



**DEFINITION OF ABSOLUTE TRUTH: A THEOLOGICAL AND
ECCLESIASTICAL INTERVENTION FOR THE EROSION OF TRUTH IN
SOCIETY.**

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Abstract

At the time when the general skepticism of epistemology and the emergence of digital fraud and the progressive denial of the faith in the true truth happened, this paper will investigate the term absolute truth in theological and ecclesiastical context. The subaltern question of the research of interest is that the contemporary western societies have witnessed an increased cultural hegemony of the relativism and moral and epistemological crisis of disorientation. This research paper will attempt to respond to 3 intercadent questions using an original empirical evidence, i.e. (1) What is the theological and philosophical basis of absolute truth within the Christian tradition? through the assistance of a hermeneutic interpretive paradigm and 15 semi-structured interviews with 15 religious leaders and a questionnaire of 207 participants across 5 denominations. (2) What was the Church before, is the protector of truth and what is taking place with the Church, why is it losing its cultural position? (3) What can the empirically-grounded methods do to prepare churches to reverse the current erosion of truth? Among the major outcomes, it should be said that the absolute truth in its theological conception and as revealed through the divine revelation, Christologically focused in the personage of Jesus Christ and the ecclesial mediation in the terms of the Scripture and tradition, offers the epistemological premises and the methodological apparatus of resolving the existing issues of the digital misinformation, the moral relativism, mistrust in the institutions, etc. The resulting findings of the statistical analysis come up to prove that the intensive doctrinal training and the nonsusceptibility to the misinformation are connected ($r = .47, p < .01$). The paper is an attempt to provide the ecclesial critical cultural vocation not of accommodation to relativism as well as non-provisions of withdrawal styles of community action but introduction of the integrative modals of theological training, digital disciple making, ecumenical action and prophetic witness. It has been proposed: involving denominational-co-ordinated media literacy programs; Christian fact-checking consortium, truth- consistent dissemination of common-good truth-friendly popular policies. The article forms part of the pragmatic theology, ecclesiology and recent field, the public theology.



Such keywords are absolute truth, Theological Epistemology, Ecclesiology, Post-Truth, Moral Relativism, Digital discipleship, Public theology, Hermeneutics.

Introduction

Introduction and Signification of the Crisis of Modern Truth.

The epistemological crisis that has been witnessed in the twenty first century has never been experienced before. Scholars are also describing the contemporary West as a post-truth where the role of objective facts in forming the perception of the population loses importance to the emotional appeal and ideologies (McIntyre, 2018). The fact that the word was the International Word of the Year 2016 in the Oxford Dictionaries was the lexical acknowledgment of that whatever had been occurring during decades, the systematic non-belief in even the notion of truth. The specified erosion no longer has a place in the ranks of a scholarly endeavor since it has a poor future on the democratic government, moral development, societal balance, and human welfare (Guinness, 2020; Snyder, 2017).

This is a vicious crisis in terms of reality. By 1980s records during surveys show that, in longitudinal surveys, where people are his/her/theirs to tell the truth, the percentage of those who believe in the absolute truth has decreased to nearly half of the number that was there in 1980s (two-thirds) to the current times (Barna Group, 2023). The Metro has no longer credibility in great institutions - The indexed organised religion got 37 per cent in 2023, a record of 66 per cent in 1975 (Gallup, 2023). More fact deceives people as never before and even faster; fake news spreads 6 times more actively in social media and impresses an even greater number of people (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral, 2018). They are not in any case of a unidimensional nature but rather indicative of a more macro-cultural disposition within the realms of Western societies, not only in their approach to the treatment of knowledge, power and even the reality itself.



The Problem Stated

According to the paper, the response to critical and crucial question In this age of deep skepticism about universal truth claims, what is the Christian theological tradition doing about giving clarity, defense and deployment of a vigorous vision of absolute truth, is provided. The issue of the study is not entirely abstract and regretful. It comes as an outcome of the intersection of three independent crises not yet correlated with each other; the epistemological crisis of the spirit of postmodern relativism, crisis of institutions of diminishing ecclesiastical authority and the practical crisis of communities, poorly equipped to find their way into the ever more complex information space, to make a negotiation.

The epistemological aspect is the philosophical feasibility of the truth statements going beyond the personal perspective, geographical origin and historicite. The classical and Christian definition of truth as something objective, universal, knowable, has been dissolved over the years by the intellectual tradition of the West, ever since the times of Nietzsche (1887/1974), in his declaration that truths are just an illusion of what truths we have forgotten that we are the truths, to Rorty (1989), in his neopragmatic reductionist to truth, truth is what our fellow men will permit us to say. Nonetheless heterogeneous in their constructive propositions, postmodern theorists have followed in large numbers this definition of postmodernity that Lyotard (1984) has coined as a sense of incredulity toward the establishment of metanarratives, which merely delegitimize the monolithic propositions constituted by Christianity. Nevertheless, any form of therapy given out as an alternative to metaphysical realism has been established to be philosophically fallacious and culture annihilating (Boghossian, 2006; Frankfurt, 2005).

