

Man's Lies, God's Wisdom

Commentary for May 16, 2018 — Expansion of My January 2006 Commentary

In this Commentary I revisit and expand my January 1, 2006 Commentary. It introduces the "[January 2006 Newsletter](#) and article for that month, "[The Pagan Immortal Soul and 'Double Doctrine'](#)" on the ASK website. "Man's Lies" are that human beings have an immortal soul. The teaching is not biblical and comes from a method of teaching called "Double Doctrine." Lies are told to the people (the "masses") in order to have power over and control their behavior. God in His wisdom hides information but does not lie to His future children of God.

The practice continues today in some religious teaching, in Christian teaching, and even in evangelical teaching. Therefore, it is always best to identify and cast off the lies of the past and look at the truths that God provides to us as they are progressively revealed in the written Word of God, the Bible.

In ancient times Gentiles (otherwise known as pagans), did not have or did not acknowledge the benefit of God's revelation (Romans 1:18–32). As a result, the leaders of various Gentile nations felt it was necessary, useful, and even profitable to purposely lie to their own people about facts of religion. They did so to control their populations through Double Doctrine.

While several examples of Double Doctrine are presented in the Newsletter and Article, I give here two other examples of clear statements, one by an ancient Roman politician and the other by a religious leader.

Ancient Wise Men Lying to Their People — Two Examples

Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC) was a famous politician and rhetorician of the late Roman Republic.¹ The Roman statesman and lawyer Cicero and the church father Augustine both thought Varro was the most learned Roman of his time. Varro was most famous for his 41 volumes of ancient history, human and divine. Only small parts of his works have survived in history, embedded within other authors' citations. However, his thoughts about religion have come down to us.

Varro expressed plainly that one way rulers ruled subjects was through lying to their people about religion. Note Augustine's (354–430 AD) comments on Varro's writing about the gods:

"Varro, a very learned heathen, all but admits that these stories are false, though he does not boldly and confidently say so. But he maintains it is useful for states [governments] that brave men believe, though falsely, that they are descended from the gods;

[why?] for that thus the human spirit, cherishing the belief of its divine descent, will both more boldly venture into great enterprises, and will carry them out

¹ Varro was a friend of the famous Roman orator, lawyer, and politician named Cicero.

more energetically, and will therefore by its very confidence secure more abundant success.

You see how wide a field is opened to falsehood by this opinion of Varro's, which I have expressed as well as I could in my own words; and how comprehensible it is, that many of the religions and sacred legends should be feigned in a community in which it was judged profitable for the citizens that lies should be told even about the gods themselves."

• *Augustine, City of God, Book III, chapter 4*

These outright lies were used for social control and supposedly to motivate the people to greatness, boldness, and even future spiritual reward. In other words, lying about the gods, religion and future rewards after death were good things. The Newsletter and Article show there are also lies about punishments in a hell-like place. The mainstream orthodox Christian teaching of eternal suffering in hell originated in paganism and was never a biblical teaching.

Double Doctrine, teaching the people one doctrine while hiding the truth, has a long history. It began with pagan religions and mystery cults. It eventually became part of orthodox Christian teaching as the Article "[The Pagan Immortal Soul and 'Double Doctrine'](#)" explains.

Let me give an example of a Christian church leader, Synesius (c.370–415 AD). Before being elected to become Bishop of Cyrene (a Greek/Roman city in ancient North Africa, which is Libya today), Synesius wrote a letter showing how the teaching of Double Doctrine worked. He felt it was proper to believe doctrines completely different from what he taught in the congregation he pastored. He lied to them. He thought he was doing well by lying. After all, the people benefitted. He gave them what he thought they needed, which was not the truth.

Synesius explained to his brother why it was good to lie to his people. Yet in his letter he had misgivings accepting his appointment to become Bishop of Cyrene. He did not believe the resurrection of Jesus actually happened, yet he taught it as a fact. He accepted the post:

"This resurrection, which is an object of common belief, is nothing for me but a sacred and mysterious allegory, and I am far from sharing the views of the vulgar crowd thereon.

The philosophic mind, albeit the discerner of truth, admits the employment of falsehood, for the light is to truth what the eye is to the mind.

Just as the eye would be injured by an excess of light, and just as darkness is more helpful to those of weak eyesight, even so do I consider that the false **may be beneficial to the populace, and the truth injurious to those not strong enough to gaze steadfastly on the radiance of the real being.**"

• *Synesius, Letter 105*

[From [Essays and Hymns of Synesius](#) trans. by A. Fitzgerald (Oxford University Press, 1930).

