

## Editorial



### POST-TRUTH: EMPIRE OF DECEIT?

It could be that not everyone knows this word but we all are under its influence. What is the meaning of post truth? It refers to that tendency that questions the truth from the facts. According to the Oxford Dictionary, "facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief"[1]. In other words, emotions and beliefs are more trustable than reality. This phenomenon is gaining notoriety on the internet and the media. Philosopher AC Grayling states that in the post-truth era "Everything is relativistic... there is no such thing as truth anymore". In this context, people's opinions are more valuable than objective facts[2].

Fake news are part of the post-truth era. These are "news that are not real or have been taken out of context" and these influence the people's mind at election time or to make money.[3] It is difficult to discern them

the truth. Some state that "unlike lies in general, they have behind them a powerful media and propagandistic system that supports them and will do everything possible to make this fallacies appear to explain reality or, at least, that they do not appear to be lies".[4] For example, affirming that global warming is a myth or that covid-19 vaccines are the mark of the antichrist. Grayling emphasizes that the problem we face is an online culture incapable of distinguishing fact from fiction. Fake news is "corrosive to our public conversation and to our democracy"; it is a culture where a few claims on Twitter carry the same power as a library full of research[5].

Facing this crossroads we ask, Do we, Christians, discern truth from untruth? Do we bet on the truth? Knowledge of the gospel and reality is essential in this process in order to unmask lies. Jesus' polemic with newly converted Jews sheds light on the matter. (Jn.8:31-59 NRSV). To those who "believed" in him, he made the following demand: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." He demanded submission to his teachings. His word will make them free from the slavery of sin. How did they react? Outraged they affirmed: "we are Abraham 's descendants, and have never been slaves to anyone; how can you say you will be free? (Jn. 8:31-59). In their allegation they incurred in a triple contradiction.

First of all, they objected that they had never been slaves of anyone. In their anger they denied the facts: They were slaves in Egypt, Syria, Babylone and were subjugated by Rome. They thought that Jesus was referring to political slavery, but they did not understand that he was alluding to the slavery of sin. There he emphasized, "everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin". Their problem was spiritual, moral and political. Defending themselves, they put their beliefs before the objectivity of the facts. They were political slaves and they were also slaves to sin but they did not recognize it.

Second, Jesus questioned their claim to be Abraham 's children. He did not question their blood lineage but their attitude. It did not resemble the attitude of the patriarch Abraham. He said that, if they were Abraham 's children, his works they would do, but they were trying to kill him. (v.39,40). He did not deny their genetic identity, but he questioned their ethical loyalty (Slade,1998: 172). He pointed out that Abraham rejoiced and loved his coming into the world, but they rejected his messiahship, his words had no place in their hearts and they were seeking to eliminate him. He disproved their position and exposed the inconsistency of their words and deeds.

Third, Jesus emphasized that he spoke what he had seen about his Father, but the Jews did what they had heard from their father [the devil] (v.38). His plea raised their anger. They claimed: "We are not born of fornication; we have one father, who is God". They insinuated that he was an illegitimate son, but they were children of God. Jesus categorically affirmed: "If your father were God, you would certainly love me". However, their rejection of him as the one sent by the Father, showed that God was not their Father. Therefore he said to them: "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires... because there is no truth in him..." (v.44). What was their final reaction? They wanted to stone him (59). They not only rejected him but together with the religious leadership condemned him to death.

What does Jesus teach in this story? To be categorical in the face of lies. There are not half-truths. We are either on the side of truth or on the side of lies. The objectivity of the facts is the criteria, not personal beliefs that define truth. Truth only resides in the gospel and demands faithfulness. The Jews in the story were named believers: "although they began with some sort of commitment with Jesus, at the end this commitment was revealed to be subordinated to other interests" (Ibid. Slade:177). Their beliefs prevailed over the truth. Christians today are called to differentiate the objectivity of the facts of every belief or tradition. We must unmask those who teach lies by saying things to appear to be true (Lk.12:1 ERV). It implies that we uncover the lie that hides, falsifies and evades the truth, whether in the social, political or religious sphere.

Some years ago the Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz stated that political lies that were installed in Latin America 500 years ago, has shaped the State institutions and have done us much harm (1976); Hannah Arendt pointed out that "Freedom of opinion is a farce if objective information is not guaranteed and the facts themselves are not accepted";[6] Vargas Llosa stresses that publicity is... the tool of power and manipulation of the public opinion in both democratic and authoritarian societies" (2019:16); Gandhi criticized christianity stating: "I like your Christ, but I do not like your Christians". He did not perceive in them the coherence of life between their beliefs and their practice.

