

Born to Win

Objective Truth

by Ronald L. Dart

Christians are supposed to overcome the world. How are we doing? Are we overcoming the world or is the world overcoming us? A case can be made, you know, that the Christian faith is being marginalized—elbowed into irrelevancy by the culture we all have to live in. And what’s worse, Christians have *cooperated in the process*. Nancy Pearcey, in her new book *Total Truth*, says,

To many people today, Christians and non-Christians alike, Christianity is seen only as a personal, interior preference, something that exists only inside a person’s head.

Nancy Pearcey - Total Truth

In her book, Ms. Pearcey sets out to show “how Christians cooperated in their own marginalization with a false piety centered in personal experience rather than in objective truth.” Now, that’s a difficult sentence. What is she trying to say? She is saying that we have contributed to all this by a false religiosity—a *pretense* of religion that is centered in personal experience as opposed to objective truth. In fact, it’s not at all uncommon to hear people speak of “experiencing” Christ. One of the great Christian mystics, Hildegard of Bingen, describes her spiritual awakening in terms of an *experience*. She says (and I quote),

“When I was forty-two years and seven months old, a burning light of tremendous brightness coming from heaven poured into my entire mind. Like a flame that does not burn but enkindles, it inflamed my entire heart and my entire breast, just like the sun that warms an object with its rays.” What did this illumination do for Hildegard? “All of a sudden, I was able to taste of the understanding of the narration of books. I saw the Psalter clearly and the evangelists and other catholic books of the Old and New Testaments.” Hildegard was overcome by this experience of intuition, connection-making, and insight and went to bed sick. It was when she “placed my hand to writing” that she received new strength, got out of bed, and spent the following ten years writing her first book called *Scivias*.

So you might say, “Well, what’s wrong with that?” I can’t say. I didn’t have the experience. You see, experience for *everyone* (except possibly the person who *has* the experience) is *purely* subjective. Nancy Pearcey speaks of “a false piety based on experience”, and of its opposite: “objective truth”. Now, this is *terribly* important. What does she mean by “objective truth”? Well, *subjective* truth is something that is true to you, but may not be true for me. I have no way to verify things that you have experienced. *Objective* truth is something that is true for everyone. It’s not based on a false religiosity that’s centered on *personal* experience. It’s based on something *objective*.

Now, I've often encountered what Nancy Pearcey calls "false piety". People speak of having "experienced God". But that experience is not *truth* to me, because I can't verify it. And if that experience that someone is describing to me *contradicts* objective truth (which it often does), then it is *false*. And the piety—the religiosity that grows out of it—is also false. For many people, a paranormal experience they've had in their life trumps *all* objective truth. They are special to God, and *you can't tell them anything*.

I was struck by all this because it had long since become clear to me that Christianity had completely lost touch with its roots. And I don't mean its Hebrew roots or its Jewish origins; I mean its roots in *objective truth*. One of *my* mentors, who began preaching back in the 1930s, got at least one thing right. It may have been a product of the age he lived in, but he believed that there was such a thing as *objective truth*. And he set out to prove it; and he succeeded in many areas, in many ways. Now, if a man believes there is such a thing as real objective truth, then he ought to be able to find it. Well, my mentor is long since dead, and his followers scattered; and as men are apt to do, many of his followers have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. Some of them have not merely lost touch with the truth, they've lost touch with *the idea* of objective truth. And like everyone else, they've been marginalized by the culture they lived in.

It's very much the "in" thing to do these days to question everything, challenge everything, change (nearly) everything. And in the process, a lot of people become disoriented and get lost in the shuffle. People everywhere, for example, find themselves dissatisfied with their church. Our church may be knowledge-based, or experience-based, or based on Hebrew roots, or based on group participation, or based on extemporaneous communication: "We don't *want* someone who has prepared a sermon standing at a pulpit talking down to us. We want to, all of us, have a say."

Now, when we come together as a church, it seems to me there is a small handful of things that are of importance—of considerable importance. The first is *worship*, the second is *fellowship*, the third is *service*, and the fourth is *edification*. We come together to worship God, and there seems to be a value in *joint* worship—that is, all of us together raising our voices in song to God has value. I don't have to explain the value of fellowship in church; we all need the support group that a church provides for us so that we can share one another's joys, one another's sorrows. We can prop one another up in times of hardship. We can help a brother who's lost his job by giving him a little money or helping him find another job. We can do community service together and increase our impact on the world and society around us.

