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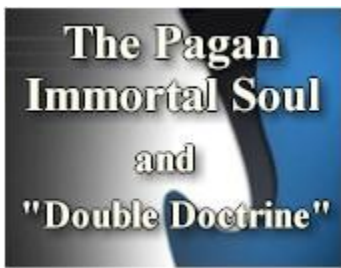
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The Pagan Immortal Soul and Double Doctrine

By David Sielaff, 2006, October 2023

(based on material in an article by Ernest L. Martin Ph.D., March 1963)¹

Read first the "[October 2023 Newsletter](#)"



The concept of the immortality of the soul is based on a lie. Modern believers in the immortality of the soul would be laughed to scorn by the philosophers of antiquity for believing that lie. Yet most theologians who claim to believe in the biblical revelation unknowingly derive many of their doctrinal beliefs from pagan philosophers of old (who purposely lied in the name of religion) who were not teaching from the Holy Scriptures. Those same lies continue to be taught in Christianity today.

The false doctrine of the “immortal soul” and its accompanying doctrine about an ever-burning hell were lies originating from pagan teaching. Early proponents of these doctrines openly admitted these lies. Most Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Protestant, and evangelical Christian churches today derive their teachings of immortality and hell from those original lies. Some pagans told the truth about the origin of these lies. The term used to teach lies to one group while teaching the truth to another is called (by Dr. Martin and others) “Double Doctrine.”

The Greek historian Polybius (*ca* 203–120 BC) tells us that the rulers of the Roman Republic deliberately lied to the common people to keep them from being unruly and difficult to manage. They lied to control the people under their rule. It was necessary “for the good of the state!” Polybius states it was clever and admirable for the rulers of the Roman Republic to blatantly lie to their own people.

The preferred method was for rulers to attain and maintain control without the use of direct force by means of religious teaching. Religion was used to terrify the common people by threatened punishments, and to soothe them with the prospect of a future reward in an afterlife beginning immediately after death. In a discussion of how the Roman Republic compares with other states, Polybius describes how Roman rulers maintained the cohesion of the Roman social structure.

“The quality in which the Roman commonwealth is most distinctly superior is in my opinion the

¹ This article has dual authorship. Read why in the "[January 2006 Newsletter](#).” All footnotes are mine unless indicated. DWS

nature of their religious convictions. I believe that it is the very thing which among other peoples is an object of reproach, I mean superstition, which maintains the cohesion of the Roman State.

... they have adopted this course for the sake of the common people. It is a course which perhaps would not have been necessary had it been possible to form a state composed of wise men, but as every multitude is fickle, full of lawless desires, unreasoned passion, and violent anger, the multitude must be held in by invisible terrors and suchlike pageantry. For this reason I think, not that the ancients acted rashly and at haphazard in introducing among the people notions concerning the gods and beliefs in the terrors of hell [the punishments of hades,²] but that the moderns are most rash and foolish in banishing such beliefs.”

• [Polybius, Histories, 6.56](#)³

Polybius encouraged the lies, knowing that the teachings about the gods and terrors of punishment were pure fiction: “pageantry,” by which he meant rituals, holidays, celebrations, displays, speeches, parades, games, etc., all played a role to keep docile and content those who were fickle, lawless, unreasoned, and angry people, while inspiring in them the desire to sacrifice for the state. Polybius also thought that the educated and the rulers of his day should continue to promote those beliefs to the common people. Most rulers apparently took his advice. The ideas of an immortal soul coupled with the terrors of hell were effective to control most people.

About 100 years later, a Roman orator, politician, and defender of “liberty” in the Roman Republic named Cicero agreed with the ideas of Polybius:

“What think you of those who have asserted that the whole doctrine concerning the immortal Gods was the invention of politicians, whose view was to govern that part of the community by religion which reason could not influence? Are not their opinions subversive of all religion?”

... Were not they likewise void of religion who taught that the Deities, at present the object of our prayers and adoration, were valiant, illustrious, and mighty men who arose to divinity after death? Euhemerus, whom our Ennius translated, and followed more than other authors, has particularly advanced this doctrine, and treated of the deaths and burials of the Gods; can he, then, be said to have confirmed religion, or, rather, to have totally subverted it?”