The empire of deceit will grow if we do not stand for the truth. Orwell stated, "the idea of the objective truth is disappearing in the world... ". And then he remarks, "the lie will have become truth".[7] In post-truth, "whether something appears to be truth is more important than the truth itself". Our challenge is to imitate the believers at Berea. After listening to Paul, they search the Scriptures to verify if what he said was in accordance with the truth (Acts 17:11). They warn us about the danger of putting our personal beliefs before the truth of the Scriptures and the objectivity of the facts.

The Bible does not cover the use of lies since the Garden of Eden and underlines the place of truth. It affirms that God is a "God of truth"; His "words are truth", and he "loves the truth in the inward parts" (Dt.32:4; 2 Sa.7:28; Psalm.51:6); it points out that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and

injustice that stops, changes and does not obey the truth (Ro.1:18, 25; 2:8); it demands of Christians to put away falsehood and talk truth, to abide and live according to the truth truth (John.8:31, Eph.4:25, 3 John.3,4), and declares that Jesus is the Truth, the living Logos that brings salvation and authentic freedom. If God is God of truth and is interested in truth, we Christians must assume truth as criterion of life.

Among other challenges, we should evaluate our beliefs in the light of Scripture; discern false news inside or outside social network; identify the political interests or public officials who use religious banners to legitimize ideologies or personal ambitions; do not share posts that may cause harm to other; use social networks wisely to to spread the Gospel and news in favor of common welfare; support ideas, people or entities that fight for truth; and biblically educate the minds of the believers, and prevent them from the threats of social networks. In this battle we are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with us to teach us the truth and to remind us of all the things that Jesus commanded (John.14, 17, 26).

Israel Ortiz, Ezra Centre Director

[1] Diccionario de Oxford: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/post-truth>

[2] AC Grayling citado por Sean Coughlan en "Qué es la "posverdad", el concepto que puso de moda el "estilo Trump" en Estados Unidos". <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-38594515>

[3] <https://unamglobal.unam.mx/que-son-las-fake-news/>

[4] Arturo torres: <https://psicologiyamente.com/social/posverdad>

[5] Ibid. AC Grayling.

[6] Citado por Daniel Capó: [https://www.abc.es/cultura/cultural/abci-verdad-y-mentira-politica-hannah-arendt-ante-totalitarismo-201705230316\\_noticia.html?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.abc.es%2Fcultura%2Fcultura%2Fabci-verdad-y-mentira-politica-hannah-arendt-ante-totalitarismo-201705230316\\_noticia.html](https://www.abc.es/cultura/cultural/abci-verdad-y-mentira-politica-hannah-arendt-ante-totalitarismo-201705230316_noticia.html?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.abc.es%2Fcultura%2Fcultura%2Fabci-verdad-y-mentira-politica-hannah-arendt-ante-totalitarismo-201705230316_noticia.html)

[7] George Orwell en Wikipedia. [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/1984\\_\(novela\)](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/1984_(novela)). Críticos de la novela afirman que "estamos comenzando a vivir en lo que se ha conocido como sociedad orwelliana una sociedad donde se manipula la información y se practica la vigilancia masiva y la represión política y social"

## Programme of Integral Health

**Robert Reich**

**Coordinator of Programme**

We thank God for the opportunities que have had to support the Theology of Life Diploma with the topic Integral Spirituality and the World Vision workshops with the topic Transformative Development. In both cases, it was the first time for some of the participants to hear the implications of an integral gospel that embraces all aspects of life. We also started a process of Integral Health Coaching with members of La Red - a group of Christian health professionals here in Guatemala, who seek to serve their fellow man in need with their medical gifts and skills.



## Programme of Environment

**Benita Simón**

**Coordinator of Programme**



With the grace of God, we had an in-person workshop with brothers and sisters of Saq B'e Association in Retalhuleu, with the participation of local church leaders. We also initiated seven virtual workshops with the regional Tearfund team; these have been enriching and hopeful spaces for the work of the Church in its care of God's creation. Furthermore, with gratitude, we launch the Ezra Centre blog with the theme "Post-truth: Empire of deceit?" written by our director.

