

The Lie

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Romans 1:25 speaks of people "who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Like the quote above, most English translations say "a lie." But the Greek texts say "the lie." I believe that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write "the lie" for a very particular reason, and I want to explain why. And I also want you to see why this is important in understanding our relationship as Christians to the world in which we now live.

Mistaken Interpretation

If Paul wrote "the lie," why have most English Bibles changed it to "a lie"? Apparently many translators think Paul is speaking of untruth in general. The *Darby Bible Translation* has: "who changed the truth of God into falsehood." *Young's Literal Translation* says, "into a falsehood," and the *Weymouth New Testament* gives, "For they had bartered the reality of God for what is unreal." Certainly, it is a fact that those who reject God have exchanged the truth of God for falsehood and lies. But it is an interpretation, not a translation, to say that Paul was writing merely of "falsehood" or "a lie" in general in Romans 1:25. He used the definite article, and the context shows that he was speaking of a very definite lie.

The Truth and the Lie

The *English Majority Text Version* translates this verse as, "who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." So, people actually swapped "the truth of God" for something Paul calls "the lie." By "the truth of God," Paul means not just any truth that God has given us but the truth about God Himself. *Robertson's Word Pictures* points out that "the truth of God" is "equivalent to *the true God*." They have given up something that identifies the true God. They have given up this truth and taken on "the lie." What is "the truth of God" and what is "the lie"?

Let's go all the way back to verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." These are people

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who are actually suppressing the truth. What truth? The truth of God, and a very specific truth of God. Notice verse 19: "because that which is known of God is revealed in them, for God revealed it to them." This is a truth of God, something that reveals Him as the true God, and these people have suppressed it.

We learn more in verse 20: "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse." The fact of God's eternal power and divinity, his very "God-ness"—things that are invisible to our eyes—can be seen "since the creation...through the things that are made." We humans are supposed to understand something important about God simply by observing the creation.

When we look at a painting, we can discern certain things. We can, of course, tell that it required a painter. And we may also make out some characteristics of the painter by the subject he has chosen, the treatment he has given it, the technique he has used, and so on. This example of the relationship of the painting and the painter is an illustration of what Paul has in mind. He is writing of the truth that the creation witnesses to the eternal power and divinity of God. In other words, an honest examination of the natural world should lead us to the inevitable conclusion that an eternally existing (i.e. existing in an eternal realm apart from the creation), all-powerful God has created it. Everyone should be able to know this, and anyone coming to any other conclusion has no excuse.

Paul then explains what happened to those who rejected God as Creator:

Because, knowing God, they didn't glorify him as God,
neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasoning,
and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing
themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Romans 1:21-22

Because they rejected God as Creator their thinking became darkened and vain and they became fools (*mōrainō*, related to our word "moron"). Notice also verse 28: "Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting." Then, in their darkness, they "traded the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping

things" (verse 23). They turned from the Creator God to images of created things, idolatry. Does this apply only to the ancient, pagan societies in which Paul lived? We'll see. And when they turned to idolatry, "God also gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves" (verse 24). Rejecting God as Creator led to these people being darkened in their minds, causing them to profess themselves wise but to really be fools, predisposing them to become idolatrous, and causing God to give them up to their lusts to commit sexual immorality. Clearly, God gave them up to this sexual immorality as a punishment—dishonoring their bodies among themselves—because the people of a sexually immoral society will always hold others in low esteem, seeing them primarily as a means to satisfy their own lusts (e.g. Genesis 19:5-11).

Next, we come to the verse we started with, verse 25: "who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." They exchanged the truth of God as Creator for the lie. What is that lie? It is the lie that the creation came about by any other means than by the creative power of the true God. Anciently, and among some people today, this meant exchanging the true Creator God for Baal, Asherah, Ashtoreth, Dagon, Molech, the Greek gods, the Roman gods, the Norse gods, and so on. But what about today? Is there a modern application?

The Lie Today

We need only look at the basis of "the lie" to know whether it has an application today. The heart of "the lie" is rejecting God as Creator and substituting something in His place. In our modern world, the most common rejection of God as Creator is godless cosmology and evolution or Darwinism.

