

Lux Center News



November 22, 2021

Thoughts on Truth: Catholic and Jewish Perspectives

Much thought has been given to the question, “What is truth?” The concept of truth has been debated in many areas including philosophy, art, science, law, journalism, and religion. The discussions can be wide-ranging and complex.

Simply defined, truth can be expressed as agreement with fact or reality or the state or character of being true. However, human truths have often been subject to interpretation. Is what I as an individual, with all of my cultural and personal biases that I believe to be true, the same as what you as an individual believe to be true? It is increasingly evident that truths are not always equal or even compatible.

Much background knowledge is required to answer these questions in a comprehensive way. And so, I offer a few quotes from Catholic and Jewish sources on the topic of truth for your own contemplation:

- The Catechism of the Catholic Church reads: “Truth as uprightness in human action and speech is called truthfulness, sincerity, or candor. Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and in guarding against duplicity.”
- A newsletter from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis stated, “The Bible teaches that God is the source of truth. Jesus not only taught the truth; he also said, “I am the truth” (cf. Jn 14:6). The Hebrew word for truth, *emeth*, refers both to truth in words and truthfulness in deeds. Jesus both personalized truth and spoke nothing but the truth.”
- Pope Francis recently spoke to journalists saying the following:

“Your mission is to explain the world, to make it less obscure, to make those who live in it less afraid of it and look at others with greater awareness, and also with more confidence. It is not an easy mission... This is why I encourage you to preserve and cultivate that sense of mission that is at the origin of your choice. And I will do so with three verbs that I believe characterize good journalism: listen, investigate and report... Thank you for your search for the truth, because only the truth sets us free.”

- In Judaism, deception is strictly forbidden, “The Holy One, blessed be He, hates a person which says one thing with his mouth and another in his heart.” [Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 113b]

- Philosopher and theologian, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel asked, “How does one ever encounter the truth? The truth is underground, hidden from the eye. Its nature and man’s condition are such that he can neither produce or invent it. However, there is a way. If you bury the lies, truth will spring up.” (p.22, *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence*)
- “For life to be livable, truth on earth cannot be what it is in heaven. Truth in heaven may be platonic – eternal, harmonious, radiant. But man cannot aspire to such truth, and if he does, he will create conflict not peace. Men kill because they believe they possess the truth while their opponents are in error. In that case, says God, throwing truth to the ground, let human beings live by a different standard of truth, one that is human and thus conscious of its limitations. Truth on the ground is multiple, partial. Fragments of it lie everywhere. Each person, culture and language has part of it; none has it all. Truth on earth is not, nor can it aspire to be, the whole truth. It is limited, not comprehensive; particular, not universal. When two propositions conflict it is not necessarily because one is true the other false. It may be, and often is, that each represents a different perspective on reality, an alternative way of structuring order. In heaven there is truth; on earth there are truths. Therefore, each culture has something to contribute.” (Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, former chief rabbi of Great Britain, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. 64-65)



Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel: Visions of the Hebrew Prophets
 December 1, 7:00-8:15 p.m. CST: Rabbi Noah Chertkoff

Learn more and register:

shsst.edu/lux-events

COMING SOON--WINTER SESSIONS

Online and In-Person

Registration Opens Soon--Watch the Lux Center Website

Why Catholics Need to Know about the Holocaust: Implications for Today's World

JAN. 19, 7:00-8:15 pm CST: *Tim Crain, Ph.D.*

Jews, Jesus and the Jerusalem Temple

JAN. 26, 7:00-8:15 pm CST: *Malka Z. Simkovich, Ph.D*

Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia presents "The Bible and the Believer: How to Read the Bible Critically"

**Watch this Webinar with a Jewish, a Protestant and
a Catholic scholar featuring Marc Zvi Brettler, Peter
Ens and Mark S. Smith.**

https://www.kaltura.com/index.php/extwidget/preview/partner_id/763372/uiconf_id/41810431/entry_id/1_wpnbb9h0/embed/dynamic?

In Response to the November 21st Tragedy in Waukesha, Wisconsin

Dear SHSST Community and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee,

On behalf of the Lux Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology, I express my deep distress upon learning of the senseless act of violence that occurred in Waukesha last evening. This senseless act of violence occurred at an event that was meant to begin the celebration of the Christmas season, among the holiest of times celebrated by the Christian community.

We pray for the healing of those who were injured and for those who witnessed this tragic event, as well as prayers for the families who have lost loved ones. Specific thoughts and prayers go to those children and their families who attend Catholic Memorial High School in Waukesha and our brothers and sisters who are members of Catholic parishes in the area. We pray for the speedy healing of the priests who were also injured.

It is with broken hearts that we address the growing expressions of violence and of hatred in our community and our world. May God shelter us under God's wings of peace, may light overtake the darkness, and may expressions of love reign over all.

In Peace, B'shalom,
Bonnie Shafrin