

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

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While evangelicalism is a much disputed term, all of us who are willing (even eager) to be known as evangelicals adhere to the basic tenets of Biblical faith as they are spelled out in the great creedal confessions. That commitment entails a concern about the dilution of those essentials in the aberrant teachings of individuals and groups as they emerge on the cultural scene seeking to win adherents to their beliefs. We therefore endorse and support efforts to point out where those beliefs are misbeliefs that deviate from the norm of revelational truth. Polemical defense of traditional orthodoxy may not be our personal responsibility, but we are grateful for the work of scholars who are called to that ministry. We realize that any such ministry, no matter how graciously it is carried on, precipitates controversy. Indeed it is inescapably controversial because it is not simply a hairsplitting discussion about academic issues. It is spiritual warfare in which inexpressibly momentous issues are being debated. Sometimes the heretical deviation may seem trifling, but ultimately in the battle between truth and error the eternal destiny of human beings, God's image-bearers, is at stake. Hence those prayerfully engaged in polemical ministry are agents of the Spirit of truth in his ceaseless struggle against the spirit of falsehood (1 John 4:1–6).

All of us, then, who hold to basic Biblical tenets are concerned about God's truth. That means we share a unifying conviction about truth. With mind and heart we accept the self-assertion of Jesus: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). We are unshakably persuaded, as Isaiah declares twice in chap. 65 of his prophecy, that God is "the God of truth." We are persuaded as well that our Lord's affirmation in John 17:17 applies to the entire Bible: "Your word is truth." We are also persuaded that the Holy Spirit, who himself is truth, has come into the world for the express purpose of guiding us into an understanding of truth. So we take with utmost seriousness Paul's charge in 2 Tim 2:15 that we "handle the word of truth correctly," and we do this in order to lead our fellow sinners into a saving "knowledge of the truth" (v. 25).

It is utterly imperative, therefore, that we have a Biblical understanding of truth. How does Scripture answer Pilate's well-known question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). I have no intention of engaging in a lexical and exegetical study of OT and NT terms, important as that study would be in itself. Lacking the qualifications to do that I commend to you a magisterial, com-

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prehensive essay on truth by Anthony Thiselton.¹ Here and now I think it will be sufficient to remind you that the Biblical concept of truth is a complex of faithfulness, firmness, reliability, honesty, integrity and consistency. Truth is whatever in word, behavior and character is in alignment with reality, and ultimate reality is the God who in his unchanging holiness cannot contradict himself, who unalterably keeps his word, and who incarnates covenantal steadfastness. Truth is thus the antithesis of the unreal, the false, the hypocritical, the deceptive, the concealed, the unfaithful. As the uncreated Creator of the whole cosmos, God in his perfect wisdom is the source of all knowledge. And since God has chosen to reveal himself through Scripture, guiding chosen mortals to function like amanuenses though not as impersonal automata, whatever he says therein is to be embraced as truth. God being the God of truth, between his words and deeds there is absolute congruity. But because God, the perfect Person, is the God of truth he in his Word stresses truth as something more than the agreement of its propositions with the reality of things and events. He emphasizes truth as a quality of human character, and he holds high Jesus his Son as the flawless example of grace and truth (John 1:14). Consequently God wills that we know the truth (8:32), believe the truth (2 Thess 2:9), speak the truth (Eph 4:15) and above all live the truth (1 John 1:6).

Arthur Holmes concisely summarizes for us the Biblical concept of truth in these six theses:

1. To say that truth is absolute rather than relative means that it is unchanging and universally the same.
2. Truth is absolute not in or of itself but because it derives ultimately from the one, eternal God. It is grounded in his "metaphysical objectivity," and that of his creation.
3. Absolute propositional truth, therefore, depends on the absolute personal truth (or fidelity) of God, who can be trusted in all he does and says.
4. All knowledge ultimately bears witness to the truth God reveals. Both the intelligibility of nature and the cognitive powers of man attest God's fidelity.
5. The propositional truth of the Biblical revelation likewise depends on and bears witness to the personal fidelity of God, and the ultimate unity of truth is specially revealed in Jesus Christ.
6. Human knowledge is, therefore, not detached and purely theoretical but intensely personal. Because truth captures the hearts and minds of men, it admits of "epistemological subjectivity." Because knowledge depends on God's fidelity, the believer's pursuit of knowledge can express his trust in God.²

Before we turn from Scripture to nonrevelational thought we will do well to hear the helpful contrast between the Biblical concept of truth and today's scientific concept as that contrast is drawn by theologian Donald Bloesch.