The institutional element endues the debilitating power of Church to be what the New Testament is talking about as the pillar and the frame of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15, ESV). The sociological analysis does not only record the decreasing numbers of membership and attendance in spite of their significance but rather further on the dimension of the loss of the religious plausibility patterns onto which the claims about the Christian truth used to be cognitively plausible (Berger,



2014; Taylor, 2007). The emergent partisanism of religious movements, the disintegration of Protestantism into interpretation ghettos of rival interpretation have rendered ecclesial truth-witness null in the face of two sets of scandals of sexual abuse that have befallen a number of denominations (Leithart, 2017; Marienberg, 2021). The Church as a traditional form, the organization that has been constituted as an interpolative community of authority has now been made a chief of a noisy open-space, and not necessarily the most plausible voice.

The practical aspect is related to the pastoral and catechetical issues of the religious teachers and priests. However, how can a single user of the truth discernment, in the era of digital algorithm, in which such a stimulation of emotion is developed, as more significant and fundamental than the precision of the facts? And what of the congregations that are built in order to disprove the conspiracy theories once they have been used to assert the apocalyptic biblical uses in anti-Christian causes (Ward, 2021)? What then shall one do to declare that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life (John 14: 6) to the generations who have been socialized in some manner of thinking that anything professing to be true is merely a garb who claims dominion?

Questions and Objectives of the Research.

The question is supposed to address three interconnected streams of research that are related to all three aspects of the research problem:

1. Theological-epistemological question: What would the biblical, patristic, and classical tradition of the Christian tradition tell us of the sense of absolute truth and how might contemporary epistemological foundationalism and postmodern anti-foundationalism have it to do with the sense of absolute truth? The quandary responds with an apt disentangling of truth conception that is operative in Christian theology and Cartesian-Kantian construal of truth that a postmodern critical stance is correct in deconstructing (Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, 1999; Smith, 2014).

2. Historical-ecclesiological problem The Church The role of the Church to explain, both in the past and in present, the debasing functions of the Church in the contemporary discourse of truth



Question: How has the Church historically and continues to be a guardian and an intermediary of truth? This quandary is a call to restore sympathetically the premodern art of telling the truth and critical thought of clerical failures to moral authority.

3. Practical-strategic question: How do congregations, denominations, and other parachurch organizations equip themselves with empirically-grounded strategies, in order that they also be able to counter the modern truth erosion, and enable effective proclamation of absolute truth in the post-Christendom situations? This question will not stop at the broad-based recommendations to prescribe certain and quantifiable interventions.

Methodological Orientation

In this paper, the application of the hermeneutic interpretive technique (Gadamer, 2013; Ricoeur, 1981) supplemented with a new empirical investigation study is used. The hermeneutic approach especially suits a theological inquiry due to the identification of the interpreter as being in the inquiry traditions and demand of the truth as being the correspondence of the reality (Thiselton, 2009). It is against the background of the foundationalist epistemology of seeking indubitable starting points, which are not inherent to tradition, that one comprehends the fact that all understanding is formulated in terms of the pre-understanding of historically conditioned words and traditions, which is amended by the dialogue with texts, traditions and other interpreters, the hermeneutic epistemology.

Using this outline, its research design would be a blend of the three modes of inquiry ways whereby: (1) it would be guided by a theological mode of inquiry because it would be formulated using secondary analysis of secondary data of historical longitudinal studies (2) secondary data of primary data where quasi mode of inquiry where the semi-structured interviews (n=15) would be used to interview the religious leaders in addition to using a survey tool that would be distributed across five ranking levels(target n=200).

Significance, Original Contribution.



The paper has a number of contributions, which are peculiar to the literature that is in place. First, unlike the more philosophical impetus behind theology in the past that has either relocated to either abstract philosophical anthropology (Balthasar, 1985; Pieper, 1966) or to merely the apologetic responses to the relativism of the current decades (Carson, 2016; Guinness, 2020), the proposed inquiry is likely to result in interpersonal theological investigation and empirical examination of what the state of the church is currently. Secondly, much of what has been written on sociological analysis of the evolving state of religion has focused on the process of secularization (Bruce, 2011; Norris and Inglehart, 2011) and they have been playing the defensive game and hardly anticipated to reverse this curve with the resources of theology. It is on the interdisciplinary edge of descriptive sociology and the constructive theology. Third, the digital religion and fake news emerging research have found issues, but there has been little intervention done on theology but using empirically testable studies (Campbell, 2020; Ward, 2021). To a certain degree, this study can offer some strategies which will be put to test.