Now, when it comes to the last item—edification—if that's not based on objective truth, we're going to end up as lost as the rest of the world is lost. The Apostle Paul addressed this very question in the *very* first chapter of the Book of Romans. I'm going to begin reading in verse 18 of Romans 1. He said,

Romans 1

NKJV

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who [d]suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Now, there are a *lot* of ways of suppressing the truth. You can *hide* the truth from people. You can *deny* the truth. Or you can even deny that there *is such a thing* as truth. God looks down on this in wrath, and he's going to come down on people who do this, says Paul. Why?

Romans 1

AKJV

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it to them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being

understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

God has two major witnesses in this world. One of them is the Bible, which is a collection of the testimony of men who have encountered God down through the ages. And the other is the creation. And neither of these sources can lie. They are both the truth, and they are both objective. And God says that men are without excuse...

Romans 1

AKJV

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

²³ And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.

In fact, sometimes you get the feeling that we are willing to worship just about anything as long as it isn't God, as long as it isn't the *objective, real* God that man *can* find—both in the pages of the Bible and in the creation that is around him on every side. Because they gave this up, God also gave them up. Verse 24:

Romans 1

KJ2000

²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:

²⁵ Who changed the truth of God [...]

Here's that word "truth" again; and he's talking about *objective* truth—not something we think *might* be true, not something we *wish* would be true, not *our own version* of the truth.

Romans 1

AKJV

²⁵ Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Now, we're not so apt today to fall down before some leering idol—before Moloch, or before Baal, or one of the gods of the Old Testament. No, but we *do* fall down before the things that our hands have made—like a BMW; like a Mercedes Benz; like a new, widescreen plasma television set; like a home theater that will rattle the windows and make you feel like you're in the middle of the action. And we just love our *things*. Paul said,

Romans 1

KJ2000

²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is shameful, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting.

Now, you don't have to be a Biblical scholar to understand what Paul is talking about here. He is talking about people who have lost track of any kind of objective *truth*. "Truth is whatever you want it to be. Truth is what feels good. It's however we see it. It's however you feel. Whatever floats your boat. Whatever works for you." We all *know* these expressions in our society. And so if it works for you to have a homosexual relationship, then people are willing to have you go ahead and do it. And it isn't just that. Nowadays, churches are even going so far as to be willing to ordain homosexual clergy. They're endorsing homosexual marriage in some cases. And we are (and have been) co-opted by the society around us. Our thinking is *dominated* by it, and not by *objective truth*. Paul says (verse 28),

Romans 1

KJ2000

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not proper;

²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

³¹ Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

³² Who knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

They not only do these things, they take their entertainment in that. Now, what Paul has done here is give us a description of where society has come. And it's not a bad description of where *our* society is today. And what we've got to be concerned about is that this society has co-opted the Christian movement entirely. It has invaded it, it has infected it; and if you as a Christian want to stand up for objective truth, our culture has found a way to make you look like a blithering idiot.

Now, most scientists would firmly reject any notion that they worship birds or beasts, but they have indeed substituted nature for God. Evolution, they believe, is creation, but creation by the laws of nature. And God might well consider the substitution of nature in the place of God to be idolatry. And the result, described by Paul, is indeed what we see abroad today. Which of us could possibly deny it? Then there is this exchange between Pilate and Jesus. It's in John, chapter 18, verse 37.

John 18

AKJV

³⁷ Pilate therefore said to him, Are you a king then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice.

And Pilate asked the question of the ages.

John 18

AKJV

³⁸ Pilate said to him, What is truth? [...]

Now, when you look at this, you have to realize that Jesus says, "I have come to bear witness of *the truth*." And it's impossible to imagine that Jesus would say that, "The truth I'm bearing witness to will be one thing to you and another thing to another fellow." No, the witness that *Jesus* is bearing—the truth of which Jesus is bearing witness—is *eternal*. It is true yesterday, today, and it is true forever. It is *the truth*, and it is objective. Everyone that is *of truth* hears his voice. But then you have the Pilates of the world who will say, "Oh, well, it may be true to you; it's not true to me. And my truth is not your

truth. Whatever way you're going—we're all on different roads, but we're all headed for the same place." Jesus on another occasion said,

John 14

AKJV

⁶ [...] I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.

So when people tell me, "Well, there are different roads, but they all lead to God in the end", I have to say, "I'm sorry, there's only one. It's Jesus." He said, "*I* am the way." Not *one of* the ways. "I'm the truth." Not *one version* of the truth. "And I am life." And, you know, that's an on or off switch, life is. There isn't any lack of objectivity; you're either alive or you're not. So a church, then, that is founded on Jesus Christ, must obviously then be founded on what? The truth. Paul, writing to the Corinthians—First Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 10:

1 Corinthians 3

AKJV

¹⁰ According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.

