

The Whole Truth and Nothing But The Truth

By Wayne Vasilenko

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Truth is a word with many synonyms and meanings. Anyone who has seen a movie or documentary concerning the ministry of Jesus Christ perhaps may recall the exchange between Jesus and Pontius Pilate when Jesus declared that He came to “bear witness to the truth,” a statement to which Pilate replied, “What is truth?” This seems to be a strange reply until you consider for yourself the same question... “What- is -Truth?” What would be your answer to that question? When you consider the world we live in today, it does not take long to realize why the answer to that question eludes so many of us. Perhaps you may find yourself taken back by the question and find yourself struggling for an answer. We can see, especially since the Internet came into existence, it is obvious that there is indeed an abundance of opinions concerning just about everything imaginable. However, when you begin to sort through this virtual maze of opinions you start to uncover many people and groups claiming that their particular opinion is “*The Truth*,” while others with differing opinions, sometimes even totally opposite opinions, may make the same claim concerning the same subject! So... can both be right? Can both be wrong? The answer is “Yes” and “Yes!” If you were not confused before, you probably are now after reading that last statement. It is easy to see why Pilate’s question was, and yet remains, a valid one that begs an answer... “What is Truth?” Most of the confusion comes about because of what we refer to as “*Relative Truth*.” Here is another word (Relative) which has many meanings! We will not get into all of the definitions of Truth, Relative, and Relativism because we would end up with pages and pages of citations, and dozens of “Rabbit Trails” to explore. So instead, you can research that for yourself if you care to. Henceforth, I will simply present my personal understanding of these various words and associated terminology, and you can feel free to agree or disagree. However before we continue, there is one more important term we must bring to the table, “*Absolute Truth*.” Here we have another adjective with many meanings, which we will touch on as we progress through this study.

Why is the subject of truth important?

In order to grasp the potential importance of this study, I feel it is important to mention the timeframe of this writing. It is the beginning of February 2020; the United States of America recently wrapped up the impeachment trial of Donald J Trump, the duly elected sitting president. Throughout the impeachment process, both sides in the argument were claiming to be the one proclaiming the truth! This in part is what prompted this study. One has to ask, “How can both sides say that they proclaim the truth, especially with the potential outcome being conviction or acquittal, being total opposites?” This is also, what brings the relevance of the question Pontius Plate asked of Jesus into the realm of our time, and it furthermore illustrates that the Bible is not simply a history book as some claim as it has much to say about our lives and our perceptions today. Moreover, the argument concerning the question of truth is also alive and well even within the church itself; in fact, it is perhaps the predominant reason we have so many denominations and cults in the world today. Each one claiming to have the “truth,” some differing little, some proclaiming beliefs radically opposite of the majority as far as the most basic beliefs, for example how one attains salvation as well as other basic tenants of Christianity. Therefore, we can now begin to see that this study may prove to be valuable to many, from both a secular, and a religious viewpoint.

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Hopefully, after considering the different ramifications concerning truth, this will help lead to more “Civil” debates among disagreeing parties in the future, both inside and outside of the church, perhaps even within political debates, as we all begin to realize that our perspective is a huge factor in our understanding of the question, “What is truth.”

Manipulating the Truth

For those reading this that may have begun to search and analyze their own thoughts on the question, here is another factor that may complicate the matter even more. It is another question... “Have you ever told a so-called Half Truth?” In other words, have you ever perhaps left out an important detail or hidden another related truth in order to win a debate or argument... something that might damage your personal belief or agenda? Many people would probably answer “Yes” to that question, which would come under this sub-heading, “Manipulating the Truth.” What I am trying to illustrate here is that “Truth” has been, and will continue to be altered, (or manipulated) by people, sometimes driven by simple pride, and sometimes by, or for other more “Sinister” reasons. The bottom line is that as morality declines, truth becomes harder and harder to discern as lying, deception, and cheating becomes more pervasive in society. It is probably safe to say that most people at some point watched a T.V. show or a movie depicting a courtroom scene where a witness is “Sworn in” prior to giving their testimony. The witness is instructed to put their left hand on a Bible, raise their right hand and they are asked the following question, “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?” Why do you suppose this was a common practice? The reason is our country is founded on Judeo-Christian principles. Therefore, the Bible in this case is representative of the absolute truthfulness of God’s Word contained within it. As the majority of early Americans claimed to be Christian, they were in effect swearing before their God that they would be telling the truth on the witness stand. Perhaps you may have caught it in the question above, but I asked, “Why do you suppose it **was** a common practice.” Once again, as morality declines, more and more people have been refusing to do this, as they claim no allegiance to the God represented in the Bible, or any other god for that matter.