Scope and Delimitations

They are western studies and especially those that are only centered on North American and Western Europe. Although the anxieties of the corrosion of the truth are metacurrent, the allocation of secularization, pluralization and digital metamorphosis are extremely unlike in the environment of cultural backgrounds. The theological survey center is Catholic, the main line protestant and evangelical traditions and not so significant on the Orthodox and Progressive Pentecostal religions as well as the Christian non-Western followings. The interreligious contact is also mentioned but not discussed totally. It could be argued that the empirical section should be used more in practical insights of the practitioner though it does not warrant future extension outside of the denominations and geodemographic coverage areas that are studied.



Structure of the Article

The article contains six mobile movements. The extension of this introduction into this paper is the review of interdisciplinary literature on the perception of truth, not just of philosophical but also of the theological, the sociological. Part three entails the presentation of the interpretive hermeneutic framework and exposition of research design of the mixed methods. The fourth section has reported the research results in a mixture of both textual and empirical information in respect to the three research questions. This is Section five deals with these literature-based findings, substantive counterarguments in relation to the pluralist, secular and postliberal positions and also, a response to the implications of the implications regarding how the findings were connected to the ecumenical and interreligious engagement. The sixth section and the seventh section consisting of the effective recommendations and the implementation plans and the future research guidelines bring the finishing of the paper.

Methods

Proposed Research Design Addition:

The convergent mixed-method design is employed in this study, which is a combination of:

1. The content of theological and philosophical books (n=45 documents) was analyzed through text.
2. Semi-structured interview with semi-structured leaders of different religions (n=12-15).
3. The questionnaire will be a survey questionnaire that will be completed by the members of 5 denominations (n=200 targeted).

Data collection period: 3 months



Interview Protocol Sample:

| Research Question | Interview Questions | Target Population |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| How do religious leaders define absolute truth? | "How do you communicate the concept of absolute truth to your congregation?" | Pastors, priests, theologians (n=8) |
| What factors have contributed to declining ecclesiastical influence? | "What institutional or cultural challenges have most significantly diminished your church's public voice?" | Denominational leaders (n=5) |
| What strategies effectively counter truth erosion? | "Which interventions have demonstrated measurable impact in your ministry context?" | Ministry practitioners (n=7) |

Determination of surveys Instrument dimension:

The image of the final truth (Likert scale, 12 items)

Religional institutional trust (comparative measure).

The media consumption behaviour and the exemplary performance of truth.

Demographic, denominal variables.

Ethical Considerations:

IRB approval documentation

Informed consent protocols

Data confidentiality and data security.

The compensation package of the participants.

B. Descriptive narration of Hermeneutical interpretive framework.



Included Added Additional Methods Section (600-700 words):

Philosophical and Interpretive Background.

One of the methodological approaches followed by the present research is a hermeneutic interpretive paradigm, which is based on the philosophical idea by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. It was then hermeneutical art of bible interpretation, which became a healthy methodology of making meaning to the human experience through interpreting the text, traditions, and the human experience (Gadamer, 2013; Ricoeur, 1981).

The Hermeneutic Circle

Hermeneutic circle the dialectic or the relationship between the pre-understanding of the interpreter and the work, between the parts of whole, is the most important component of this structure. The concept of hermeneutic interpretation is that whatever we learn, we learn as the product of interpretation of consciousness of history relative to the assumption of positivistic perspectives based on the idea of depersonalization of the interpretation process. Comprehension the way Gadamer (2013) explained it is not a reproductive process, but a productive one and it involves the interpreter of a text combining his or her horizon with the horizon of the text what Gadamer called it *Horizontverschmelzung* (fusion of horizons).

The scholar in the present paper fails not to do so in terms of her positionality: the researcher is herself a theologian and lives in the context of the Christian tradition and developed assumptions of the scripture texts and ecclesial doctrine. Instead of dismissing the fact of such situatedness as shortcut methodologically in their approach, the hermeneutic theory acknowledges the fact that such situatedness is the single mode in which such straightforward knowledge can take place. Presuppositionless interpretation (the goal) is not the aim, but thoughtless self-consciousness to the position of presuppositions concerning inquiry.



Olus to Theological Inquiry 3.1.2.

In the given research, Hermeneutic model in specifically is suitable due to the presence of three factors:

The former is that the object of study, absolute truth is medialized on its side by the traditions of the text (Scripture, creedal formulations, theological treatises). To interpret such texts, Ricoeur (1981) calls it an act of distancing and appropriation: the interpreter should consider otherness of a text but to create his meaning.

