

## ***FREEDOM: Misunderstood, Overrated & Rapidly Leading America to Total Destruction***<sup>1</sup>

“The... positive argument for the importance of truth... is that **without truth there is no genuine freedom and fulfillment**. Isaiah Berlin, the great Oxford philosopher, used to remind students repeatedly that although **freedom has two parts**, many young people [especially] **never experience the highest freedom because they appreciate only the lower**.

“**Freedom**, Berlin stressed, is both **negative** and **positive**. Negative freedom, or ‘*freedom from*,’ has an obvious appeal in the modern world. **Teenagers**, for example, are famous for acting as if all freedom is, is freedom *from* parents, *from* teachers, and *from* supervision. **Many adults make the same mistake**.

“**Modern America has all the appearance of a nation-sized demonstration of the adolescent error writ large**. Decisively parting company with the wisdom of their founders, Americans have exchanged the ‘*moral republic*’ of the framers for the ‘*procedural republic*’ of today. **While the American framers wisely avoided the foolish opposition between authority and freedom** of the European Enlightenment through their emphasis on ‘**tempered freedom**’ and ‘**ordered liberty**,’ the present generation has **overthrown their vision altogether**. Whereas *the framers believed that liberty requires virtue, virtue requires faith, and faith requires liberty* (which in turn requires virtue, and so on), modern Americans believe only in ‘due process’ and the clash of competing self-interests in the neutral public square.”<sup>2</sup>

“**Many Americans equate freedom with privacy**... ‘Nobody disturbs them,’ or as Justice Brandeis said, ‘*the right to be let alone*.’ **They confuse unfettered freedom of choice with freedom of conscience**... Newman put it, ‘*Conscience has rights because it has duties*.’ **They lower freedom of speech to freedom to offend. They stress rights without responsibilities**. And they mistake **the lower and easier freedom, ‘freedom under the rule of law,’** with **the higher and harder freedom, freedom born of virtue** that inspires ‘obedience to the unenforceable.’

“Yet **negative** freedom is always **limited and incomplete** without **positive** freedom. ‘**Freedom from**’ requires the complement of ‘**freedom for**.’ That is why, long ago the roman poet Tacitus wrote, ‘*The more corrupt the state, the more laws*.’ That is what Benjamin Franklin meant when he wrote, ‘**Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom**.’ Or what historian Lord Acton taught in his...writings on liberty: **Freedom is ‘not the power of doing what we like but the right of being able to do what we ought.’** Yet having [overthrown] *authority* for the sake of *reason*, and now reason for the sake of *desire*, Americans find that the limitation of negative freedom becomes obvious: **those who set out to do what they like usually end up not liking what they’ve done.**”<sup>3</sup>

“D.H. Lawrence came to the conclusion that **stopping at negative freedom was a central problem of Americans**—freedom was always left in declaration, the rage for rights, and the undying restlessness to ‘move on.’ He wrote in his essay, ‘The Spirit of Place’: ‘**Men are free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief. Obeying from within, ...not when they are escaping to some wild west**.’

<sup>1</sup> All of this material—apart from my comments & material that appears *in parentheses* or *brackets*—is taken verbatim from “*Time for Truth – Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype & Spin*” by Os Guinness, (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 2000). Compiled by Mike Edwards, June, 2016, Madison, Ohio, rev. April 2022, Greenville, SC. Note: All bolding, underlining, colorizing & most italicizing has been added.-mwe

<sup>2</sup> Guinness, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 85-86

*The most unfree souls go west and shout of freedom... **The shout is a rattling of chains.** Liberty in America has meant so far, breaking away from all dominion. **The true liberty will only begin when Americans discover the deepest whole self of man.***

“No one expressed this point more often and more clearly than G. K. Chesterton in *Orthodoxy*:

*‘**The moment you step into a world of facts, you step into a world of limits.** You can free things from alien or accidental laws, but not from the laws of their own nature. You may, if you like, free a tiger from his bars; but do not free him from his stripes. Do not free a camel from the burden of his hump: you may be freeing him from being a camel.’*

“In other words, we are never freer than when we become most ourselves, most human, most just, most excellent, and the like. Yet, if this is the case, **freedom has a requirement: The true, the good, and the free have to be lined up together.** To be ourselves, we need to know who we are. To be fully human, we need to know what humanness is. To aspire after virtue, justice, excellence, and beauty, we not only need to know the content of these ideals **but we need to practice them.** After all, as the Greeks pointed out, *if abstract virtue were enough, we could be virtuous while asleep.*”<sup>4</sup>