Synesius' arrogance is stunning, an example of the wretched state of the North African Christian church in the early 400s AD. He thought the resurrection was untrue, that lies "**may be beneficial**" to people, but "**The philosophic mind ... admits the employment of falsehood**"! In other words, the truth was harmful to simple, uneducated people. Synesius was an elitist who was certain he knew the truth.

Both Varro and Synesius were wise men of the world, educated men who thought they understood the realities of life and the necessity to control the meaner and base nature of their fellow man. Their writings are good examples how God has confused the wise of the world, just as He said he would do, so they willingly lie to the people they teach:

**“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He takes the wise in their own craftiness.’
And again, ‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.’”**

• **1 Corinthians 3:19–20** (quoting Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11)

God does not lie to mankind. The apostle Paul wrote it **“was impossible for God to lie”** (Hebrews 6:18). Before his death Paul repeated that important truth:

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, ... In hope of eternal [eonian, age-lasting] life, which God, that [who] cannot lie, promised before the world began; But has in due times manifested his word through preaching ...”

• **Titus 1:1–3**

Although God Does Not Lie, He Does Hide Truth

God does hide truth from people. He has hidden Himself from most people since creation, even from those who actively seek Him without His calling them. The prophet Isaiah wrote:

“Verily you are a God that hides yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior. ...

[God says, v. 19:]

**I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth:
I said not unto the seed of Jacob, ‘Seek you me in vain’:
I the Lord speak righteousness,
I declare things that are right.”**

• **Isaiah 45:15, 19**

Isaiah says God hides Himself from the children of Adam. We do not even begin to realize His actions in creation (Psalm 77:19). Eventually everyone will know everything about God and Christ (John 13:7; Romans 11:33–34). Note 1 Timothy 2:4: **“Who [God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”** The word “knowledge” in Greek is *epignosis*. It actually means “full knowledge” of the truth. Yes, in some future time all human beings will know everything they need to know about God. No more hiding, no more secrets.

Originally, YHWH did not hide Himself from His people of Israel, but after repeated grievous sins against Him and His Covenant, YHWH punished Israel and He hid Himself (Isaiah 8:17, 45:15, 19; 57:17; Psalm 44:24). The flagrant disobedience forced Him to blind the minds and put a veil upon the hearts of His people Israel:

“But their minds were blinded: for

until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

Nevertheless when it [their heart] shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.”

• **2 Corinthians 3:14–16**

Understand that thought, the day is approaching when **“the veil shall be taken away”** from Israel.

God Reveals Himself in Words, His Revelation Is Progressive

God does not hide Himself from those few He selects to reveal His secrets to in this life. Today He reveals Himself to people through His written Word, the Bible. He even reveals the secret things of Himself (Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 25:14; Daniel 2:22; Romans 16:26; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:5). For some people He leads them to know Him from the things He has made (Romans 1:20–22).

Besides creation, when God reveals Himself to the world, He usually does so in plain words so that after a future physical resurrection to judgment, most people will understand that God’s truth was available to them in the past (though hidden), but then the truth will be fully available to them. Today, for us believers it is our honor to seek out the secrets of God (Proverbs 25:2), secrets that God hides from the wise of the world.

“Your faith should not stand [be or rest] in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world [eon, age], nor [the wisdom] of the princes of this world [eon, age], that come to naught:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery [a secret], even the hidden [wisdom concealed], which God ordained before the world [eons, ages] unto our glory.”

• **1 Corinthians 2:5–7**

In Scripture a “mystery” or a secret is not a lie, it does not mean something incomprehensible, it is simply something hidden. Once revealed, truth is no longer hidden to those who understand, the secret is plain and intelligible. As explained in Dr. Martin’s [“Chapter 3: Progressive Revelation,”](#) and [“Chapter 33, Just Who Are You?”](#) from his book [The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#), many things God reveals to mankind are unveiled in stages, step-by-step, progressively, at times of His choosing as said in Hebrews 1:1–2, for example.

The things concealed and later revealed to Gentiles and select Israelites, believers in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, are given to us as a privilege. It is to our eventual glory for us to learn and possess that wisdom.

“He that comes to God must believe [1] that he is, and [2] that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

• **Hebrews 11:6**

We should appreciate and acknowledge through prayer the goodness, mercy, and grace of God. We have been given an unbelievable gift and blessing: to seek Him diligently, earnestly, honestly, and He will reward our search in His own way, in His own time (Ephesians 2:7). The apostle Peter encourages us: **“Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 3:18). He allows you during this time of grace, to search for Him and to find Him. You shall find Him because you are His own beloved child.

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