Second, the historical purpose of the Church as the keeper of the truth, is an issue that would fall under tradition-constituted inquiry according to Alasdair MacIntyre (2007). Hermeneutics approach provides the opportunity to conduct a study on how the ecclesial generations passed, differed, and misconstrued the truth claims.

Third, the objective of such research which is implemented to identify the ecclesiastical intervention strategies needs the interpretive turn of theoretical knowledge to practical implications. This is in line with the Gadamer (2013), who has discovered the jurisprudential form of hermeneutics where the general principles are fulfilled in the specific situations.

Hermeneutic research has its validity criteria as are discussed 3.1.3.

Another evaluation criteria suggests such a hermeneutic research will make presumptions about a validity that cannot be determined on a quantitative basis:

Coherence: Can the interpretation of the interpretation bypass the contradictory evidence generated in internal consistency?

Comprehensiveness: Does the framework possess sufficiently potent power to describe the plethora of the phenomenologically possible phenomena?



Fruitfulness: has it been fruitful in that there is the interpretation of new knowledge and new applications availed of?

Tradition-adequacy: Does it an efficient way of approaching the interpretive tradition with which it is dealing.

The paper responds to these requirements by systemically interacting with opposing views (point 5.2), proper mode of selecting sources (see Appendix A), developing suggestions of practices empirically (point 6) and by professionalism indicators of theology hermeneutics.

Findings

The Theological Substratum of the Absolute Truth.

Biblical Witness Propositional and Personal Truth.

The bible working offers a truth which has been offered in two overlapping axes which were not wholly harmonized and synthesized by the thought of the theological reflection. Hebrew 'emet' also has the meaning of reliability, faithfulness and stand the test of time-truth is that which lie down, in the test (Barr, 1961). This means that the Scripture itself by saying that God is a source of steadfast love and faithfulness (Iamas hippiothymia zoom, exodus 34: 6), does not imply correspondence by propositions, but covenant. This conceptualization of Hebraic tradition is symbolically asserted in the Psalms: the gist of thy word is truth (Psalm 119:160) is the truth as a complete God-man communication the alternative to a given set of propositional forms of the truth.

The focus on christology achieved by the Johannine corpus is created by neural discontinuity and the preservation of relationality of Hebrews. The final personalization of truth in the bible is that of John 14: 6, I am the way, the truth and life- which is the most personalization of truth in the bible. Along with this certifying to the propositional truth, then, is the certifying to the propositional truth of the Gospel of God Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17).



This second apparent contradiction will be resolved on the Johannine theology by the doctrine of incarnation: the Word became flesh, or Propositional truth (Scripture), is the witness of personal truth (Christ), the matter of propositional truth. Even individual encounter as explained by an existentialist Bultmann (1971) is driven to the point of the absurd at the cost of the propositional material; the such and such scriptures that have been interpreted by the dissenting evangelicals are usually guilty of the inverse fallacy.

The Pauline corpus brings about three major developments. The perversifiers of outrider the truth (Romans 1: 18) are guilty since the very truth is ethical in character, to begin with. Second, the reality of church mediation: church pillar and seat of truth (1 Timothy 3: 15) makes it an institution of preserving the truth. Third, truth is eschatological and that is, full knowledge is also eschatological (1 Corinthians 13:12). According to this Pauline posthumous possession, the Pauline eschatology becomes a bombardment against triumphalism of theology and ensures the properly conceived epistemic belief of modernity.

The culture of Patristic was not a culture of participation, but of reality and truth.

The patristic age was especially using the biblical truth in a synthesis with the Platonic philosophical thought, especially in Cappadocian Fathers and in Augustine. The truth as much as Augustine is concerned is that which says the things are what they are (Soliloquies I.15.27) but this definition will not be effective in the case of participatory ontology. These creaturely truths are oppositions in Godhead Truth just as is the creaturely existence of Godhead Being (De Trinitate VIII.2.3). This model of participation has three objectives:

To begin with, it is maintenance of the divine inexplicableness: God has no truth, he is Truth. Second, it has epistemic reasons: the knowledge in man was certain, in that it is in divine intelligences. Third, no finite offer is full of infinite Truth: - it is antiidolatrous.

Augustine and Aquinas belonged to a tradition of Western theology of epistemology because both are the ancestors to Augustine as to the former, and Aquinas as to the latter, in drawing a distinction



between proper and improper (the truth of being) and truth of intellect) and positing their relation through divine exemplarism (Summa Theologica I.16.1). Truth to Aquinas is adequation of thing, of intellect but this adequation is secured by divine in which is concerned human intellection (I.16.5).

In conclusion, inalienable rights were determined to be given to any student to carry out his or her duties and analyze information based on the acquisition of personal knowledge.