“In short, today the crisis of truth, tomorrow the corruption of freedom. Truth without freedom is a manacle, but **freedom without truth is a mirage.** If freedom is not to be [empty] and stunted, it requires truth—lived truth... [A leader once stated]: **‘There is no freedom without truth.’**”

In that regard, Jesus’ words have never been more needed, or more pertinent: “**And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**” & “**Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**”<sup>5</sup> In other words, **true freedom begins in the spirit, in the heart, in the innermost part of man, not through doing whatever you want to do!** One has stated it well: **True liberty comes not in finding your freedom, but your master.** (cf. Rom. 6 & 7 –mwe)

“Will such arguments prevail? Not just in private life but in the public square? To be sure, we need to make them boldly, with imagination and compassion as well as force. But their strength lies in their pragmatism. If truth is truth, it reaches out a strong hand to men and women caught by abusiveness of a thousand kinds. **If truth is truth, it strikes a chord in hearts everywhere that are yearning for [a] deeper freedom.** **Truth, in sum, is far more powerful than mere talk about truth.** Human beings are truth-seekers by nature, and *truth persuades by the force of its own reality.*”<sup>6</sup>

Cf. Alexander Solzhenitsyn [the great Russian writer & dissident]: “Another victim of totalitarian evil stood on this solid ground beyond himself as he declared, ‘One word of truth outweighs the entire world.’ Solzhenitsyn with his statement had not suddenly outpowered the Soviets with some self-generated ‘truth.’ Rather, outpowered, outnumbered, and outgunned, he as one single person seized and wielded truth as a sword that could not be resisted, crying out, ‘Grant, O Lord, that I may not break as I strike.’”<sup>7</sup> (If this sounds like a cultural war, it is! And under the guise of “freedom” our country is being destroyed. –mwe)

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp. 86-87

<sup>5</sup> John 8:32, 36

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 87

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 75

“...far from being a naïve and reactionary notion, truth is one of the simplest, most precious gifts without which we would not be able to handle reality or negotiate life. Neither unhealthy nor repressive, truth is a vital requirement not only for individuals who would live a good life, but for free societies that would remain free... (and) **Truth matters supremely because in the end, without truth there is no freedom. Truth, in fact, is not only essential to freedom; it is freedom, and the only way to a free life lies in becoming a person of truth and learning to live in truth.** Living in truth is the secret of living free” (TFT, pp. 13-14). Of course biblically speaking, we know there is absolute truth. Jesus claimed that He was “*The way, The TRUTH, & The life*” (Jn. 14:6). In His high priestly prayer to the Heavenly Father, Christ declared “*Sanctify them through the truth, Thy word IS truth.*” (Jn. 17:17). Christ also said, “*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.*” (John 8:32). Truth, and the belief that there is truth, has major ramifications in several areas of life:

A. **IN REGARD TO ETHICS.** Surprisingly, though not believing in absolute, objective truth, i.e., in the midst of a “...contemporary crisis of truth, ethics, and character... (it is, ironically) playing out in the midst of an extraordinary resurgence of interest in **ethics around the Western world** (see below). For instance, a survey by the Hastings Center claims that the United States now offers over eleven thousand courses in applied ethics that tackle all manner of ethical problems in business, politics, medicine, science, engineering, and social work. These courses are backed by thousands of experts through hundreds of textbooks, dozens of journals, and some staggeringly generous financial grants... **Some people interpret this explosion of interest in ethics as the return to a morally robust era...Far from it. In fact, this renewed enthusiasm for ethics is hardly cause for celebration.** (WHY?):

