



ARE YOU READY?

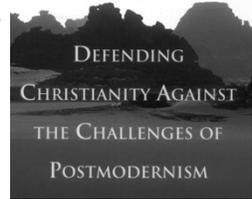


*Daniel Janosik, PhD
Faith Bible College
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Lecture 2
Loss of Truth

TRUTH DECAY

TRUTH DECAY



IS TRUTH IRRELEVANT?

- “One word of truth outweighs the world.” (Russian Proverb)
- The Declaration of Independence declared in 1776 that “We hold these Truths to be self-evident...”
- In John 14:6 Jesus proclaims that He is “the Way, the Truth and the Life...”
- In today’s postmodern world, truth has become irrelevant

- Our society has partaken of all the moral decay found in the rotten philosophies of our day and now it has abscessed and Truth Decay has been the result
- In order to reverse this trend, we may need to pull the error out at its roots and fill the resulting gap with biblical Truth
- Are you ready for this task?

Core of Post-modernism

“For these postmodernist thinkers, the very idea of truth has decayed and disintegrated. It is no longer something knowable by anyone who engages in the proper forms of investigation and study. Truth is not over and above us, something that can be conveyed across cultures and over time. It is inseparable from our cultural conditioning, our psychology, our race and our gender.

Core of Post-modernism

“At the end of the day, truth is simply what we, as individuals and as communities, make it to be – and nothing more. Truth dissolves into a host of disconnected ‘truths,’ all equal to each other but unrelated to one another; there is no overall, rational scheme of things.” (20)

IS TRUTH RELATIVE

- ♦ Truth is whatever we want it to be: “true for you, but not for me”
- ♦ Truth, then, becomes relative to everyone and therefore authoritative for no-one.

Understanding Truth Decay

“Truth decay is a cultural condition in which the very idea of absolute, objective and universal truth is considered implausible, held in open contempt or not even seriously considered. The reasons for truth decay are both philosophical and sociological, rooted in the intellectual world of ideas as well as the cultural world of everyday experience.” (22)

WHAT IS “TRUE TRUTH”?

- ♦ Truth, in order to be true, must correspond to reality.
- ♦ However, the postmodern world is trying to redefine the notion of reality
- ♦ Let’s look at the ways that postmoderns seek to destroy the notion of “true Truth”

The Acids of Truth Decay

1. The Enlightenment vision of unleashing reason’s powers in pursuit of universal knowledge and technical mastery of the world has failed.
 - Modernism did not live up to its promise of making the world a better place to live. In its pursuit of objectivism without the inclusion of the Spiritual dimension, it became bankrupt in its efforts to monopolize all dimensions of life.

The Acids of Truth Decay

2. The social situation of people in a cosmopolitan, media-saturated environment makes a unified worldview untenable.
 - There are so many disparate voices in the media that it would be impossible to declare a single view as the one “truth” over the others.
 - We are drowning in a cacophony of voices: “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”

The Acids of Truth Decay

3. The diversity of religious and philosophical perspectives available to people today makes the notion of one absolutely true religion or philosophy unacceptable.
 - If there are many ways of knowing the truth, then there cannot be a single religion that can claim to have the ultimate truth
 - There are therefore many roads up the mountain to God
 - The “acid of pluralism”

The Acids of Truth Decay

4. Our cosmopolitan and pluralistic environments do not allow for a fixed sense of personal identity, or one best way of life.
 - All boundaries and structures have been transformed or thrown out so that there is no final truth as to how humans ought to behave
 - The “acid of cultural relativism”

The Acids of Truth Decay

5. Language is ultimately a contingent creation of human beings. It cannot represent any objectively knowable reality.
 - What one person means by a word may not correspond to the understanding of another person, therefore words only have meaning in the context of the individual’s own understanding
 - The “acid of relativism of language”

The Acids of Truth Decay

6. Written texts do not have a determinate, singular, knowable meaning or truth value.
 - There are as many meanings to a text as there are readers, and the author’s intended meaning may have nothing to do with the meaning interpreted by the reader.
 - The “acid of the deconstruction of meaning”

The Acids of Truth Decay

7. What is defined as truth is a function not of verifiable evidence or sound logic but of power-relationships that masquerade as neutral means of enforcing order.
 - “Knowledge is Power”
 - The “acid of power-relationships and transactions”

Analysis

The Problem with Post-Modernism

“The problem with postmoderns is that they have made peace with a poisonous view of truth, an untrue view of truth. It is one kind of problem to believe an untruth, to take as fact something that in reality is a falsehood, yet still believe that truth exists and can be known. If one believes, for instance, that Jesus never claimed to be God incarnate, historical evidence can be marshaled to refute this claim.