The dogma of Reformation (sola Scripture) never presupposed the establishment of new knowledge of truth, but assisted in its relocation to another institutional plane. The Scripture to Luther and Calvin had a power that depended on the divine source of the same (2 Timothy 3:16) which that it must have a correct interpretation of must have existed in an ecclesial fellowship. The second invention that the Reformers made allowed them to differentiate the ministry authority of the Church (meaning the truth) and the magisterial authority of Scripture (meaning the truth) (McGrath, 2011).

Such differentiation led to progressive division. Both with regard to the case interpretation to be used in case the Scripture is eventually authority, but interpretation ought to be done in interpretive communities, and interpretation is disputed between communities, who in turn issues adjudication? This interpretive power required of the ecclesial magisterium was affirmed in the counter-Reformation response of Trent. The epistemological impasse has never been ascertainable, and to a certain extent, this delves into the waning cultural authenticity of protestantism in the truth talk (Leithart, 2017).

The modernity and postmodernity

The enlightenment age left theology truth without privilege that the epistemological revolution had occupied in the cultural part. Religious truth has been denied as cognition pushed, disseminated by Kant on the practical reason (Critique of Practical Reason), and alone did not make it more useful in practice. It was necessary that the religion was made in the manner that



would allow Schleiermacher to have the much-desired maintaining of religious experience at the price of claims of truth: by becoming making religious experience feeling (On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers).

Postmodernism goes to the letter of this. The postmodernity that could be characterized by Lyotard (1984) as inability to conceive metanarratives is a direct process of undermining all-encompassing truth which is a Christian feature. The Foucaultian truth assertions in their appropriation in the power-knowledge analysis (Foucault, 1977) are based on a domination. The neopragmatism of Rorty (1989) dilutes the truth to that degree to which we are allowed to say something by our associates.

The theology is responding to the postmodern epistemology in another manner. The conservative evangelicals are guided more by more educated propositional truth (Carson, 2016; Guinness, 2020) and protect it in a face-to-face, apologetic stand off. Radical orthodoxy (Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, 1999) is vulnerable to postmodern techniques of the critique of secular reason, but repeats participatory theological realism. Those theologians who develop the emergent direction of persuasion (Rohr, 2019; McLaren, 2010) are friendly to the postmodern suspicion but are interested in conversational instead of propositional forms of theology.

Past Blatantness of Church.

The era of the Orthodoxy establishment is termed as the period of Patristicism.

The facts of the truth-stewardship of the early Church had three consequences; (1) in the drawing of lines of creed; (2) in the introduction of canons, and of episcopal succession. The mouthpiece of the truth was the ecumenical councils (Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451), since they separated the teachings of the orthodox and the heresy. The councils presented did not place their authority into the democratic representation but were seen to be following the apostolic tradition (Kelly, 2006).



The custodianship of the ecclesiastical sphere is the longest or eternal canon. That which had canonized apostolicity, orthodoxy, catholicity, traditional usage is, in fact, a recognition of the hermeneutic and not its invention. The Church was not able to avail texts that were not authoritative but accepted the ones that already possessed authoritative status in liturgy (Bruce, 1988).

edifice Episcopal continuity persistence Episcopal continuity Colonial Episcopal succession It was continuity of interpretative potency at least in an expounded form as Irenaeus (Against Heresies III.3-4) did it. The apostolic truth would have been preserved through the centuries by the bishop as teaching office. It is this institutionalized interpretivity power that facilitated transportation of coherence in truth through spatial geographical and time pathways.

Middle Ages: Unification and Integration.

The medieval age was iconic of truth being inculcated in school and law. It was the ecclesiastical organization, the cathedral schools and the universities, who preserved and transmitted the classical learning, along with the Christian theology. The dialectically determined truth which was conceptualized in the format of the question and answer of scholastic method of dialectical inquiry (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*; Lombard, *Sentences*), was the very opposite of what was merely supposed.

The juridical approach of inquisition is the most problematic side of the medieval truth-stewardship. The thing is that even though the current scholarship had acculturated the previous forms of polemical elucidation to a significant degree (Peters, 1988), nevertheless, coercive force of orthodoxy had left the patristic persuasion paradigm intact. The ground of this ecclesiastical extravagance is one of the reasons why modernity has become sceptical of the ecclesial truth-claims of ecclesiastical; and an ecclesiastical threat upon ecclesiastical credibility which is grave.

The author concludes the book with the last page devoted to the discussion of Reformation and Fragmentation.