¹ A. C. Thiselton, "Truth," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 3.874-902.

² A. F. Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 37-38.

Truth in the Bible means conformity to the will and purpose of God. Truth in today's empirical, scientific milieu means an exact correspondence between one's ideas or perceptions and the phenomena of nature and history. Error in the Bible means a deviation from the will and purpose of God, unfaithfulness to the dictates of his law. Error in the empirical mind-set of a technological culture means inaccuracy or inconsistency in what is reported as objectively occurring in nature or history. Technical precision is the measure of truth in empiricism. Fidelity to God's Word is the biblical criterion for truth. The difference between the rational-empirical and the biblical understanding of truth is the difference between transparency to Eternity and literal facticity.³

When we turn from Scripture to that human activity known as philosophy we find, as might well be expected, a wide spectrum of opinions concerning truth. Yet a mainstream consensus has emerged beginning with Aristotle in the fourth century BC and coming in western thought through all the ages up to a contemporary like Mortimer J. Adler. Central to that consensus are the so-called laws of logic Aristotle formulated. They are, as we know, the law of identity (A is A), the law of noncontradiction (A is not both A and non-A), and the law of the excluded middle (every proposition is either true or false). I will be talking about the law of noncontradiction at some length as we proceed. So let me temporarily bypass any discussion of its validity and put before you Adler's concurrence with this mainstream view flowing from Aristotle.

The logic of truth is the same for all exclusionary claims to truth—claims that something is correctly judged to be true and that all judgments to the contrary are, therefore, incorrect. The point I have just made remains unaltered when we consider sets of conjoined propositions that constitute systematic theories, hypotheses, or doctrines. If any one proposition in a set of conjoined propositions is false, the set as a whole is false, but its falsity can be corrected by the elimination of the false proposition from the set.⁴

We must not overlook the fact that the correspondence view of truth allows for the supplemental principle of coherence. And this principle holds that a statement is true if it squares with a system of other statements. Nor must we forget that another supplemental principle has been employed as a criterion: the pragmatic principle of how supposed truth actually works out when put into practice, a principle that requires caution and limitation in its employment. Given the impossibility of demonstrating empirically the correspondence of the proposition "God is a trinity of persons" we need other tests of truth—such as, to cite Holmes again,

the rational coherence of a proposition with a body of already accepted and assured beliefs, so that we know stealing is wrong because it follows logically from other knowledge we have; or the pragmatic procedure of determining whether acting on a belief actually secures the practical results it implies, so the belief stealing is wrong is borne out by what happens as a result of somebody's thievery.⁵

³ D. G. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 120.

⁴ M. J. Adler, *Truth in Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1990) 10.

Granting, then, that these two supplemental principles have also been used as criteria for arriving at a valid answer to the question, "What is truth?", I join with James Emery White in declaring that the core of western epistemology has been the correspondence theory united in wedlock to the law of noncontradiction.

But today this age-old concept of truth is under relentless attack. No doubt agnosticism and skepticism have been challenging the possibility of reliable knowledge from the time of the early Greek philosophers. No doubt too the veracity of the Christian faith has been the target of virulent critics starting with the Roman Celsus and continuing across the centuries. No doubt, moreover, deviant and spurious cultists have repeatedly led their misguided followers spiritually and morally astray. In our own time, though, a frontal assault on truth is being carried on with ammunition provided by both past and contemporary debunkers. Since a virtual library of materials dealing pro and con with all the issues involved has grown up and keeps growing, I am going to focus on the most radical of the truth-deniers. And that immediately brings me to a self-appointed and self-styled anti-Christian, Friedrich Nietzsche, the brilliant German philosopher who was born in 1844 and died lonely, sick and demented in 1900.

