

Reflection on Wednesday 8 July 2026 by Forbes Mutch, Lay Leader of Worship



Truth under pressure

Today is the eighth of July. On this day, 77 years ago, George Orwell published his famous novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. If you've ever wondered why he chose to set his story in that year, he wrote it in 1948 so, setting his story in the future, he just reversed the digits of the year in which he was writing, turning 48 into 84.

To me, *1984* is a very relevant novel for Christians because it explores what happens when fundamental Christian values such as truth, freedom, and human dignity are replaced by absolute state controls. And the novel encourages people of faith to think carefully about their religion in an increasingly secular and technologically connected world.

One of the central themes of *1984* is the manipulation of truth. In the book, the ruling Party constantly rewrites history, changes facts and demands that citizens accept whatever it

declares to be true. Objective reality no longer matters; only the Party's version of events is acceptable. How many times have we seen that happening in regimes around the world? How many times do we see it happening in countries now?

This is uncomfortable for us, as Christians believe that truth is not determined by governments, or individual political leaders or public opinion or cultural trends, but is rooted in the character of God. Jesus declares '*I am the way, the truth and the life*' (John 14:6), reminding us that truth is ultimately found in him – and, therefore, God – rather than in shifting political or social narratives.

One of the most important lessons of the book concerns the value of human dignity. The Party views people as tools to be controlled rather than individuals created with inherent worth. Fear, surveillance and manipulation strip away personal identity and meaningful relationships. By contrast, the Bible teaches that every person is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27); Christians are called to defend the dignity, freedom and value of every human being, even when society refers to people as statistics, consumers or voters.

Finally, *1984* challenges Christians to examine the influence of modern technology and media. Orwell imagined a world where surveillance was constant and information was tightly controlled. While today's societies are different, advances in digital technology, artificial intelligence and social media raise legitimate questions about privacy, freedom of conscience, and the responsible use of information. Christians are called to exercise wisdom, discernment and integrity, carefully evaluating what they read, share, and believe rather than accepting popular narratives without question.

In the end, *1984* is not a Christian novel, but it raises questions about the way the world is evolving that Christians should take seriously. It warns against idolatry, deception, the abuse of power and the loss of objective truth.

At the same time, it highlights the hope found in the Christian faith: that truth cannot ultimately be destroyed because it is grounded in God; human dignity is secure because people bear his image; and genuine freedom is found not in political systems but in Christ.

Orwell's vision remains a powerful reminder that Christians are called to be individuals; people of truth, courage, discernment and unwavering faith in every generation. I'm pleased that the book that George Orwell published 77 years ago remains as shocking and relevant today as it was then.

Amen