The Pilgrim’s Progress

Chapter 17: Ignorance and Little-Faith, Part 2
Christian and Hopeful encountered a man named **Ignorance** after their visit with the four Shepherds - Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere. They saw him as he was coming from the country of Conceit, down a crooked lane which merged with the Way. Christian engaged him in conversation, inquiring about his homeland and ultimate destination.
Ignorance Reveals His Worldview

• “I was born in Conceit and am going to the Celestial City.”
• “I know my Lord’s will and have lived a good life.”
• “I repay every man I owe, pray, fast, tithe, and give other offerings.”
• “I have left my country for the place I am going.”
• “No one knows the way to the Celestial Gate.”
What Is A Worldview?

• “A worldview is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world” (James W. Sire).

• “A worldview is like an intellectual lens through which we see the world” (Bocchino).
“Few times in history has revealed religion been forced to contend with such serious problems of truth and word, and never in the past have the role of words and the nature of truth been as misty and undefined as now. Only if we recognize that the truth of truth...is today in doubt, and that this uncertainty stifles the word as a carrier of God’s truth and moral judgment, do we fathom the depth
of the present crisis. When truth and word remain as the accepted universe of discourse, then all aberrations can be challenged in the name of truth. Today, however, the nature of truth and even the role of words is in dispute.”

- Carl F.H. Henry
The Acids of Truth Decay

TRUTH DECAY
Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism
DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS
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.

2. The social situation of people in a cosmopolitan, media-saturated environment makes a unified worldview untenable.
3. The diversity of religious and philosophical perspectives available to people today makes the notion of one absolutely true religion or philosophy unacceptable.

4. Our cosmopolitan and pluralistic environments do not allow for a fixed sense of personal identity, or one best way of life.
5. Language is ultimately a contingent creation of human beings. It cannot represent any objectively knowable reality.

6. Written texts do not have a determinate, singular, knowable meaning or truth value.

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.
Simone Weil

“The need of truth is more sacred than any other need.”
“I have an extremely severe standard for intellectual honesty, so severe that I never met anyone who did not seem to fall short of it in more than one respect; and I am always afraid of failing in it myself.”

Simone Weil
1909-1943
Critiquing Ignorance

• “I know my Lord’s will and have lived a good life.” How does one know God’s will apart from special revelation? How does Ignorance know that living a good life is the ground of his own justification before God?
• Why do all of Ignorance’s sentences begin with “I”?
• If “no one knows the way to the Celestial City,” how does he know the way?
Christian Exclusivism Defined

• Belief that Jesus Christ is the *only* Savior (denies that there are or can be other saviors).

• Belief that explicit faith in Jesus Christ is necessary for salvation (denies that people may be saved without conscious and explicit faith in Jesus Christ).
If Christian exclusivism is true, then all the following alternatives are false:

- Atheism
- Universalism
- Non-Christian Religions
- Pluralism
- Inclusivism
First Principles

- **The Law of Non-contradiction**: “A (something that exists) cannot be both B and non-B at the same time in the same sense.”

- **The Law of the Excluded Middle**: “Either A (some proposition) is true or A is false.”
“Each of the first principles should command belief in and by itself.”
• The claim is made: “Truth does not exist.”
• Suppose this view (that truth does not exist) is true (if it is, it is self-defeating).
• If all views of reality are false, then this view must also be false.
• To deny the existence of truth is to affirm its existence.
• Truth is inescapable.
What is Truth?

• Philosophers use this phrase to think about truth: the correspondence theory of truth.
• The correspondence theory of truth means there is a unified truth that corresponds to reality.
• Facts involve properties; reality is the totality of facts.
• What we believe are the rails upon which our lives run.
• When we believe something, we act and test its reliability.
• When our beliefs match up to the facts, we have truth.
• Facts are totally unforgiving. Facts are what we run into when we are wrong.
• If you are building a life, the truth will not show up immediately. We will find our beliefs either true or false.
“Truth is a property of propositions. To say that $x$ is a property of something is to mean that $x$ is a characteristic, feature, or trait of that thing. Just as baldness is a property of some men and redness a property of some roses, so truth is a property of some propositions” (Ronald Nash).
The Law of Identity

“Everything is what it is, and not another thing.”

Joseph Butler
Pluralism

• A pluralist is a person who thinks humans may be saved through a number of different religious traditions and saviors.

• John Hick (1922-2012): “There is not merely one way but a plurality of ways of salvation or liberation... taking place in different ways within the contexts of all the great religious traditions.”
Pluralism

- Religious pluralism is considered to be the product of one’s family, culture, and society.
- Pluralism is the logical conclusion of a relativistic view of truth and a denial of the laws of logic.
- As Aristotle demonstrated, all thought and knowledge rest upon first principles.
- “If all views of reality are true, all views of reality must also be false, and ultimately there would be nothing to say about anything” (Pete Bocchino).
“If pluralists really object to exclusivism because of its reliance on such logical laws as the principle of the excluded middle or the law of non-contradiction, pluralism is in serious trouble. This would mean that in their view of things, any one who would become a pluralist must first abandon the very principles of logic that make all significant thought, action, and communication possible.”
“Pluralistic cultures are beguiled by the cosmetically courteous idea that sincerity or privilege of birth is all that counts and that truth is subject to the beholder. In no other discipline of life can one be so naïve as to claim inherited belief or insistent belief as the sole determiner of truth. Why, then, do we make the catastrophic error of thinking that all religions are right and that it does not matter whether the claims they make are objectively true?”
“All religions are not the same. All religions do not point to God. All religions do not say that all religions are the same. At the heart of every religion is an uncompromising commitment to a particular way of defining who God is or is not and accordingly, of defining life’s purpose.”
Inclusivism

- Inclusivists agree that Jesus’ atoning work is the necessary ground for the salvation of any human being, but claim that it is not necessary for people to know about Jesus or believe in Jesus to receive the benefits of his redemptive work.

- Inclusivism asserts that while one set of beliefs is absolutely true, other sets of beliefs are at least partially true.
Another Look at Ignorance

• “You follow the religion of your country and I will follow mine.” “A cannot be both B and non-B at the same time in the same sense.”

• “I hope it will work out for us all.” Note the lack of certainty when one moves away from truth.

• “I cannot think of any man from our country who knows the way to the Celestial Gate.” His path leads to intellectual suicide.
Our Journey

• As we make our way toward eternity, we have to decide if Jesus is the one and only way to the Father or whether we believe there are many roads that merge on the mountain top.

• The best way to settle the issue is to examine the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

• We will meet pluralists and inclusivists along the way to heaven; what will we say to them?
“Regardless of a man’s system, he has to live in God’s world.”
In Memoriam

“RIP John Hick. Hope you were right!”
- Keith DeRose

A fearless thinker; a good soul. May that soul be recreated in our thoughts even if not in other worlds of divine grace.
- V. Alan White
“We run heedlessly into the abyss after putting something in front of us to stop us seeing it” (166).

Blaise Pascal
1623-1662
“Do not be astonished to see simple people believing without argument. God makes them love him and hate themselves. He inclines their hearts to believe. We shall never believe, with an effective belief and faith, unless God inclines our hearts, and we shall believe as soon as he does. And that is what David knew very well: ‘Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.’”
“Truth is so obscured nowadays and lies so well established that unless we love the truth we shall never recognize it.”
Who Said It?

“Truth is so obscured nowadays and lies so well established that unless we love the truth we shall never recognize it.”

- Blaise Pascal, in 1659
“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever” (Is. 40:8).
“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:17-18).