But why choose this one particular iconoclast when other champions of illogical irrationalism might well be nominated? Simply because, when impact on the *avant garde* intellectuals of the twentieth century is being considered, Nietzsche has no rivals. Indeed one of the most notorious of today's God-is-dead theologians, Thomas J. J. Altizer, a Nietzsche admirer and apostle, assures us that

if there is one clear portal to the twentieth century, it is a passage through the death of God, the collapse of any meaning or reality lying beyond the newly discovered radical immanence of modern man, an immanence dissolving even the memory of the shadow of transcendence.⁶

It is Nietzsche, then, with his God-is-dead pronouncement and his whole nihilistic philosophy who has given birth to the radical progeny of today's truth-debunkers and truth-deniers.

The apostate son of a Lutheran pastor, Nietzsche actually wrote a diatribe entitled *The Antichrist* that was the culmination of his battle with Christianity. He closes that scathing yet scintillating polemic with this anathema:

I condemn Christianity, I raise against the Christian church the most terrible of all accusations that any accuser ever uttered. It is to me the highest of all conceivable corruptions. . . . The Christian church has left nothing untouched by its corruption; it has turned every value into an un-value, every truth into a lie, every integrity into a vileness of the soul. . . . I call it the one immoral blemish on mankind.⁷

⁵ Holmes, *Truth* 102.

⁶ T. J. J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966) 18.

⁷ A. J. Hoover, *Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and His Thought* (Westport: Praeger, 1994) 110-111.

That book contained a final page, cut out by his sister and only recently published. It is Nietzsche's vituperative decree against Christianity.

Proclaimed on the first day of the year one [on September 30, 1888, of the false time scheme]: War to the death against depravity; depravity is Christianity.

First proposition:—Every form of anti-nature is depraved. The most depraved type of man is the priest: he **teaches** anti-nature. Do not use arguments against the priest, but prison.

Second proposition:—Every participation in a religious service is an attack on public morality. Be more severe toward Protestants than toward Catholics and more severe toward liberal Protestants than toward those of strict belief. The criminality of being a Christian increases in so far as the Christian approaches science. The criminal of criminals is consequently the **philosopher**.

Third proposition:—The accursed places in which Christianity has hatched its basilisk eggs should be flattened to the ground and regarded as the vile places of the earth, to the terror of all posterity. Poisonous snakes should be bred there.

Fourth proposition:—The preaching of chastity is a public incitement to anti-nature. Every condemnation of sexual love, and every dirtying of it through the concept "dirty" [*unrein*] is original sin against the holy spirit of life.

Fifth proposition:—Eating at a table with a priest is forbidden: in doing so one excommunicates oneself from honest society. The priest is **our** chandala—he should be condemned, starved, and driven into every kind of desert.

Sixth proposition:—The "holy" story [**Geschichte**] should be called by the name it has earned, the **accursed** story; the words "God," "Savior," "redeemer," "saint" should be used as terms of abuse and as criminal insignia.

Seventh proposition:—The rest follows from the above.⁸

As might be expected, therefore, in his attempt to turn all traditional values upside down this prophet of God's death has nothing but contempt for the concept of truth. Again and again he ridicules classical western epistemology, which can appropriately be called cognitivism. It holds, according to Arlie J. Hoover, that "(1) there is a world out there beyond the mind, (2) that the mind can contact the world in various ways, and (3) that this contact gives us truth about the world."

Advocating a perspectivism instead of cognitivism, Nietzsche's position can be set forth syllogistically (even an irrationalist must resort to logic). Major premise: There are many eyes. By that he means of course there are many viewpoints, many perspectives. Minor premise: There are accordingly many truths. Differing perspectives, Nietzsche reminds us, arise from a multiplicity of differences in culture, time, place, education, and even temperament; and differing perspectives result inescapably in relativism. Ergo: There is no truth. The conclusion of relativism is nihilism. For if there is no

⁸ Ibid. 31.

truth that is true universally and absolutely, there is likewise no settled meaning and no fixed value.