• [Cicero, The Nature of the Gods, Book 1.42](#)⁴

Cicero wondered about the use of religion by politicians, but neither his contemporaries nor historians note that he ever spoke out publicly or condemned the practice. (Note also “the deaths and burials of the Gods.”)

Having the common people fearful of divine punishment for evils or sins was useful to keep society stable and the masses under control. The people were told that the gods were both judges and witnesses to their actions. By manipulating these beliefs, the leaders could rule the unruly and control the uncontrollable. The people were told wild and fabulous tales about the gods to deliberately confuse them and keep them in ignorance of the truth. The initiated, however, were told the truth by degrees, or at least some of the truth. Ancient writers such as Cicero, Seneca, Panaetius, Polybius, Quintus Scaevola, and Varro all:

“... regarded religion as a device of statesmen to control the masses by mystery and terror ... [There was] one truth for the intellectual classes and one for the common people, the climax reached is the phrase, ‘It is expedient for the state [*i.e.*, the people] to be deceived in religion.”

• [Hastings, “Hypocrisy,” Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics](#)⁵

Double Doctrine Was In All Religions And Philosophical Schemes

This method of controlling the people through religion did not originate with the Romans. It began much

² See Polybius, *Histories*, Shuckburgh 1889 translation (London, New York: Macmillan, 1889. Reprint Bloomington 1962).

³ [The Histories of Polybius](#), Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press, 1922–1927), fragments from chapter 6.

⁴ Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877).

⁵ James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 7 (New York: C. Scribner's, 1914), pp. 62–64.

earlier. The lie about an immortal soul in each person was one story told to the common people. The truth that everyone who died had ceased to exist was made clear to those “in the know.” This perpetuated and strengthened the control of those in power because only they had the real truth in many areas of life. Such a practice was considered indispensable for the preservation of the state.⁶

The use of Double Doctrine came as early as the 6th century BC [1] with the teachings of the philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras in Asia Minor, and [2] later was practiced by all the major Greek philosophical schools, and then [3] to all the philosophers of the 1st century BC.⁷ While Pythagoras did not leave any written works, his philosophy was well known around the Roman Empire. The early Christian scholar Origen says of Pythagoras and his system:

“He divided his disciples into classes, the one he called ESOTERIC, the other, the EXOTERIC. For to those [the former] he trusted the more perfect and sublime doctrines; to these [the latter] the more popular and vulgar.”

• *Origen, On Philosophy, see fragments*⁸

William Warburton, a bishop in the Anglican Church in the late 1700s, wrote a 3-volume work called *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated* that saw at least 10 editions published.⁹ Warburton’s purpose was to prove the divine nature of the Old Testament by its omission of any discussion of the future state of the dead, even though the rest of the world’s religions all had such beliefs. Warburton thought the lack of information about the future state of the dead proved the divine origin of the Old Testament.

Warburton gathered a massive amount of primary evidence to show that ancient philosophers and rulers taught a scheme of Double Doctrine as a method to coerce control over and provide meaning in the lives of their people. Future rewards were promised to promote social behavior, so that soldiers, citizens, and even slaves would willingly sacrifice themselves for the state. This method of gaining obedience was much cheaper than using force.¹⁰

First, Warburton’s evidence led him to conclude: **“The idolatry of the Gentile States was chiefly the worship of dead men ... Kings, Lawgivers, and Founders.”** This explains why countries had so many gods similar to gods of other countries. Every city had a founder, a mighty king, a mother of the city, a builder, a developer, a leading landholder, a lawgiver, a military hero, and a savior in their distant past. As city-states became

⁶ “Hypocrisy,” in Hastings, *Encyclopedia*, p. 63.

⁷ Ernest Martin notes in his article “[Pagan Doctrine of the Soul](#)” in *The Good News*, vol. 12, no. 3, March 1963 (Pasadena), 2:

“One of the most important observations to be made regarding the teachings of the pagan philosophers and/or theologians is that they ALL adhered to the ‘double doctrine’ method of teaching. Pythagoras in the 6th century BC, [later] Plato, Aristotle, and even those of the 1st century always had two doctrines! Invariably, their disciples were told the truth (as much as the philosophers understood), and the common people were told as many bold-faced LIES as was necessary to control them and render them governable.”