Truth Spoilers!

It is very interesting to me that things that have been generally accepted as truth or fact for many years, even centuries in some cases, can be upset, or reversed by the opinions of one or two people, even those without any first-hand knowledge of the subject in question, worse yet, by people with an obvious opposing **agenda driven viewpoint**. How can it be possible that even one obscure person, with a simple statement or written word, is able to upset an entire belief system in some cases, sometimes even affecting the general understanding of history itself? Have any of you reading this ever felt totally “shot down” by information that appears to contradict something you have believed all of your life?

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For example, you may have revered some historic character ever since you were a child, and out of nowhere someone makes a statement about your hero that obliterates the perception you had for that person over your entire life. I do not recall the details, but I once read something concerning George Washington that really shook my understanding of him. Rather than him being the “Patriotic Founding Father” as most people envision him, statements made about him, made him out to be more of a self-serving power seeker. These statements turned out to be third party conjecture at best, citing statements made by someone about one hundred years or so after his death, statements proven false soon after they were originally made! Nevertheless, some obscure writer resurrected a proven false statement shaming a Nobel man for recognition or self-gain one would assume. A seed of doubt planted, using information known to be false. This continues to be a tactic used by naysayers concerning many subjects even today, especially in the religious and political realm. Anyone who has had a debate with a Jehovah’s Witness will soon be made aware that although they agree with much of what is called “Main Stream Christianity,” they quickly start to point out what they refer to as, “mistranslations” or errors in the Bible that you may refer to, even in the “venerated” King James Bible! For example, they will say that Word, (aka. Jesus) was not God but rather “a god.” Just out of curiosity, I looked up the original Greek rendition of this passage, which, by the way is in the Gospel of John 1:1. The two appearances of the word “God” in this passage are both translated “**θεός, theos,**” meaning (according to the Greek Septuagint) the same as the Hebrew word for Jehovah, or Elohim, both of which denote “The One True God.” I find it interesting that they did not use the name Jehovah here as it undoubtedly refers to Jehovah the “One true God.” Is it perhaps because the word translated “God” the second time in this passage, is a direct reference to Jesus whom they deny is “God Incarnate” contrary to the rest of Mainstream Christianity. All you have to do to verify that is to keep reading past verse one and it becomes crystal-clear that it refers to Jesus!

The Jehovah’s Witnesses will also tell you that Jesus was hung on a stake rather than a cross as you have heard all of your life whether you are a Christian or not! The fact is, the word translated “Cross” can refer to either one, a cross, as most know it or a single stake, it is the Greek word “**σταυρός**” pronounced, Stauros. Their interpretation I believe serves only to confuse people and force them to question the accuracy and validity of the Bible, even though there is much archaeological proof that the cross (not a single stake) has been a symbol of the church of Jesus Christ since its beginning. They will discredit whichever translation you have in favor of theirs, always steering you to their translation as being the only true translation. During one exchange with a “Jehovah’s Witness,” I posed the following question. “Why is it that 16 different translations of the Bible that I compared to their New World Translation, (some dating back to before the King James Bible) all translate the passage (And the Word **was God**) while their translation, (and only theirs) translated it (And the Word **was a god**)? Would not most people go along with the majority opinion or translation in this case? On top of that, the original translators of their translation, again known as “The New World Translation,” had no training at all in Hebrew or Greek, the original languages of the Old and New Testaments! Here we have a situation where 16 translations made by hundreds of scholars and renowned theologians over hundreds of years, going back to the most ancient manuscripts available to them at the time; these theologians are being discredited by a small group of virtually unknown individuals, with little or no theological training. How can that be?

Please go to the link below for more information:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World_Translation_of_the_Holy_Scriptures#Translators

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While much of the New World Translation *is* accurate, the fact is that there are many examples of the true meanings of passages therein being “manipulated” by its translators in order to support what most modern theologians refer to as the “distorted beliefs” of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Are the *accuracies* contained in their translation a result of simply going along with the majority concerning passages irrelevant to their doctrine or belief system, or is it a result of the actual re-examination of the original manuscripts as a whole? Perhaps we will never know. As for me, and my house... we accept the “general consensus,” and I therefore recommend the same to my readers. So far, we have looked at how truth can be, and in many cases is distorted or manipulated; we will now examine “Absolute” Truth. Is absolute truth even possible? The answer to that really depends on whether or not you are actually seeking the “real truth,” or just out to prove a point or win an argument by focusing only on the truths that support your opinion or belief.

Is there Absolute Truth?