Reducing all truth-claims to mere linguistic conventions, Nietzsche gives this glittering but nihilistic answer to Pilate's question, "What is truth?":

A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power. To be truthful means using the customary metaphors—in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory to all.⁹

If truth is illusion metaphorically camouflaged, the end of all courageous philosophizing must be nihilism. But alas, though not surprisingly, only the superman is fearless enough to gaze unblinkingly into the abyss of meaninglessness and rejoice in his emancipation from the bondage of the falsehood that truth is both ontological reality and epistemological possibility. Nihilism? Yes indeed. And one of Nietzsche's aphorisms says it all: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted." Karl Jaspers unpacks the dire significance of that epigram.

When all determinate truth within the world is called in question and no representation of truth is the truth itself, this formulation, which appears to deny all truth, must become possible. Taken by itself it expresses complete lack of obligation; it is an invitation to individual caprice, sophistry, and criminality. By calling in question any and every kind of fixation of the truth, Nietzsche makes a most extraordinary demand: "By 'freedom of the spirit' I mean something very specific: surpassing the philosophers and other disciples of the 'truth' a hundredfold in severity with oneself, in integrity and in courage. I treat previous philosophers as despicable libertines hiding under the hood of a woman: truth." As a short formula it is of ruinous ambiguity. As an expression of radical licentiousness it is intrinsically incapable of providing any guidance whatsoever. Then it immediately signifies the sinking into the nothingness of indeterminate possibility that accompanies the end of all truth. In this form it obliterates the distinction between the truth of an appearance which promotes life and the capricious lie of an individual as well as that between historicity and chaos.¹⁰

How, though, does all of Nietzsche's convoluted rhetoric and irrational reasoning impinge on us who are concerned with the proclamation of God's truth in this year of grace nearly a century after he died (Nietzsche of course, not God!). It impinges on ourselves indirectly yet powerfully through its im-

⁹ F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," *The New Nietzsche* (ed. D. B. Allison; New York: Dell, 1977) xvi.

¹⁰ K. Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1965) 227. I have taken the liberty of excising from this passage the comments Jaspers makes in attempting to give a positive interpretation to Nietzsche's view of truth. Jaspers admits that a "surface" reading of Nietzsche's attack leads to the conclusion of a nihilistic irrationality, which in my opinion is Nietzsche's real meaning.

pingement on sophisticated, culture-shaping professors in our most prestigious universities and colleges. It impinges on ourselves indirectly yet powerfully through the surprising prevalence of nihilism in academia. And nihilism, as analyzed by Karen Carr, can be classified under several rubrics. There is, for example,

alethiological nihilism. This is the denial of the reality of truth, usually expressed by the claim, "There is no truth." If knowledge is taken to be justified true belief, then alethiological nihilism entails epistemological nihilism; without truth, there can be no knowledge.

There is also *ontological nihilism.* This is the denial of an (independently existing) world, expressed in the claim, "Nothing is real." If one holds a correspondence theory of truth, then metaphysical nihilism entails alethiological nihilism; if there is no world for one's beliefs to correspond to or to be about, then no true belief is possible.

There is still further *moral nihilism.* This is the denial of the reality of moral or ethical values, expressed in the claim, "There is no Good" or "All ethical claims are equally valid." An ethical or moral nihilist does not deny that people use moral or ethical terms; the claim is rather that these terms refer to nothing more than the bias or taste of the asserter.¹¹

Nihilism, whatever its specific genius, is not simply the innocuous speculating of some ivory-tower eggheads. It oozes downward through media, arts, and publications of every sort into the *Zeitgeist* and begins to affect the lives of multitudes far removed from academia.

What Roger Lundin experienced at a summer seminar very heavily underscores what I have been saying. It was, Lundin reports, "as much a journey across the postmodern landscape as it was an exploration of this brilliant, enigmatic German."