## Programme of Children, Adolescents and Family

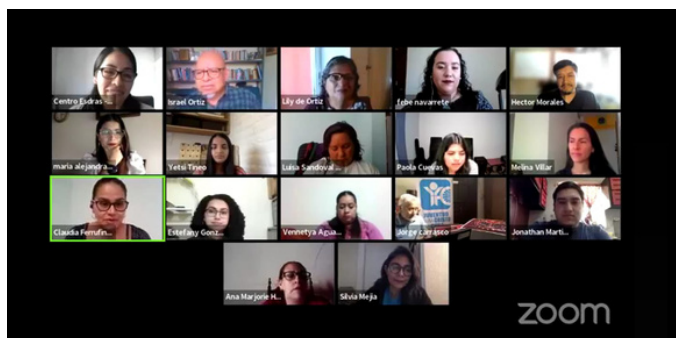
**Karen Sipac**

Coordinator of Programme



We are starting this year off with the right foot. We are happy to share that after completing the modules of the Diploma course that began last year, on February fifth we

graduated twenty one students from all over Latin America. They are leaders serving in Youth for Christ programs. Also, in the month of March we started a new Diploma course with leaders of local churches. We are very excited and expectant of what God has each one of them in this course. We are sure it will be of great benefit to the participants.



## Theological Studies

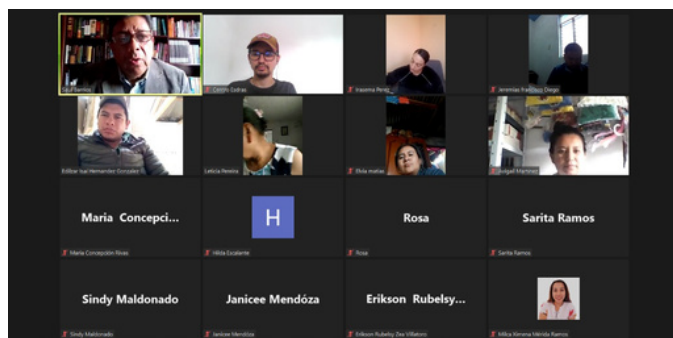
**Jeison Rodríguez**

Coordinator of Diplomas

In spite of how difficult it has been to promote and participants of the different diploma courses, the grace of the Lord continues to accompany our ministry and we have signed a letter of collaboration with the Pentecostal Biblical Seminary of the Church of God to develop with teachers of this institution the diploma course Pedagogy of Jesus.

Likewise, the diploma course "Mission in the Manner of Jesus" will start at the beginning of April.

We also have been coordinating workshops to facilitators with Horizon for April and May and accompanying the Theology for Life diploma course, which is already in its fifth module.



## Operaciones

**Zorobabel Gouz**

We praise God that we were able to complete the audit of the financial statements comprising the statement of assets, liabilities and endowment fund as of December 31, 2021 performed by independent auditors with a report submitted to and approved by the board of directors of Ezra Centre. In conjunction with one of our partners, we used the institutional evaluation based on international quality standards related to governance, financial control, operations and capacity of the foundation.

An evaluation of the ministerial climate was conducted by means of a survey applied to the foundation's personnel in order to obtain opinions related to aspects of ministerial relations.



## Agreements with fellow entities

In response to a request of World Vision Guatemala, a team of teachers from Ezra Centre developed the Biblical Theological Framework for the Childhood Development"; and then facilitated 8 workshops for their staff and field facilitators. It was a privilege to serve our colleagues at World Vision with these inputs on behalf of children and their transformative development, and a rich fraternal exchange of knowledge and experiences. May the Lord continue to bless the ministry of World Vision.



## Gratitude:

- The Lord 's presence and provisión through our brothers and sisters who donate in Guatemala and abroad, whom we thank with all our hearts.
- To our colleagues and partners in ministry: Tearfund, Latinlink Switzerland, Resonate Global Mission.
- We are grateful for the beginning of the diploma courses: Mission in the manner of Jesus, Integral development of children and adolescents, Theology for live and Pedagogy of Jesus.

**We thank you dear brothers and sisters inside and outside Guatemala for your companionship and spiritual support in this ministry journey**

## Please, PRAY for the following:

- Virtual workshop for teachers from Horizon Education Network, who provide the online platform for Ezra Centre.
- The planning process for the "Faith and Culture" consultation to be presented the second semester of this year.
- For the students who registered for each of the diploma courses.
- For the health of our team.
- For the teachers that will be sharing in the diploma courses.

## Do you enjoy reading?

### We have some books on sale (in Spanish)



- Diccionario Bíblico Contemporáneo Q.150.00
- El Shalom y la Justicia de Dios (Spanish) Q.50.00
- Esperanza para toda la Creación Q.60.00
- Reinventando la Misión en América Latina Q.150.00

\*\*Home delivery at additional cost



## ¡DONATE!

Be part of the vision. Together we can do so much for the formation of the leadership of the people of God.

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