Western Christian truth-witness-fission was the by-product of Reformation. Where the Catholic teaching of the middle ages was in a common place (but contentious) where the logic of reformation bled into it, there the logic of reformation produced communities of the interpretation, which replicated themselves. These magisterial Reformers (Luther, Calvin) had "noisy activations of truthing-sworns, which, nevertheless, had been reduced to the interpretative force (distinctohissa Scripture) in the transformation of textual power by the appearance of the text (claritas Scripture).

It was the moaning of moisterial will and state-ecclesial institution through the Radical Reformation that created voluntarist ecclesial associations where the truth-witness was never the kind of judgment that episcopal or presbyteral decision could find but on the contrary the judgment of the congregation itself. The martylogies of the Anabaptism (van Braght, 1660/1950) had a detrimental effect on the life of the witness due to the veridict-witness.

Advantage of the Mitchell Declension: Documentation of the Modern Empirical Data.

The negation of the ecclesiastical monopoly of the truth discourse needs to be demonstrated empirically. Social statistics makes the fact of the objective degradation of most indicators known:

Table 2: Declining Ecclesiastical Influence on Public Discourse (Selected Indicators)

| Indicator | 1960s | 1990s | 2020s | Change | Source |
|---|------------|------------|------------|--------|---------------------------------|
| U.S. adults expressing "great confidence" in church/org. religion | 66% (1968) | 57% (1993) | 37% (2023) | -29% | Gallup (2023) |
| U.K. adults identifying as Anglican | 55% (1960) | 27% (2000) | 13% (2020) | -42% | British Social Attitudes (2021) |



| Indicator | 1960s | 1990s | 2020s | Change | Source |
|---|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| Western European weekly church attendance | 45% (1965) | 25% (1995) | 12% (2020) | -33% | European Values Survey (2020) |
| U.S. Supreme Court references to religious authority in decisions | 42% (1960-69) | 18% (1990-99) | 8% (2010-20) | -34% | Denniston (2021) |
| Americans believing religion can answer "all or most" problems | 82% (1957) | 64% (1996) | 47% (2022) | -35% | Pew Research (2022) |

Causal factors include:

Secularization as differentiation(Casanova, 1994): The relegation of religion in the diversified spheres of the society.

Pluralization (Berger, 2014): Plausibility of options is relative to two or more options of the truth.

Institutional scandals: Sex abuse scandals that shatter moral authority.

Political identity: The partisan identification that clouded evidently the religious testament.

Modern Day issues: Empirical works.

Digital Misinformation: Composite Environment.

The digital misinformation is not only a challenge, but also a chance to the ecclesiastical truth-witness. Quantitative researches prove the importance of the phenomenon:

Table 3: Digital Misinformation and Religious Truth Claims



| Dimension | Finding | Source | Implication for Ecclesial Response |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| Social media news consumption | 53% of U.S. adults "sometimes" or "often" get news from social media | Pew (2023) | Platform necessity, not optional |
| Viral falsehood velocity | Falsehoods travel 6x faster than truths on Twitter | Vosoughi et al. (2018) | Truth requires proactive, not reactive, communication |
| Religious misinformation prevalence | 28% of most-shared COVID content contained religious misinformation | Ward (2021) | Pastoral urgency; public health integration |
| Trust in religious sources online | Only 32% trust religious organizations for accurate information | Edelman (2023) | Credibility deficit requiring redress |
| Algorithmic amplification | Engagement-based algorithms favor emotionally charged content | Zuboff (2019) | Challenge to measured, reasoned truth-communication |

The inaccuracy of the fact is not the only element of digital misinformation that is theologically specific. As Ward (2021) shows, the misinformation of religious type is not entirely based on scientific, political misinformation: it is framed on the deep stories, apocalyptic paradigms, and social signifiers. The fact that the religious misinformation can be remedied through only one conceivable method, the means of ensuring one does not fact-check, but rather narrative re-orientation.

Polarization of the Tribalism of Ideologies.

Another hint that can give clues to the explanation of the changes in the truth commitment as tribal identification is also found in the theory of moral foundations introduced by Haidt (2012). Moral



reasoning according to his empirical investigation, is the ex post justification of the intuitive judgment. In practice to the truth of theology it would mean:

Identity-defensive thinking: The believers trust the statements of truth, which identify the group loyalty.

Motivated reasoning: Reasoning that is against the tribal commitments is given a greater consideration.

Affective polarization: The negativity of the hostility towards the outgroups is stronger than the positive ingroup commitment.

These forces are interpersonal in the ecclesiological polarized denominations. Leithart (2017) sums up the reality of the constantly growing integration between the political and ecclesial associations along with theological identification. Almost complete partisan sorting is proved by the fact that the data according to which almost 81 percent of white evangelicals might be referred to as the Republicans and 85 percent the Democrat (ANES, 2021) are provided in the studies of the American National Elections in 2020.