What emerged from our readings and discussions last summer was a vision of life that seemed critically astute but morally impoverished. Metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics were declared dead topics, and philosophy and literature were seen to be nothing more nor less than conversations to be carried on within the rotting corpse of Western belief. Many of my colleagues in the seminar and almost all the books I was reading were urging me to abandon the ideal of truth, to laugh at the dream of hope, and to cease any search for meaning. To paraphrase a few of my summer colleagues: the bad news is that there is no good news, and the good news is, surprisingly, that there never has been any good news. So we are liberated by knowing that we have no right to lament the loss of something we never had. We need not be saved, because we are not lost.¹²

Lundin's allusion to deconstructionism brings me to another evidence of Nietzsche's pervasive, baneful influence.

But what is deconstructionism? Espoused by a fairly sizable number of academicians whose names are not familiar outside the orbit of rather eso-

¹¹ K. L. Carr, *The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth-Century Responses to Meaninglessness* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992) 17–18.

¹² R. Lundin, "Deconstructive Therapy," *Reformed Journal* 36/1 (January 1986) 15.

teric scholarship—Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Michel Foucault, Harold Bloom, John Caputo—it is, as explained by Thomas Oden,

the dogged application of a hermeneutic of suspicion to any given text, where one finds oneself always over against the text, always asking the skeptical question about the text, asking what self-deception or bad faith might be unconsciously motivating a particular conceptuality.¹³

To those of us who are uninitiated into the bewildering thought-world and perplexing jargon of deconstructionism, Oden's explanation may itself cry out for explanation. So let us hear from one of its critics, David Lehman. He says that this

hottest European cultural import since existentialism is the brainchild of Jacques Derrida, the Algerian-born French philosopher, a resident of Paris and a frequent visitor to the United States, where he has held faculty appointments at several universities. The pervasiveness of his influence in the American academy today is beyond dispute. A prolific author and indefatigable lecturer, Derrida is a man of many neologisms, the maker of supernally complex puns, and deconstructionism is only the most famous of these. The word has its etymological root in Martin Heidegger's concept of *Destruktion*—or, more exactly, in Heidegger's call for the destruction (*Destruktion*) of ontology, the branch of metaphysics that studies the nature of being. One may wonder how so recondite a project has managed to achieve such notoriety.¹⁴

Lehman further informs us that “pure deconstruction is no longer the height of fashion, but the impulse continues in alloyed form, and it is as ubiquitous as ever. The language, the categories, and the war is peace logic of deconstruction keeps cropping up.”¹⁵

We need not perplex ourselves any further in attempting to understand this latest offspring of Nietzschean irrationalism. What we need to do, though, is be aware of its bottomest conviction. Deconstructionist John Caputo sums it up in eight words: “The truth is that there is no truth.”¹⁶ And in that curt summary Caputo is summarizing Derrida's summary of Nietzsche. And if there is no truth, then Michael Novak was really speaking the truth when he insightfully remarked:

≥One principle that today's intellectuals most passionately disseminate is a vulgar relativism, “nihilism with a happy face.” For them, it is certain that there is no truth, only opinion: my opinion, your opinion. They abandon the defense of intellect. There being no purchase of intellect upon reality, nothing else is left but preference, and will is everything. They retreat to the romance of will.

≥But this is to give to Mussolini and Hitler, posthumously and casually, what they could not vindicate by the most willful force of arms. It is to miss

¹³ T. Oden, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992) 79.

¹⁴ D. Lehman, *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (New York: Poseidon, 1991) 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 26.

¹⁶ M. Westphal, “The Cheating of Cratylus,” *Modernity and Its Discontents* (ed. J. L. Marsh, M. Westphal and J. D. Caputo; New York: Fordham University, 1992) 168.

the first great lesson rescued from the ashes of World War II: Those who surrender the domain of intellect make straight the road of fascism. Totalitarianism, as Mussolini defined it, is "*la feroce volanta*." It is the will-to-power, unchecked by any regard for truth. To surrender the claims of truth upon humans is to surrender Earth to thugs. It is to make a mockery of those who endured agonies for truth at the hands of torturers.¹⁷

If the truth is that there is no truth, then might makes right. Might decides what right is, and the dictatorship of a Mussolini, a Hitler, or a Stalin may prove to be the logical end of illogical deconstructionism.