I want to explain here that there can hardly be any doubt that there can be some change within a broad category that Genesis calls "kinds." We are all familiar with many breeds of dogs, both domestic and wild. But they all come from the first dogs that God created on the sixth day with the genetic potential to eventually produce the breeds we have today, from Chihuahuas to Great Danes, and from the timber wolf to the dingo. I have no problem with seeing that other animals and plants also had their original ancestors that God created in the week of Creation with the genetic codes to lead to the variations we have today. Even humans have their original ancestors—Adam and Eve, who had the genes in them to lead to the races and ethnicities we

now have. Nevertheless, we are one kind, because God "made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth" (Acts 17:26), and because God made humans in the image of God: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). And that's the point. God made the first birds, the first fish, the first amphibians, the first reptiles, the first insects, the first mammals, and so forth, including the first people. One kind did not evolve from another. People did not evolve from animals. No life came about on its own. The universe did not come from a chance big bang or any other event apart from God's Creation. God created all.

Godless scientists have suppressed the truth, rejecting the fact that is manifest and clearly seen in the creation, that God is the Creator. Therefore, they are without excuse. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" and substituted the created things for the Creator, saying that these have the power to create themselves. This is de facto idolatry. And yet it has led to even further idolatry.

Because, in the atheistic naturalism that encompasses godless cosmology and Darwinism, there is nothing higher than the created things, the human tendency is to then begin to revere these things. And so we have radical environmentalism in which nothing is more important than protecting mother earth, or Gaia, from man. And we have people who—rejecting that man is a special creation made in God's image—seek to give rights to animals who are, in their view, as important as man. And we have neo-paganism, as people, with their senseless hearts darkened because of their rejection of the true God as Creator, now again literally worship the creation instead of the Creator. And you can be sure that God will give these people "up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured amongst themselves." You can read the rest in verses 26-32 of Romans 1.

A Wrong Approach

Arguing over the scientific points of special creation and evolution—the tactic so often used by those who consider themselves the defenders of creationism—is a waste of time and a distraction from our calling as Christians. Seeing the complexities of intelligent design in the creation and believing in the Creator God is a matter of natural faith. As the Romans 1 verses we just examined point out, all can believe in the Creator God (without understanding what the Bible reveals about Him). Simply by viewing His creation, those who reject Him as Creator are without excuse. And those who do reject Him are rejecting the

obvious and putting faith in the big bang, in life spontaneously arising, in natural selection, and so forth. As much as one side may think they have the truth about how the evidence should be interpreted, it is really a matter of one faith versus another. So, arguing interpretations of the physical evidence is, in my opinion, a big, fat waste of time and effort that makes both sides look pretty foolish. God has given Christians a far better calling.

Our Calling in Relation to the Lie

As we look at the world around us and see this rejection of God and the resulting darkness, we can get very discouraged. But that's not the response God wants us to have. Certainly, we live in a dark world that has largely rejected God. But Jesus said,

You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill can't be hidden. Neither do you light a lamp, and put it under a measuring basket, but on a stand; and it shines to all who are in the house. Even so, let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

To have an influential segment of society respond to believers with a snobbish air of superiority that poisons their listeners' minds with the idea that Christians are backward and superstitious yokels who want to live in the dark ages and obstruct scientific progress makes our job more difficult. It can be disheartening when a famous television entertainer-scientist, Bill Nye the Science Guy, says in a video titled "Creationism Is Not Appropriate For Children" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHbYJfwFgOU>) that if you ignore that it took billions of years to create the world around us, "your worldview becomes crazy, untenable, itself inconsistent.... I say to the grownups, if you want to deny evolution and live in your world, that's completely inconsistent with the world we observe, that's fine. But don't make your kids do it. Because we need them. We need scientifically literate voters and taxpayers for the future. We need engineers that can build stuff and solve problems.... In another couple centuries I'm sure that worldview won't even exist. There's no evidence for it."

But, in fact, it is the worldview of Nye and others who reject God as Creator that has already been defeated: "I [Jesus] have told you these

things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

We are not a light to the world when, in discouragement, we retreat, figuratively hiding under a basket. And we are also not a light to the world when we step down from our hill or lamp stand and quibble with the kingdom of the world's scientists over the fossil record. We are called to bring a specific message of Good News from the King who has conquered this world that will translate (transfer) the elect from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13). We are commissioned to "go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that" Jesus has commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20). The message we are to bring "is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Though the way of the Christian will undoubtedly become more difficult as the world waxes worse (2 Timothy 3:13), we must believe and do the truth, trust God with the results, and keep our minds set "on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). We must be careful to preserve our distinctness and not fear being different from the kingdom of the world around us, not losing our saltiness, maintaining our light and holding it high (Matthew 5:13-16). We must lose any concern we might have for fitting into the carnal society around us or with pleasing men (Romans 12:2; Galatians 1:10).

In this way, victory over the lie is, without doubt, ours.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:57

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: your faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

1 John 5:4-5

They overcame him because of the Lamb's blood, and because of the word of their testimony. They didn't love their life, even to death.

Revelation 12:11