Many people will argue that there is no absolute truth. Is that possible... is everything just “relative” to one’s own feelings or beliefs? In a society without any authority, government, or laws, the answer could be “yes.” However, what kind of society would that be? If everyone could decide for themselves what is right or wrong, what is permissible and what is not, what do you suppose would be the result? The Rapist could say, “It is ok for me to rape anyone I want to, any time I want to!” The Robber could say, “If I see something you have that I like, I can take it!” The Murderer could say, “If I don’t like you it’s ok to kill you!” Drivers could ignore speed limits, as they proceed to text while driving at 60 mph through a school zone saying, “I can drive as fast as I want to, wherever I want to!” This is what it would be like in a society without laws or absolutes, which also include limits to one’s behavior in society. I believe It is safe to say that we would all agree that the truth is, it is not ok to rape anyone, nor is it ok to steal, murder, or drive through a school zone speeding and texting! Many of you may have heard the saying, “My house, my rules - Your house, your rules.” Is this an example of absolute truth, or relative truth? In order to answer that question, we must consider another question; “Which side would you be on in the above illustration including the Rapist, the Thief, the Murderer, and the Speeder?” Once again, I believe that everyone would agree that the actions of these people are wrong whether you are “Religious” or not! Interestingly, the reason I say this can be traced back to a passage *in* the Bible. Consider the following passage:

Romans 2:14-15 (AMP)

¹⁴ When Gentiles who have not the [divine] Law do instinctively what the Law requires, they are a law to themselves, since they do not have the Law. ¹⁵ They show that the essential requirements of the Law are written in their hearts *and* are operating there, with which their consciences (sense of right and wrong) also bear witness; and their [moral] decisions (their arguments of reason, their condemning or approving thoughts) will accuse or perhaps defend *and* excuse [them]

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As you can see according to this Bible passage, this equates to what we call conscience, but this perhaps sheds some light as to where our conscience comes from. Is this why people engaged in practices such as Homosexuality keep it a secret for so long? Is it because their conscience is telling them there is something wrong with it, or is it strictly due to social or religious pressure? There indeed can be social or religious pressure involved, however in modern society this pressure is becoming less and less as we drift further and further from God and the Bible. Nevertheless, many people hesitate, sometimes for years to “Come out of the closet.” In light of the fact that homosexuality is not only accepted by most people these days, but even pushed on us, especially our children under the guise of “Tolerance,” social or religious pressure is becoming less and less of a factor in one’s reluctance to admit living a homosexual lifestyle. Once again, perhaps the reluctance comes from the “God Given” knowledge of right and wrong that the Bible refers to in Romans chapter 2 listed previously! To me, this makes a strong case for Absolute Truth! Realizing that not all people reading this believe in God or the Bible, if you do not just humor me a moment; pretend there is a God, and He did indeed create everything just as the Bible says. Would that old saying, “His house, His rules” apply as it applies to your house and your rules? I believe it would, and in fact, it does! Because God is a loving god and a gracious god, He not only gave us laws for our own good, laws that keep us safe, He helps remind us of His laws through our conscience as we are weakened by temptation. The same temptations He faced for forty days at the hand of Satan himself. I believe that there is absolute truth and it is found in the Word of God, the Bible. I came to this conclusion over a period of 48 years as of the time of this writing. For almost half a century I have argued, debated, researched, researched again and again, only to come to the conclusion that truth does exist, and it *is* found in God’s word! The Bible proves itself to be true over, and over again, both through fulfilled prophesy, and historical and archeological proofs. Even science has proven the Bible true, again, and again. After all of these years of weighing all of the evidence, I believe that Absolute Truth indeed can be found in God’s Word, the Bible! Of course, you can say this is my opinion and you would be correct. However, I feel safe in saying it is my “Informed Opinion.”

In conclusion, of this study, I will leave you with one admonition... Never take anyone claiming to be telling the truth about anything for granted. Do some research yourself, and see if their statements agree with fact and be sure to explore all the facts, not just the ones that “feel right.” Remember that not only can blatant false statements be misleading; likewise “partial truths” can be just as misleading and dangerous to your well being and understanding. As it pertains to social or political issues, the ramifications of being misled can indeed affect your life here on earth. However, when it pertains to your relationship with God, seeking and ultimately finding the truth may have “Eternal Consequences;” this is certainly something for all of us to consider with care. Just as an old TV series proclaimed at the opening of the program, “The Truth is Out There,” but once again, it is ultimately up to us as individuals to sort through what we see, and hear, to find it.

Become a real “Truth Seeker.” Seek the whole truth and nothing but the truth!