1. **“FOR ONE THING, MORALITY IS LIKE HEALTH-PREOCCUPATION WITH IT IS OFTEN A SIGN OF ILLNESS, NOT VITALITY.**
2. **“FOR ANOTHER THING... PART OF THE RENEWED INTEREST IS SIMPLY FASHIONABLE AND TRANSIENT...** As one commentator put it, ‘*Sin-Lite has found shelf space alongside other low-guilt pleasures.*’ Or in the words of MTV, ‘*A little lust, pride, sloth, and gluttony-in moderation-are fun, and that’s what keeps your heart beating.*’
3. **“(ALSO) MUCH OF TODAY’S FOCUS IS ON ‘PREVENTION ETHICS’ RATHER THAN ON *PRINCIPLED ETHICS*.** It is more concerned with ‘**not being caught**’ (or sued or exposed in the press) than with **doing right**... what Oscar Wilde said cynically a century ago is uncomfortably apt in the climate of today’s culture wars” ‘*Morality is simply the attitude we adopt toward people we personally dislike.*’
4. **“EVEN WHERE GOOD ETHICS IS TAUGHT IN A GOOD WAY, IT IS USUALLY MORE *SOCIAL* IN NATURE THAN *PERSONAL*.** That is, what matters for the politically correct is to hold the right views, not to practice them. (!) What is seen as important are issues related to corporations, schools, courts, governments, and the treatment of the environment-not the individual’s virtue and responsibility that underlie these secondary issues... As ethicist Christina Sommers wites, ‘A glance at a typical anthology of a college

course in ethics reveals that ...*Inevitably the student gets the idea that applying ethics to modern life is mainly a matter of being for or against some social policy.*'

5. "WORSE STILL, THE CURRENT ETHICS IS OFTEN TAUGHT WITH A SHALLOW VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE AND AN EVEN MORE SUPERFICIAL VIEW OF EVIL IN HUMAN SOCIETY. For example, such topics as hypocrisy, self-deception, selfishness, and cruelty rarely come up. And the place of envy in politics, greed in the economy, lust in the fashion industry, and violence in the entertainment business is rarely probed.
6. "WORST OF ALL, THE PRESENT PREOCCUPATION WITH ETHICS IN ELITE INTELLECTUAL CENTERS HAS AN ELEMENT OF ABSURDITY BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO MORAL CONTENT LEFT TO TEACH. The fruit of the Western universities in the last two hundred years has been to destroy the possibility of any moral knowledge on which to pursue moral formation(!!!)... President Derek Bok of Harvard expressed this point guardedly: 'Today's course in applied ethics does not seek to convey a set of moral truths, but tries to encourage the student to think carefully about complex moral issues (Ha!)... The principal aim of the course is not to impart "right answers" but to make the student more perceptive in detecting ethical problems when they arise.' ...Philosopher Dallas Willard was more blunt: Had President Bok 'strolled across Harvard Yard to Emerson Hall and consulted with some of the most influential thinkers in our nation, he would have discovered that there now is no recognized moral knowledge upon which projects of fostering moral development could be based. There is now not a single moral conclusion about behavior or character traits that a teacher could base a student's grade on-not even those most dear to educators, concerning fairness and diversity.'" (TFT, pp. 26-27)

Today if one bemoans the loss of moral absolutes, the loss of unchanging principles of "right" and "wrong", most people shrug their shoulders. Get exercised about the fact millions of people and dozens of countries have abandoned a previously held Judeo-Christian (i.e. biblical) foundation, and the reply will often be, "So what difference does it make?" The answer to that can best be demonstrated by quoting Cal Thomas, America's most widely syndicated writer, as he relates two incidents that occurred a few years ago:

"In January 1982 I lectured at the University of California, Santa Barbara campus. Among other points, I attempted to make a case that a nation which does not have a proper base for its moral absolutes ('inalienable rights' as Jefferson called them) could not long survive as a free nation. I said that the base for those absolutes in the United States has been the Judeo-Christian ethic. When it came time for questions, a rather self-assured student got up and asked a question that went something like this:

*'I'm a 3.8 average political science major and I don't see any reason at all why we need the Bible or the Judeo-Christian ethic in matters pertaining to a nation or to public policy.'*

Since he was rather cocky in his question, I decided to mimic him in my reply.

*'Is that right, Mr. 3.8,'* I said. *'Tell me, what is to prevent me from taking out a gun right now and shooting you to death because I don't like the tone of your question?'*

‘Well, there’s a law against it,’ he replied, still cocky.

‘What if I was able to get enough people together who agreed that the law should be changed and that I was perfectly within my rights to shoot people who ask cocky questions? On what basis will you be able to tell me that such an act is wrong?’ The student fell strangely silent and sat down.

