

Fake News v Good News

In our digital age, it can be a little risky when writing for a monthly publication such as “Crosstalk” to go for a lead article on a current discussion or event, but a fairly safe bet is the topic of “Fake News”. What actually inspired me was a satirical comedy show on the radio that was spoofing current affairs. In this, a journalist was reporting on a piece of research carried out by scientists (how my heart sinks when I hear on the news, “Scientists say...”) which proved conclusively that *everybody* hates oranges – including the people who like them.

At the end of the journalist’s item, she made a 'chance' remark that at least oranges hadn't been "proven to be harmful to health". Cut to a (spoof) studio follow-up interview where one of the debaters had been using her mobile phone to go on-line during the introduction, and she had noticed that a journalist had just denied that oranges were dangerous. This proved conclusively in her mind that (a) oranges *were* dangerous and (b) there was a massive media and government cover-up, which needed to be exposed. In the meantime, she was adamant that all oranges should forthwith be banned on the grounds of public health.

It made sense to me at the time as an amusing piece of satire. I would also like to make a reassuring disclaimer and reiterate that oranges are in fact tasty, healthy, nutritious and harmless, unless consumed in ridiculous excess or thrown very hard at your head.

As Christians, we believe in truth, in the one true God and that Jesus is the way, the truth and the light. And yet, how can we hold onto this, let alone convince others in a world where news is “fake”, where contradictory options are considered equally valid, and where a “fact” is becoming a personal opinion rather than a statement of something that is so?

At this point, it’s time for the good old Common Sense Check. So, consider the statement, “The sun always shines”. Is this true or false? First, there is the subjective view. Much of this article is being written on a wet Bank Holiday Sunday in Wales. Subjectively, therefore – no, it most certainly doesn’t always shine.

Secondly, there is the **metaphorical** view. You could argue that a good life-philosophy is, always to look on the bright side. “The sun always shines” then becomes a philosophical ideal to achieve; something which expresses a truth without needing to be literally true.

Finally, there is the **objective** view. Behind the clouds, the sun is indeed always shining. It never stops, and if it were to stop, it would mean darkness, cold and the end of all life on earth.

There is nothing wrong with any of these ways of looking at things. The problems arise when you try and confuse them and mix and match your arguments.

So, back to Jesus. Yes, people can follow Jesus’ ways, ideals and teachings without believing He is the Son of God. Yes, you can argue that Christians have many ways of looking at things and there is much in our faith that is subjective and personal to us as individuals (and praise God for that!). But, take away the basic truths that God loves us, wants us to be His children and came as Jesus to die on a cross for you and me so that we might be with Him, and then everything is lost and all you are left with is darkness, cold and the end of all life on earth.

So, here’s to truth and facts and common sense. Always question, always think for yourself and, in humility, bear in mind that being sure of something is in itself no guarantee of its being true. But also remember that a fact is a fact is a fact and remains true, however you

look at it.

Jesus said, “If you hold on to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”.

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