What, then, in the light of this assault on truth is our own responsibility? As truth-possessors of God's liberating and illuminating grace we must resolutely dedicate ourselves to functioning as trustees of truth. A trustee is under obligation to scrupulously protect and wisely administer whatever has been committed to his or her care. This challenging task is not an assignment that we take upon ourselves. It has been laid upon us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In order that we may be forcibly reminded of this God-assigned responsibility, I am going to turn to a series of NT texts, citing them without comment.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard (Acts 20:28–31).

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned. As we have already said, so now I say again, if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned (Gal 1:8–9).

I am put here for the defense of the gospel. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, and whether I come and see you or whether I only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel (Phil 1:16, 27).

We speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God who tests our hearts (1 Thess 2:4).

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith (1 Tim 6:20–21).

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men

¹⁷ M. Novak, "Awakening from Nihilism: The Templeton Prize Address," *First Things* 45 (August/September 1994) 20.

who change the grace of God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord (Jude 3–4).

What these texts tell us in their cumulative impact is that God in his sovereign grace has assigned to us, as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, the trusteeship of his truth. It is our privileged task, our holy task, our awesome task, to guard his truth zealously and transmit it without adulteration to our own generation and on to any generations that may follow after us. Obviously we are unable to do this by ourselves. We can do it only by prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit and with sincerest humility. We can do this only as we entreat the Holy Spirit to lead us personally into a deepening understanding of that truth. For it is only as the truth enlightens our minds, possesses our hearts, and is incarnated in our lives that we can perform this task. And above all else we must be willing to stand rocklike in the midst of the truth-denying, truth-adulterating currents of our day. We must try prayerfully not to become bigots and yet meekly endure the accusation of bigotry. We must try prayerfully not to be fanatics and yet meekly endure the accusation of fanaticism. We must try prayerfully not to be narrow-minded and yet meekly endure the accusation of narrow-mindedness. As trustees of God's truth we must exercise our Spirit-guided judgment as to what teaching, what doctrine and what theology is not in alignment with God's truth, pointing out where it deviates from the Biblical norm. Prayerfully we must guard ourselves against pharisaic self-righteousness and proud exclusivism. The anti-Christian arrogance of some English sectarians a few centuries back inspired an anonymous poet to write:

We are the Lord's elected few,
 ≥Let all the rest be damned.
 There will be no room up there for you,
 ≥We don't want heaven crammed.

Prayerfully we must guard ourselves against becoming overly judgmental, labeling individuals who do not agree with us in every jot and tittle of the theology as heretics as if we were in a position to pass sentence on their motives. We must nevertheless serve God faithfully as trustees of his truth. And in doing that, despite the heavy burden of our responsibility, we will experience the blessing of living in the light, the joy and the hope of God's truth, the truth that makes us free indeed.

I urge therefore that we often repeat William Barclay's prayer not only with our lips but earnestly from our hearts.

≥O God, we thank you for all those in whose words and in whose writings your truth has come to us. For the historians, the psalmists and the prophets, who wrote the Old Testament; for those who wrote the Gospels and the Letters of the New Testament; for all those who in every generation have taught and explained and expounded and preached the word of Scripture: we thank you, O God.

≥Grant, O God, that no false teaching may ever have any power to deceive us or to seduce us from the truth. Grant, O God, that we may never listen to any teaching which would encourage us to think sin less serious, vice more

attractive, or virtue less important; grant, O God, that we may never listen to any teaching which would dethrone Jesus Christ from the topmost place; grant, O God, that we may never listen to any teaching which for its own purposes perverts the truth.

≥O God, our Father, establish us immovably in the truth. Give us minds which can see at once the difference between the true and the false; make us able to test everything, and to hold fast to that which is good; give us such a love of truth, that no false thing may ever be able to lure us from it. So grant that all our lives we may know, and love, and live the truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.¹⁸