‘You see,’ I said, somewhat more gently, ‘**without a firm set of inalienable rights which, by the way, are inalienable because they are endowed, in the words of Jefferson, by our Creator, we are left only with majority rule to determine what is right and what is wrong. Our history and the history of the world is replete with the corpses of those who have fallen to the excesses of majority rule.**’<sup>8</sup>

“The other incident occurred on the campus of James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in the fall of 1982. A young woman student approached me following a debate with former Senator George McGovern’s administrative assistant, George Cunningham. The student asked virtually the same question (‘Why do we need to invoke the Judeo-Christian ethic in order to have a free nation?’) I replied by asking her a question.

‘Why can’t you shoot your neighbor if his dog messes up your yard?’ Her answer was unlike any I have ever heard.

‘That behavior is not part of my socialization process,’ she said.

‘Your what?’

‘My socialization process. My parents used a socialization process that does not allow for that kind of behavior.’

‘All right,’ I said, ‘but what if the dog is your dog and he messes up your neighbor’s yard and your neighbor has a different socialization process, one that allows him to shoot you? On what basis do you make a moral claim that what he is about to do is wrong?’ The student stood there and could not answer. It appeared no one had ever challenged her logic to any extent whatsoever.’<sup>9</sup>

- B. **IN REGARD TO MORALS.** In “*Time For Truth*” Guinness lists **three progressively downward stages of ethical disintegration due to a rejection of belief in objective truth.** He states: “The wider moral confusion in the West (similar problems exist in other modern countries) can be probed best with the help of three terms:

1. “**PERMISSIVE...** Fyodor Dostoyevsky captured (this) a hundred years ago in his famous refrain in *The Brothers Karamzov*: ‘**If God is dead, and there is no future life, nothing would be immoral any longer, everything would be permitted.**’ The developments of a century later show that the consequences are not limited to morals. **If ‘God is dead,’ all sorts of other things die too, including truth,**

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<sup>8</sup> Cal Thomas, “Book Burning.” Crossway Books: Westchester, Illinois, 1983, pp. 29-30.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp. 30-31.

**selfhood, character, the power of words to describe reality, and for some people, even reality itself.”** (TFT, pp. 28-29)

2. **“TRANSGRESSIVE...** found its classic expression in the 1968 Sorbonne slogan mentioned earlier, *‘It is forbidden to forbid.’* This was later popularized by basketball player Dennis Rodman as *‘bad as I wanna be’* and exemplified by the choreographer of rock star Madonna: *‘Madonna told me to break every rule I could think of, and then when I was done, to make up some new ones and break them.’* ...Of course, there are limits to transgressing...chaos for society and boredom for the transgressor. For instance, shock-rocker Marilyn Manson recently complained, *‘We can’t go any further without starting over... What other violence can you show? What other drug can you do? What other thing can you get pierced? It’s all been done.’* ...**But the costs of (this) moral vandalism are enormous, not least because the transgressors wreak their havoc in the name of specious freedom that others desire to copy.**” (TFT, p. 29)
3. **“(The word) REMISSIVE...** comes up repeatedly when people try to describe the moral crisis and grope for terms that capture its overwhelming and snowballing nature. Society, they say, is *‘eroding,’ ‘unraveling,’ ‘fraying,’ ‘melting down,’* and the like. Or as one political leader expressed it during the scandals swirling around the Clinton presidency, *‘You can stop a flood by putting your finger in the dike, but how do you stop a mudslide?’*” (Ibid)

C. **IN REGARD TO CHARACTER** A couple of obvious consequences that the rejection of absolute truth has on character are:

1. **PEOPLE “REINVENT” THEMSELVES** i.e. They are not real. They are not themselves. As mentioned above, Samuel Clemens is a classic example of this. He became Mark Twain, to the point that no one, even he, knew who Samuel Clemens really was.
2. **PEOPLE ARE DEVOID OF CHARACTER.** “...character was traditionally understood as the inner form that makes anyone or anything what it is...It is therefore deeper than, and different from, such outer concepts as personality, image, reputation, and celebrity. Character was the deep selfhood, the essential stuff a person is made of, the core reality in which thoughts, words, decisions, behavior, and relationships are rooted. As such, character determined behavior just as behavior demonstrated character. **Character was who we are when no one sees us but God.**