The Problem with Post-Modernism

“However, it is another kind of problem to believe that truth itself is merely a matter of personal belief and social custom, so that the truth about Jesus depends on who you take him to be; in this case, no amount of evidence or argument about particular matters of fact will change one’s belief. The argument must instead be shifted to the very nature of truth itself.” (24)

What is Truth?

- Aristotle defined truth as a correspondence of what you know or say to what is. In other words, Truth means “telling it like it is.”
- Therefore, there is a correspondence between Truth and reality

Lecture 25
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EVANGELIZING THE POSTMODERN WORLD



♦ “The most valuable thing in the world is Truth”

• Winston Churchill



- The concept of Truth is central to Christianity, and yet it is one of the most strongly attacked concepts in our faith
- Jesus Christ said “I am the way, the *truth* and the life...”
- Unfortunately, even many conservative Christians have cast off the belief in absolute truth

Truth is NOT absolute

| | | |
|----------------|------|-----|
| Non-Christians | 1991 | 67% |
| | 1994 | 75% |
| Christians | 1991 | 52% |
| | 1994 | 62% |

Who has moved?
 God,
 or us?



- “In the modern world reason reigned supreme and it was envisioned that rational man would hold all things together. Now, postmodernism has become the buzz word in academia, the word by which all things have fallen apart; for reason itself is banished as a dinosaur in humanity’s evolutionary climb, and truth is considered extinct.”
- Ravi Zacharias, *The Inextinguishable Light*

Does truth correspond to reality?

- For the world today, truth is only for one who “believes” that there is a correspondence to reality
- Since “Truth” does not exist, then what is held as true is only a belief, and a belief cannot be rationally held

The Postmodern Syllogism

- P1: Absolute Truth does not exist in a rational, factual world
- A1: Only a belief system states that Absolute Truth exists
- A2: Belief and reality are incompatible
- Conclusion: Since only a belief system upholds the concept of Absolute Truth, then Absolute Truth cannot exist

Three Steps to Take

“Unless we establish the **possibility** and the **necessity** of truth, and of **how one arrives at the truth**, any belief system can be mocked at will, or off-handedly dismissed as cultural.”

Ravi Zacharias

| Modern | Postmodern |
|--|--|
| Purpose and design | Randomness and chance |
| Stability in values | Values are transient and relative |
| “Reason as the means and meaning as the end” | “glories in unreason and celebrates meaninglessness” |
| A search to find the unity of truth | Focuses on deconstruction – extols contradictions |

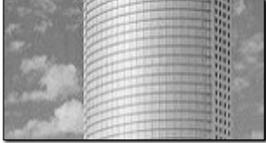
–Adapted from Ravi Zacharias, *The Inextinguishable Light*



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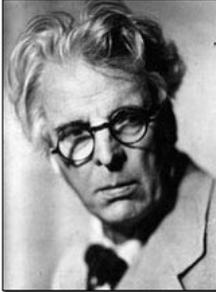
Modern

PostModern



Form becomes everything. Content is lost.

