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Truth Prevails

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Truth Prevails

Abstract

"The Bible tells us that Christ Jesus—truth personified—upholds everything continuously and has worked out our salvation."

Posting about faith and belief in God from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<https://inallthings.org/truth-prevails/>

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Comments

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Douglas De Boer

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 106:1-12](#)

[Genesis 28:10-17](#)

[Romans 16:17-20](#)

In Psalm 106 the psalmist recites some of the many acts of God that are worth remembering. “Who can... fully declare his praise?” (v. 3). One thing the Psalm mentions is the parting of the Red Sea. “The waters covered their adversaries; not one of them survived” (vs. 11). Indeed, who would even believe all of what God has done? One joke gets at the heart of it like this:

Nine-year-old Joey’s mom asked him what he had learned in Sunday school.

He replied, “Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his army build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then he radioed headquarters for reinforcement. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved.”

His mom said, “Now Joey, is that really what your teacher taught you?”

“Well, no, Mom. But if I told it the way the teacher did, you’d never believe it!”¹

The joke is good because it’s funny, and even better because it adroitly illustrates that truth requires faith. Truth is not merely a neutral and objective “correspondence to the observable facts.”

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the light” (John 14:6). Truth is personified in Christ Jesus, our Savior. In a memorable scene from the Bible, Pontius Pilate asks Jesus point blank, “What is truth?” Pilate’s jaded question is in response to Jesus’ assertion, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37-38). Being a practical person with eyes to see (only) the observable facts-at-hand, Pilate washed his hands of the whole exasperating mess (Matthew 27:24). How dumbfounding is it that he would ask “What is truth?” while staring Truth in the face! Writers of a television drama would never in a million years be able to invent a scene as bizarre as that.

When thinking about truth, it is a classic gambit to recall the situation in World War II of a gentile family hiding Jews. If the family is questioned by the Germans, should the family tell the truth? Bonhoeffer wrote, “There is a truth which is of Satan. Its essence is that under the semblance of truth; it denies everything that is real. It lives upon the hatred of the real and the world which is created and loved by God. It pretends to be executing the judgment of God upon the fall of the real. God’s truth judges created things out of love. And Satan’s truth judges them out of envy and hatred. God’s truth has become flesh in the world and is alive in the real, but Satan’s truth is the death of all reality.”²

Opposing Truth there is Satan, the father of all lies (John 8:44). Satan enters the Biblical scene advising, “You shall not certainly die...” (Genesis 3:4). Adam and Eve had never experienced death. Satan’s advice was eminently practical, corresponding with observations. Satan’s modus operandi is to tempt us with practicalities such that we ignore what we know by faith in Christ, yet we think that by our own judgment we are doing good. Pontius Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. (Germans hiding Jews during World War II knew the Jews were innocent.) But Pilate was a man given over to the apparent necessity to be practical. Pilate became an unwitting instrument of Satan during the hearing of Jesus when Pilate traded Jesus’ innocence for a practical way to save the peace of the day.

The Bible tells us that Christ Jesus—truth personified—upholds everything continuously and has worked out our salvation (Colossians 1:15-20). Our lectionary reading from Genesis tells us of angels descending and ascending from heaven in care of Jacob. Jacob found a truth beyond practical reality bestowed on him in a dream. Psalm 106 recounts God’s amazing power in our lives. Romans speaks of the risk of naïve thinking and the crushing of Satan. There most certainly is more to life than what we naively observe. “The grace of our Lord Jesus [Truth] be with you.”

Remember the modus operandi of Satan is to be merely practical and *stick to the observable facts as we judge them*. According to the joke, Joey thought he was doing good, but he was too big for his britches.

Christ, an innocent man, was condemned to the cross. That is a totally believable story. Justice does get miscarried occasionally. But the crucifixion was a mere bruising to the Truth of the situation. In the resurrection, Satan was crushed by the Truth. Jesus invites us to live in the resurrection truth. Truth will prevail.

Footnotes

1. Gerrit Feyer, [Banner, Punch Lines, July/August 2017](#). ↩
2. [Ethics](#), p. 361 ↩