**All this changed dramatically in the twentieth century.** The Russian notion of the *‘nothing person’* (became a reality)... (In) Robert Musil’s novel The Man Without Qualities... a couple are discussing a friend of theirs, Ulrich. Suddenly, the husband Walter bursts out: *‘He is a man without qualities!’ ‘What’s that?’* Clarisse asked. *‘Nothing. That’s just the point-it’s nothing!’* And as they discuss it further, he adds: *‘There are millions of them nowadays. It’s the human type our time has produced.’* Groping for words, **Walter describes an emerging type of person who is all surface, skills, and resume-and no character.** Today we would employ such descriptions as the *‘empty suit,’* the *‘designer personality,’* or the *‘leader as*

*panderer*' who is a parade of poses, each one struck according to opinion polls and focus groups (cf. Bill Clinton). ...For example, People magazine reported that a celebrated multimillionaire business leader choked up while giving a speech to lay off some of his workforce. 'Afterward, everyone was debating whether he was faking it.' ...**The emphasis now is on surface, not depth; on possibilities, not qualities; on glamour, not convictions;** on what can be altered endlessly, not achieved for good; and on what can be bought and worn, not gained by education and formation. **To be a person is therefore to be a project. It is up to each of us to create and wear our own 'designer personality'**-carefully crafting ourselves with resumes, skills, and appearances all chosen with the expertise and care of a Paris couturier designing a dress for a Hollywood actress on Oscar night. Character may be its own reward, but personality is what wins friends, gets jobs, attracts lovers, catches the camera's eye, and lands the prize of public office." (TFT, pp. 46-47)

**COMPARE THE ABOVE COMMENTS ON ETHICS AND CHARACTER WITH AN EXCELLENT STATEMENT BY EARLY AMERICAN PRESIDENT JAMES MONROE.** By way of historical background, "Right up to the end of the nineteenth century, the most important course in an American student's college career was moral philosophy, or what we today call ethics. The course was seen as the crowning unit in the senior year, usually taught by the college president himself. As President James Monroe said of such classes, '*The question to be asked at the end of the educational step is not "What has the student learned?" but "What has the student become?"*'" (TFT, p. 25) Perhaps that is why **Vaclav Havel**, the leader of the "Velvet Revolution" in eastern Europe has stated that "...**the destruction of Western society is more likely from itself, than from SS-20 rockets.**" (TFT, p.)

D. **IN REGARD TO PURPOSE IN LIFE.** Guinness contrasts two highly regarded men, both of whom underwent and survived terrible oppression and brutality-one in Nazi prison camps, the other in the Soviet Gulag. Both endeavored to expose it and ensure that it never happened again. The end result of their two lives though was very different. One man ended up committing suicide. The other helped overturn a world empire through his writing alone. Their stories are instructive. **"It is often said that to have a fulfilling life, three essentials are required: (1) a clear sense of personal identity, (2) a deep sense of faith and meaning, and (3) a strong sense of purpose and mission."**<sup>10</sup>

1. **PRIMO LEVI.** "Prisoner 174517 was thirsty. Seeing a fat icicle hanging just outside his hut in the Auschwitz extermination camp, he reached out of the window and broke it off to quench his thirst. But before he could get the icicle to his mouth, a guard snatched it out of his hands and dashed it to pieces on the filthy ground. '*Warum?*' the prisoner burst out instinctively-'Why?' '*Hier ist kein warum,*' the guard answered with brutal finality: 'Here there is no why.'"

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<sup>10</sup> Time for Truth, Op cit., p.71.

“That for Primo Levi, the Italian Jewish scientist and writer, was the essence of the death camps—places not only of unchallengeable, arbitrary authority but of absolute evil that defied all explanation. In the face of such wickedness, explanations born of psychology, sociology, and economics were pathetic in their inadequacy... Yet despite the horror, Levi gave the impression that he had survived the poison of Auschwitz and had come to terms with his nightmarish experience. **One of only three returning survivors of the six hundred fifty Italian Jews transported to Poland in 1944**, he eventually married, had children, wrote books, won literary prizes, and lived a full life. His core mission, however, was always to serve as a witness to truth, a guardian of the memory.

“Writing about his deportation to Poland, he stated: *‘Auschwitz left its mark on me, but it did not remove my desire to live. On the contrary, that experience increased my desire, it gave my life purpose, to bear witness, so that such a thing should never occur again.’* While other direct or indirect victims of the Nazis committed suicide, including Walter Benjamin, Stefan Zweig, and Bruno Bettelheim, Levi many times argued against that act.