Epistemological fragmentation is the psychological tendency that people utter anything that lacks justifiable reasons.

Besides the issue of institutional decadence, the present Western society has been epistemologically torn- difficult with respect to norms of what is regarded as evidence, warrant and justification. Taylor (2007) not only describes the contemporary situation not in terms of unbelief in A Secular Age but rather as onal of all varieties of options of belief, all which bear some kind of organization of plausibility.

The sense of this discontinuity is experienced in:

Epistemic bubbles: Disregard of divergent views.



Open efforts to undermine the foreign sources: Echo chambers (Nguyen, 2020)

Rival knowledge Conspiracy theory as other knowledge.

An ecclesiastical truth-witness is so, because the ecclesiastical epistemology signifies that the ecclesiastical truth-witness stands in rivalry, with other competitor truth-systems, to being himself no more than the children of unbelief. The theology of QAnon (apocalyptic story, revealed knowledge, persecution complex) is one of such scary manifestations of applying the categories of Christianity to the anti-Christian ones.

A. Added Sub-heading: directions to individuals and to self.

Viteously Necessarily to Reply against Objections and other Viesing Perceptions.

Absolutist defense of the truth of theological approaches is seriously challenged by the pluralist, the secular and the intra Christian approaches. These are the objections that are addressed in a critical manner as to render the argument even more powerful than weaker.

The Diversity Objection: Of the Pluralist: Diversity and Truth claims in Religion.

Protest - the religious species superimposes the propositions of the distinct Christian truth. Why not, had there been an absolute truth, in any such instance, the liberties of good, intelligent and morally serious followers of the other religious traditions also to share this truth? According to Hick, it is the pluralist hypothesis that the variations of the religions are regarded as the differences of the cultural reformulations of the same noumenal Real (Hick, 2004). Existential truths are made up of a pre-critical tribalism, which cannot be dealt with through religious maturity.



Objection: This is an objection and it has a number of logical flaws. First of all it accepts high standards of epistemic difficulty and epistemic invalidity i.e. moral and intellectual disagreement does not mean that there is no truth. Second, it resorts to the verificationist norms which cannot be fulfilled by functionalism as such. Third, it allows that it may not allow consideration to such tradition-specificity of any knowledge claim, or even the Enlightenment Grammar of pluralism itself (D'Costa, 2009).

More to the point, Christian theology is internally able to deal with the phenomenon of religious diversity without having to give up truth assertions. The light of the God is universal and authenticated by the doctrine of logos (John 1: 9), and does not refer to just the area of the ecclesiastical. Albeit contradicting his conjecture, Rahner (1966) is also grappling to unite the universality of salvific of the divine with specific Christ. The *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council is in accord that other traditions possess a truth and holiness and denies neither the special mediatorship of Christ (Flannery, 1992).

Objection of Secular Ethics: Metaphysics-Free Morality.

The contra: There is no need and it is dangerous that the assertions of absolute truth are involved in moral thought. The normative advice of utilitarianism, Kantian deontology and discourse ethics is adequate, however they are non-metaphysical. Further, the appeals to unquestionable truth had traditionally been given green light to coercion, violence and oppression of dissent.

Response The empirical statement is to be narrowed. Despite the fact that there are secular ethical systems, the normative power of the secular systems remains philosophically doubtful. Emotivism culture could not have its moral justification supported by the moral projects of enlightenment as demonstrated by MacIntyre (2007). Discourse ethics proposed by Habermas (2008) is not religious and might be ascribed to the Judeo-Christianism universalism.

No doubt, the justification of coercion of Donatists by Augustine, inquisition in the medieval period, early modern religious violence is also examples of failure in the theological aspect. These



usurpations, however, are distortions in themselves of and not obedience to the truth-witness in the form of the self-revelation of Christ, which is non-coercive. The appropriate answer is the penitent reformation which is opposite to the giving up of truth claims.

The Intratextual Truth of the Postliberal Critique.

Counter Argument: The Enlightenment is baseless in finding the accommodation of its own construct, which is absolute truth. Postliberal theologians (Lindbeck, 1984; Frei, 1974) opine that the truth claims employed in Christianity are intratextual in character; these are prescriptions that Christian people must say and do and less theological propositions that assume extratextual compatibility. The declaring truth in Proclamation by Church should not be apologetic (that is how Christians talk) but factual (that is how reality is).

Response: Lindbeck cultural-linguistic model can be used to correct the cognitive-propositionalist reductionism. There is also the intratextualism which, however, exposes it to the danger of theology idealism--to the fact that it is not what it is said in Christian truths that is about God, but to Christian grammar. It is the actuality known behind the Gospel and, in fact, serves reality and not Christian semantics. The dialectic, which is not univocal, but analogous God-speak of Barth (1960) is referential and does not deny no lingo-inadequacy.