¹¹ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now, Jesus Christ is *real*. He is *objective*. And it is *Jesus Christ* who forms the foundation of the church. And he is not one way to you and another way to me. Jesus is who he is. Now, he says,

1 Corinthians 3

AKJV

¹² Now if any man build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

So here we are. We're trying to *build* something in Jesus' name. We're trying to build on the foundation that Paul laid a *long* time ago, which is Jesus Christ. And Paul said the fire is coming. And when the fire is coming, and all that's going to be left when it's over, is that truth which will remain.

Now, there's another manifestation of this same foundation, this same truth. I want to read a short section out of the 119th Psalm. It's the longest chapter in the Bible. I'm going to read beginning in verse 89. The Psalmist says,

Psalm 119

AKJV

⁸⁹ For ever, O LORD, your word is settled in heaven.

Now, there's something you need to realize as you read through this particular chapter of the Bible. I think there are six (or maybe seven) different synonyms for "law" that are used, and he goes back and forth between them. One of them is "your word". Another one is "truth". Another one is "commandments". Another one is "judgments". They go on through the different synonyms many, many times back and forth in the 119th Psalm. So he starts off by saying,

Psalm 119

AKJV

⁸⁹ For ever, O LORD, your word is settled in heaven.

So we're dealing with something that is objective—something that is the same yesterday, today, and forever. What is it? It's God's word.

Psalm 119

AKJV

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness is to all generations: you have established the earth, and it stays.

⁹¹ They continue this day according to your ordinances: for all are your servants.

All what? Everything created in the earth. He established the earth and it's still here. And it continues this day according to God's ordinances, because everything on it is God's servant.

Psalm 119

KJ2000

⁹² Unless your law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.

⁹³ I will never forget your precepts: for with them you have revived me.

⁹⁴ I am yours, save me; for I have sought your precepts.

⁹⁵ The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider your testimonies.

⁹⁶ I have seen a limit to all perfection: [...]

There's just nothing out here that's completely perfect.

Psalm 119

KJ2000

⁹⁶ [...] but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

It covers everything. What he is saying is that the Law of God is a wonderful revelation of *the truth*. But it's very easy to go astray on this little point. When we ask the question, "Well, is this Law binding that you're talking about? Is this Law still binding? It was binding on ancient Israel; is it still binding to us today?" When you ask that question, you have gone astray. You've made a wrong turn. You're down a blind alley, and there's no way out of it. This question is sometimes asked in the light of what Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 18, verse 18.

Matthew 18

KJ2000

¹⁸ Verily I say unto you, whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be what has been bound in heaven[....]

Okay, I can accept that. But you need to understand you *cannot* "loose" the Law of God. It's not the truth one day and then false the next. And by you and I saying it's no longer true, it doesn't make it so. What you *can* do is loose people—loose *people*—who are held by sin. Binding and loosing, as Jesus speaks of it, is not about the Law. It's about people. In Isaiah, chapter 8, verse 19:

Isaiah 8

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¹⁹ When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

And right here is where men often go astray. Even those who *believe* in the Law and fancy themselves *teachers* of the Law. If we could bring God into court today and ask him to testify, we could count on him testifying to *the truth*, could we not? What, then, is the testimony of God? Because whatever it would be today is whatever it would have been back then. What is this truth that he has told us that he has designated as his testimony? Exodus 25, verse 16:

Exodus 25

AKJV

¹⁶ And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you.

The ark? The testimony? There was nothing in the ark except the Ten Commandments, and a rod, and a pot of manna. What's he talking about here? Understand this: that in the Old Testament, during this particular part of the Old Testament, the Testimony—capital “T”—*is the Ten Commandments*. You may not realize this, but what we often call “the Ark of the Covenant” was from the beginning called the Ark of the Testimony, and it was only much later that it became the Ark of the *Covenant*. So the Ten Commandments are the *testimony* of God, and they're not changing. They were true at Creation, and they are true now. There is another little verse out of the 119th Psalm. It's verse 105:

Psalm 119

AKJV

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

The Law does not chain us to a spot; it lights our way as we walk. But we need to be careful as we walk: that we don't lose our dedication to, and our love for, the truth—objective truth: not your truth or my truth, but the real thing. And we need to remember that we are not here to be overcome by the world. We're here to *overcome* the world. We are not here to be *absorbed* into the culture of the world. We're not here to get *comfortable* with the culture of the world. We're not here to *adapt* to the culture of the world. We are here to *challenge* and *overcome* the culture of the world. Let's roll.

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radio program by
Ronald L. Dart.

Christian Educational Ministries

P.O. Box 560 ❖ Whitehouse, Texas 75791
Phone: 1-888-BIBLE-44 (242-5344) ❖ Fax: (903) 839-9311
❖ www.borntowin.net ❖

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