Deconstruction



W. B. Yeats



Things fall apart, the center will not hold

| | Biblical Theism | Modernism | Postmodernism |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Truth | Truth has been revealed to men and women by God | Truth can be discovered by reason and logical augmentation | Truth does not exist objectively; it is a product of a person's culture |
| Human Identity | Humans are both spiritual and material beings, created in God's image but fallen because of sin | Humans are rational, not spiritual, beings who can define their existence according to what their senses perceive | Humans are primarily social beings, products of their culture and environment |

| | Biblical Theism | Modernism | Postmodernism |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| The World | God is the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of His earth and has instructed humans to subdue it and care for it | Humans can and should conquer the earth and all its mysteries | Life on earth is fragile, and the "Enlightenment model of the human conquest of nature ... must quickly give way to a new attitude of cooperation with the earth" |

| | Biblical Theism | Modernism | Postmodernism |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Thought and Language | Reason "can disclose truth about reality, but faith and revelation are needed in addition" | For answers and understanding about life and the world around us, people should rely only on rational discovery through the scientific method and reject belief in the supernatural | Thinking is a "social construct," language is arbitrary, and there is no universal truth transcending culture |

| | Biblical Theism | Modernism | Postmodernism |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| Human progress | Human history is not progressing but awaiting deliverance | Human progress through the use of science and reason is inevitable | Things are not getting better; besides, progress is an oppressive Western concept |

From Josh McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Vol. 2, p. 612.

**How do we arrive
at Truth?**

Truth Conforms to Reality

“An absolute is basically an unchanging point of reference by which all other changes are measured. Each discipline brings with it a handful of certainties by which others are developed. Those certainties, if assumed, must be previously demonstrated when used as absolutes.”

Ravi Zacharias, *The Inextinguishable Light*

**For Christians,
the Starting Point
is God**

The Structure of Reason

- We still need to use reason in order to show that truth (1) must correspond to reality and that (2) it must be coherent
- This statement relies on two fundamental laws, the Law of Non-Contradiction and the Law of Rational Inference

Law of Non-Contradiction

- ♦ 1. A is true, B is false
- ♦ 2. A is false, B is true
- ♦ 3. Both A and B are false
- ♦ (both cannot be true)

Law of Non-Contradiction

- ♦ 1. Christianity is true, Islam is false
- ♦ 2. Christianity is false, Islam is true
- ♦ 3. Both Christianity and Islam are false
- ♦ (both cannot be true)

Statements must correspond to Reality

The Law of Rational Inference

- ♦ The outcome of any system of thought must be coherent
- ♦ Legitimate conclusions result from valid arguments

“Truth by definition is exclusive”

“If truth were all-inclusive, nothing would be false. And if nothing were false, what would be the meaning of true? Furthermore, if nothing were false, would it be true to say that everything is false? It quickly becomes evident that nonsense would follow.”

• Ravi Zacharias, *The Inextinguishable Light*

- ♦ Truth is exclusive because it is the only coherent conclusion that we can derive

Truth is rational

- ♦ Truth is rational and corresponds to reality
- ♦ Belief in truth is rational
- ♦ Belief corresponds to reality

The Empirical Factor

- ♦ Reason must be balanced with experience
- ♦ Our experiences show that the truths that we believe are based in reality
- ♦ Christianity is the ultimate pragmatism: it is the only religion that holds the center – it is the only one that fully corresponds to reality

Don't Give Up!

- ◆ Push your arguments to their logical conclusion
- ◆ False reasoning cannot hold consistently to the end
- ◆ “Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”
 - C.S. Lewis, *WG*, 28

The God Factor

- ◆ “Truth can exist only if there is an objective standard by which to measure it. That objective, unchanging absolute is God.”
 - Ravi Zacharias, *The Inextinguishable Light*

| | Biblical Theism | Modernism | Postmodernism |
|------------|---|---|---|
| Reason | Truth corresponds to reality | Truth corresponds to reality | Truth corresponds to reality |
| Experience | Experience validates the reality of Truth | Experience validates the reality of Truth | Experience validates the reality of Truth |

Truth will correspond to reality when Reason and Experience correspond to Biblical Theism

The Question

- ◆ Pilate asked Jesus, “What is Truth?” Unfortunately he did not wait to listen. The only one who could satisfactorily answer that question was standing right in front of him.

How should we respond?

- ◆ Pilate was unwilling to deal with the question that Jesus put before him
- ◆ The first step is the love of truth and the willingness to submit to its demands
- ◆ “Intent, in the pursuit of truth, is prior to content”
- ◆ A person needs to be open to the truth

- ◆ Secondly, truth will connect with the heart that is open:
- ◆ Jesus said, “They that are on the side of truth, listen to me” (John 18:37)