rejects the very notion of truth preferring relativism and radical subjectivism instead.

Christians ought to be concerned about this because the current fascination with postmodernist philosophy has invaded the church. This should be expected. After all, in the absence of faithful biblical instruction the church always tends to embrace error. We also have a very crafty enemy. What better way to attack “the faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3)” than by denying the very existence of objective, knowable truth? Stan Grenz, the recently deceased postmodern theologian said that the Bible’s authority comes from whatever community of faith chooses to grant it authority. This is known in philosophical circles as “postfoundationalism.” The idea here is that the Bible is a mere extension of the community rather than being God’s authoritative revelation to the community. But how can we speak meaningfully about God, ourselves, and salvation if there is no such thing as “true truth”? How can we have any assurance in our salvation if what is written about it in the Bible is not ultimately trustworthy? In the end, Christianity is to be embraced not because it presents a superior ethic than, say, Buddhism (although it does) but because the former is true and the later is not. Indeed the ethics of Christianity are only valid insofar as they rest upon a rock solid foundation of knowable truth given by an authoritative source. What else would compel someone to turn the other cheek, go the second mile, or sell what you have and give it to the poor?

Ours is a revealed faith. Scripture makes it very plain that we are utterly incapable of intuiting the truth *about* God without the revelation *of* God. It is also clear that, left to himself man will always prefer a lie to the truth of God.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness *suppress the truth*. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because *God*

*has shown it to them*” (Rom 1:18-19).

When the truth is not known it is because it has been refused. The postmodern apologists within the church claim that their position is humble because, they reason, “Who are we to claim that we know the truth?” The biblical response, of course, is that we are nothing. Our confidence does not spring from hubris but from brokenness as we give up all claim to either control or deny the truth. Rather, in humility we receive the truth from God as He has made it plain in His Word.

Another reason the postmodernists reject the notion of revealed, objective, and propositional truth is that the postmodern age no longer respects those notions. This begs the question, “Why should it surprise anyone that our culture doesn’t like the idea of truth?” It is true that propositions are a nuisance because they force the issue of truth and falsehood. If God has made His truth plain in His Word then there is such a thing as heresy; there are those who are wrong.

One writer in the postmodern evangelical movement has said that we shouldn’t deal with “the truth question” at all. He insists that, “the sooner we see that we needn’t, the sooner we can get on with the business of being Christians, which in no way entails accepting a certain philosophical account of truth, justification, and reality.” The problem with this way of thinking is that where there is no claim to truth there is no Christianity. Indeed, Christianity is a clearly revealed doctrine before it is a lifestyle. This is why the postmodern evangelicals have such a hard time articulating what exactly Christianity is, why Jesus came, what He accomplished on the cross, and even from what Christians are saved.

God has not left us to feel our way through the darkness. He has made plain to us in His Word all we need for life and doctrine. He has not simply transmitted grand narratives that serve as dim sign posts along the path of an ill-defined journey. Francis Schaeffer put it well:

“The Scriptures give the key to two kinds of knowledge – the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of men and nature. The great Reformation confessions emphasize that God revealed His attributes to man in the Scriptures and that this revelation was meaningful to God as well as to Man. There could have been no Reformation and no Reformation culture in Northern Europe without the realization that God has spoken to man in the Scriptures and that, therefore, we know something truly about God, because God has revealed it to man.”