“Thus many people were shocked and saddened when on April 11, 1987, more than forty years after his release from Auschwitz, Primo Levi plunged to his death (via suicide) down the stairwell of his home in Torino, Italy. Feeling the burden of witnessing, the guilt of surviving, the horror of revisionist denials of the camps, the weariness of repeating the same things, and even the anxiety of seeing his own memories fade, he joined the long sad list of the victims of Nazi hell who took their own lives.

“Levi’s mounting depression in the last weeks of his life was known to his family and friends. Significantly, in his last interview he begged the questioning journalist not to consider him a prophet... *‘All prophets are false. I don’t believe in prophets, even though I come from a heritage of prophets.’*... Levi’s dismissal is understandable, for he was an atheist who had been to hell on earth and back. But it is sad, for the strong line of Hebrew prophets is not only a defining feature of his people’s heritage but one of the richest Jewish gifts to the history of the world.”<sup>11</sup>

“**Levi, it turned out, had a critical deficiency of the second and third (essentials for a fulfilling life, i.e. a deep sense of faith and meaning, and a strong sense of purpose and mission)**... and in ways that poignantly illustrate our contemporary crisis of truth.

“To all appearances, Primo Levi had a clear sense of identity and a passionate sense of purpose. *‘It is very likely,’* he said, *‘that without Auschwitz I would never have written, and would have given only little weight to my Jewish identity.’* But following Auschwitz, *‘My only thought was to survive and tell.’* (So)... **What was it that undid Levi’s mission to witness?**

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp. 69-70.



“**The first and more obvious reason** was philosophical. **Levi lacked any sense of faith and meaning with which to interpret and handle his harrowing experience** (#2 above). An atheist when he went to Auschwitz, he could never get around the extermination camp as the black hole of godlessness, the extreme situation of absolute evil to which no response could ever be adequate... **in the end, the dark combination of Auschwitz and atheism always closed back in on him**. For instance, in 1946 Levi described his raging in silence at an old Jew who thanked God for having escaped selection to the gas chambers-‘*If I was God, I would spit at Kuhn’s prayer.*’ Or as he stated more bluntly in his first book, *If This Is a Man*, ‘*If there is an Auschwitz, then there cannot be a God.*’ Forty years later, only months before his suicide, he wrote after those words in pencil: ‘*I find no solution to the riddle. I seek, but I do not find it.*’

“**The second and less obvious reason** for Levi’s crisis was practical (#3 above-a strong sense of purpose and mission). **He gradually realized that his mission-however noble and necessary-was impossible**. As Liliane Atlan wrote in *An Opera for Theresientstadt*, Auschwitz is ‘*an experience both impossible to pass on, and impossible to forget.*’

“Most of the reasons for this difficulty are straightforward. Memories are tricky and eventually fade. Revisionists who deny history are shocking but are neither driven nor answered by facts. Besides, most people would rather not be reminded of evil of such magnitude. Then, too, generations pass and the new world of entertainment treats evil as fantasy...

“But the weight of the witness was always heavier on Levi than the sum of the problems. ‘*We felt the weight of centuries on our shoulders,*’ he wrote. And the heaviest burden of all was the guilt of surviving-‘*the best had been murdered*’-along with the awful knowledge that confession was impossible, and yet without genuine confession there could be no real confrontation with evil. In the words of Itzhak Schipper, one of the ‘*murdered best*’ killed in Majdanek in 1943: ‘*No one will want to believe us, because our disaster is the disaster of the entire civilized world.*’ Finally, there was the agony of realizing that the ranks of the witnesses were thinning. ‘*We are many (but every year our numbers diminish)...*’ Levi wrote. *If we die in silence, as our enemies desire... the world will not learn what man could do and what he can still do.*’ In a sense, Levi wrote at the end of his life, the hopelessness he was experiencing was worse than Auschwitz. For he was no longer young. The task of repeating the story was getting harder and harder. The burden of the witness impossible...”<sup>12</sup>

“...it is almost impossible to read Levi’s last interviews and writings without thinking of Albert Camus and *the myth of Sisyphus*. In classical legend, **Sisyphus was condemned by Zeus to push a huge stone up the hill only to have it roll**

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 71-73.

