

A Lie by Any Other Name

By Steven Harper

Let it be said from the beginning: Lying is an unacceptable practice in the eyes of God, and it is something for which many will be condemned eternally (Rev. 21:8). The Christian is, in fact, commanded to “put away falsehood, [and] let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25). The people of God are expected to be honest and people of integrity because God is truthful in all He says and does. God does not lie (Titus 1:1-2) and, in fact, it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18). His very nature makes it impossible!

Among religious people, though, there is some equivocation on whether or not lying is an acceptable practice. This fact should cause great concern for those who know God, and who know that His word clearly condemns lying in any form. In an effort to disguise the lie, though, some religious men and entire religious systems allow for or even promote deception and lies, but just by another name. If I may quote William Shakespeare: “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” A lie by any other name is as much a sin as an outright lie. A lie is still a lie.

But let us allow an *expert* in the field to define and explain *mental reservation*, a form of lying that has been acceptable within the Roman Catholic Church, but not written in “canon law”:

“Mental reservation is the expression of one truth, with the reservation (i.e. the omission) of a related truth. There are two types of limitations that may cause a statement to be a type of mental reservation: (1) the expression of a truth with the omission of a related truth, or (2) the expression of a truth with the omission of the true manner of interpretation. In the first case, there are two related truths; one is expressed and another is omitted. In the second case, the related truth that is omitted is merely the proper manner of interpretation of the expressed truth. Human language often has multiple possible meanings; this commonly understood feature of language does not cause what is expressed to be a lie.” [Ronald L. Corte, Jr., Catholic Theologian and Bible translator, in Catechism of Catholic Ethics]

Corte goes on to say: “Mental reservation, properly understood and applied, is not intrinsically evil because no falsehood is intentionally asserted; the assertion is not inherently directed toward the deprivation of truth. Therefore the moral object of mental reservation is good, not evil. ‘However, in order to be moral, any act must have three good fonts: (1) intention, (2) moral object, (3) circumstances. So not every act of mental reservation is moral. If any act of mental reservation has a bad intention, it is a sin. If any act of mental reservation can be reasonably anticipated to do more harm than good in the circumstances, it is a sin.’ [Corte, “The Distinction Between Lying and Mental Reservation,” 12 Feb, 2011, online blog.]

If I may sum up Mr. Corte’s explanation: Mental reservation [leaving out pertinent facts intentionally, with the purpose of misleading] is acceptable if your intentions are for good. This leaves the door wide open for individual interpretation of what “good” is, with each situation determining the definition, apparently. [Don’t they call that situation ethics?]

Several Irish newspapers recognized that this was a common practice among the hierarchy of the Irish Roman Catholic Church after the recent revelation of Church cover-ups of sexually-abusive priests among their number. To say the Irish citizens were disgusted and outraged would be a dramatic understatement. I believe we will probably be learning the same thing about the Roman Catholic Church here in these United States very soon, and for the same reasons. Some have already seen it. Who will now tell us with a straight face that this was for “good”?

In the religion of Islam, the so-called “religion of peace,” there is a common practice that is acceptable and most likely promoted among faithful adherents called *taqqiya* or *kitman*. *Taqqiya* is saying something that is not true, while *kitman* is a deliberate omission; both are permitted when speaking to infidels [those who do not believe Islam], and for the purpose of winning their confidence or to gain an advantage over them. The Qu’ran and Hadith have

several passages that give examples of these practices, and plainly state that they are acceptable.

Beyond this as an acceptable practice among its adherents, though, we may be surprised to learn that Islam's Allah, the one we keep being told is the same as the God of Judaism and Christianity, is said to be a liar and a deceiver himself. Take note: "And they (the disbelievers) schemed, and Allah schemed (against them): and Allah is the best of schemers." [Sura 3:54]

And, "And when those who disbelieve plot against thee (O Muhammad) to wound thee fatally, or to kill thee or to drive thee forth; they plot, but Allah (also) plotteth; and Allah is the best of plotters." [Sura 8:30]

And, "And when We cause mankind to taste of mercy after some adversity which had afflicted them, behold! they have some plot against Our revelations. Say: Allah is more swift in plotting. Lo! Our messengers write down that which ye plot." [Sura 10:21]

Let us note that the word translated as "plot" or "scheme" is the Arabic term makara, which means deceit. According to the most revered book of Islam, God [Allah] is a deceiver, a liar.

Now, we must make a choice: Will we follow the words of these religious teachings, or will we accept what the Bible, God's true word, teaches? The Bible clearly condemns lying and liars, and clearly teaches that God does not lie or deceive. Roman Catholicism, though it has not codified lying as acceptable, has practiced and encouraged it by endorsing and practicing mental reservation when it, or its officials, deem it for "the good" of the church. Islam, on the other hand, blatantly and openly [at least to its followers] approves of the practices of taqqiya and kitman, lying, to unbelievers; it also clearly teaches that their God [Allah] is himself a liar and a deceiver.

There are two reasons the true God demands honesty and integrity from His people: [1] He does not lie and is completely truthful in all He says and does, and He wants us to be like Him, and [2] He knows that the world will not believe or trust what we teach, even when we speak the absolute truth, if they even suspect we might ever not tell them the full truth. If they have any doubt that we will always be truthful with them, why would they believe us at all?

You see, friends and brethren, sometimes our integrity is all we have as a means to get others to listen to us when we are speaking the truth. Many people really don't know God, but they can get to know us, and what we show to them is, in effect, showing them who God and Christ are. If they see dishonesty, or 'strategic' truth-telling [when it's for our benefit], they will not be able to trust us and they will simply mark us off as people who are just as deceptive as the rest of the world and will not bother sticking around long enough for us to teach them the truth, the words of salvation. "Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit" (Prov. 12:17). Speak truth.