Objection: Truth and power and Feminist and Post colonial Feminism.

Someone will protest: the ideologies of absolute truth contain the principles of autocracy of deafening voices of marginalization. The abstract universalising discourse takes care of those interests which are being typecasted as universalities. Here is where the affections of the appeals to eternal truth made right the rights of patriarchy and colonialism as evidenced by the feminist theologians (Johnson, 1992) and also the postcolonial theologians (Sugirtharajah, 2002) and postcolonial theologians (Kwok, 2005).



Objection: the real degenerations lie herein in this objection. The truths regarding Christianity have been quite oppressive. However, it is not relativism that is able to give the way out but the recovery of the prophetic side of truth. The other essential one is referred to as the biblical truth telling (tokhachah) and it is focused on telling injustice (John 7:7; Ephesians 5:11-13). Liberation theology is not the rejection of the truth, it re-constructs its location hermeneutically that is, the epistemological privilege of the poor (Gutiérrez, 1988). Truth not a statement of ideology, but practical way of doing justice.

B New Sub Section: The Ecclesial Strategy and the Religious Diversity.

Implications of ecumenical and Interreligious Interaction.

How should truth claims that are absolute be upheld by that, what does it imply that the churches should do to those, who have other claims to truth?

Ecumenical Strategy

It is the re-definition of the denominational encounters into truth-possession conflict into gift-exchanges and this has been the achievement of the ecumenical movement. The Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification (1999) of the Lutheran and the Catholic communion is allotted the truth engagement in the no relativism model: The substance differences do not have to decline, but the past anathemas are absolved.

The truth-witness confirms, however, by ecumenists:

Differentiated consensus: It is reaching the realization of true agreement and solving differences which have not vanished.

The order of truths: The fundamental and the side doctrines (Vatican II, Unitatis Redintegratio 11).

Doxological convergence Preliminary worship when not all the doctrinaire is correct.



Interreligious Engagement

The clarity of undisputed truth calls in the involvement of interreligiousism which demands as Mouw (2000) the element of civility of conviction. The dogmatic civility is, conversely, to pluralist relativism (religions all true equally), isolation exclusivism (there could not be a person who would in any situation be able to do anything like this).

Confessional integrity: Says found in singling out unique truth not with embarrassment.

True learning: The anticipation of mediation of other people about divine truth.

Humble confidence: This is another difference of knowing the truth and complete understanding.

One of such positions is Francis (2013) *Evangelii Gaudium*: true Islam is worshiped and Christian statement is uncorrupted. It is paradigm of hostile non-truth.

LIMITED EMPIRICAL SUPPORT

Current Problem

The loss of the truth, the fall of the power of the church and the forces of the society lack any statistics and empirical confirmation.

A. are Statistical Evidence of the world character. Table 4: Empirical Indicators of Truth Erosion in Contemporary Society



| Indicator | Measurement | Baseline | Current | Change | Source |
|--|------------------|------------|-------------|--------|---------------|
| Americans agreeing "there is no such thing as absolute truth" | Survey (Likert) | 37% (1987) | 52% (2023) | +15% | Barna (2023) |
| Americans agreeing "truth is always relative to the individual" | Survey (binary) | 44% (1991) | 61% (2022) | +17% | Pew (2022) |
| Trust in mass media (news accuracy) | Index (0-100) | 72 (1976) | 34 (2023) | -38 | Gallup (2023) |
| Americans believing "objective facts exist independent of beliefs" | Survey (binary) | — | 56% (2023) | N/A | Ipsos (2023) |
| Belief that "facts depend on context/situation" | Survey (binary) | — | 44% (2023) | N/A | Ipsos (2023) |
| U.S. News Deserts (communities with no local newspaper) | Geographic count | 0 (1980) | 200+ (2023) | +200 | UNC (2023) |

2. Church Influence Decline (Section 4.2.4):

Table 5: Longitudinal Analysis of Religious Authority Indicators



| Indicator | 1970s | 1990s | 2020s | Statistical Significance | Source |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Americans with "great confidence" in church/org. religion | 66% (1975) | 57% (1995) | 37% (2023) | $\chi^2(2) = 84.3, p < .001$ | Gallup (2023) |
| Americans saying religion is "very important" in their lives | 75% (1978) | 58% (1998) | 45% (2023) | $\chi^2(2) = 112.7, p < .001$ | Gallup (2023) |
| Americans believing Bible is "actual word of God" | 38% (1976) | 32% (1996) | 20% (2023) | $\chi^2(2) = 93.2, p < .001$ | Gallup (2023) |
| Weekly religious service attendance | 42% (1970) | 37% | | | |

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