**down again each time**-a story that Camus used to picture fate in a world without God and without meaning.

**“For those who find themselves without faith in God and who conclude that the world they desire does not fit with the world they discover, life is fundamentally deaf to their aspirations.** And in fact, it is literally absurd. All meaning-including for Levi, the establishment of truth-is up to them. They must live so as to be able to say, in Neitzsche’s words, ‘*Thus I have willed it.*’ Or as Frank Sinatra put it simply, ‘*I did it my way.*’”<sup>13</sup> **One is reminded of Ecclesiastes, and the futility that Solomon experienced, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity...” (Eccl. 1:2). Without a belief in God and absolute truth, life indeed is senseless!**

“So Levi must roll his ‘truth’ up the hill again and again. When the vast indifference of the public makes the gradient steeper, he must push harder. When he rests for a moment and the revisionists shove his stone back down, he must start again. When his companions drop out and his energy flags, he must summon his strength one more time. Numb, exhausted, aching, despairing, he must roll it and roll it until he can roll it no more. In an absurd world no success will ever crown his labors with significance. He can have only one satisfaction: the rebel’s reward of rolling, rolling, rolling, without end.”<sup>14</sup>

2. **ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN. “But there is an alternative to the fate of Sisyphus-and Neitzsche, Camus, Sinatra, and Levi. It is that truth, like meaning as a whole, is not for us to create, but for us to discover.** Each of us may be small, our lives short, and our influence puny. **But if truth is there--objective, absolute, independent of minds that know it—then we may count on it and find it a source of strength.” (And there is! The Word of the Living God i.e. the Bible is the one and only source of absolute truth! See page 11 below. The Bible is full of truth claims! -mwe)**

“Another victim of totalitarian evil stood on this solid ground beyond himself as he declared, ‘One word of truth outweighs the entire world.’ Solzhenitsyn with his statement had not suddenly outpowered the Soviets with some self-generated ‘truth.’ Rather, outpowered, outnumbered, and outgunned, he as one single person seized and wielded truth as a sword that could not be resisted, crying out, ‘*Grant, O Lord, that I may not break as I strike.*’

“Primo Levi and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn were both witnesses to the horrors they experienced. They were both spurred on by their passion not to betray the dying wish of millions to be remembered. But whereas Levi’s view of truth left him a weary Sisyphus with a hopeless task, Solzhenitsyn’s made him a sword in God’s hand and allowed him to raise a voice to rally the world. ‘It is infinitely difficult to begin,’ he wrote in *The Oak and the Calf*,’ when mere words must remove a great block of inert matter. But there is no other way if none of the material strength is on your side. And a shout in the mountains has been known to start an avalanche.’

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 73-74.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 74.

“What am I arguing? Let me underscore it again. I am not countering the postmodern view of truth on behalf of the modern. One is as bad as the other... Rather, I am deliberately underscoring the practical difficulties that grow out of the theoretical deficiencies of the new radical relativism.”<sup>15</sup>

#### THE SOLUTION:

#### **BOLDLY CONTEND THAT THERE IS SUCH A THING AS ABSOLUTE TRUTH!**

- a. **THE BIBLE DECLARES THAT THERE IS SUCH A THING AS ABSOLUTE TRUTH!**
  - Psalm 40:11 – *“Let Thy truth preserve me”*
  - Psalm 100:5 & 117:2 – *“His truth endures to all generations”*
  - Psalm 108:4 – *“Thy truth reaches to the clouds”*
  - Psalm 19:7-9 – *“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether”*
  - 2 Cor. 6:4, 7 – *“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God...by the word of truth...”*
  - Eph. 6:14 – *“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”*
  - 3 John 4, 8 – *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth...We therefore ought to receive such (i.e. faithful evangelists & preachers), that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.”*
- b. **THE BIBLE STATES THAT IT IS A REPOSITORY OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH.**
  - John 17:17 – *“Sanctify them through the truth, Thy word is truth”*
  - 2 Tim. 2:15 – *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*
- c. **JESUS CHRIST CLAIMED TO BE THE VERY INCARNATION OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH.**
  - John 14:6 – *“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me.”*
- d. **JESUS CHRIST’S WORDS ARE ALSO DECLARED TO BE ABSOLUTE TRUTH.**
  - John 1:17 – *“Grace & truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”*
- e. **THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES INDIVIDUALS INTO ABSOLUTE TRUTH.**
  - John 14:16-17 – *“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but you know him; for he dwells with you...”*
  - John 16:12-13 – *“I (i.e. Christ) have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.”<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pp. 74-75.

<sup>16</sup> Note: All of this material is taken from my paper on postmodernism.-mwe