In his book *The People That History Forgot*, Dr. Martin shows that not only did the major mystery religions originate from near Babylon, the philosophical school of Stoicism also originated from there. See Chapter 17, “[Eastern Philosophy Conquers Rome](#).”

⁸ In Martin, “[Pagan Doctrine of the Soul](#),” p. 6.

⁹ William Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, 3 volumes, 10th edition (London: Tomas Tegg, 1846).

¹⁰ For example, during a crucial time in the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD the Roman general Titus inspired his troops to move forward and fight, openly stating that the first ones attacking would surely be killed. Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 6:46–49 wrote:

“... what man of virtue is there who does not know, that those souls which are severed from their fleshly bodies in battles by the sword, are received by the ether, that purest of elements, and joined to that company which are placed among the stars; that they become good genies, and propitious heroes, and show themselves as such to their posterity afterward? while upon those souls that wear away in and with their distempered bodies [meaning, by disease], comes a subterranean night to dissolve them to nothing, and a deep oblivion to take away all remembrance of them ... but since fate has determined that death is to come of necessity upon all men, a sword is a better instrument for that purpose than any disease whatever. Why is it not then a very lowly thing for us not to yield up that to the public benefit which we must yield up to fate?”

In other words, Titus said to his soldiers, since death is inevitable, it is better and more noble to die for the good of Rome than simply to die. Of course, Titus was not leading the charge. As the commanding general he was “too essential” to die in battle.

kingdoms, kingdoms became empires, consolidating larger territories and trade and communication, syncretizing and incorporating gods of neighboring peoples was normal, if done under the auspices of the state.¹¹

Second, “the attributes and qualities assigned to their Gods, always corresponded with the nature and genius of the government.” If a society and government were warlike, the gods would be warlike. If a society and government were involved with sea-going or overland trade, the gods would reflect those involvements.

Third, the practice of public worship was such that the government and to a lesser extent society as a whole were the major beneficiaries from public religious practice. Individuals gained little. Religion was a state function, not a function of persons. The practice of pagan religion was totally interwoven with the transactions of the State.¹²

Double Doctrine And An Immortal Soul

The Greek historian Herodotus tells us who were the first people to talk about an immortal soul.

“The Egyptians were the first who maintained the following doctrine, that the human soul is immortal, and at the death of the body [the soul] enters into some other living thing, then coming to birth; and after passing through all creatures of land, sea, and air, it enters once more into a human body at birth, a cycle which it completes in three thousand years. There are Greeks who have used this doctrine, some earlier and some later, as if it were their own.”

• *Herodotus, The Histories, [Book 2, chapter 123](#)*¹³

Pythagoras was thought to have gained many of his philosophical and religious concepts from the Egyptians. One of Pythagoras’ pupils was the renowned Plato, who clearly taught a Double Doctrine in his teaching. Plato is universally considered one of the greatest philosophers in history and his opinion is extremely important, influencing people for thousands of years. A pupil of Plato’s, the revered physician Galen wrote,

“Plato declares that animals have constantly a soul [meaning all animal beings, including man, have an immortal soul], which serves to animate and inform their bodies; but as for stones, wood and what we commonly call inanimate parts of the creation, all these, he says, are quite destitute of soul. And yet in his Timaeus, where he explains his principles TO HIS DISCIPLES AND SELECT FRIENDS, he there GIVES UP THE COMMON NOTION, declares that there is a soul diffused through the universe, which is to actuate and pervade every part of it. Now we are NOT to imagine that in this case he is inconsistent with himself, or maintains contrary doctrines, any more than Aristotle and Theophrastus are to be charged with contradiction, WHEN THEY DECLARED TO THEIR DISCIPLES THEIR REAL DOCTRINES and to the COMMON PEOPLE, principles of another nature.”

• *Galen, On the Natural Faculties, fragments*¹⁴

Plato himself admitted that he did not merely withhold the truth from people, but that he directly lied to them. Plato even arranged a system whereby his friends would understand when he was writing to those who were knowledgeable, or to those who were ignorant. The serious letter had messages to be regarded as true. The less serious letters were those for the masses. Plato had a system for his friends to distinguish them:

“Concerning the sign which indicates which of my letters are seriously written and which not. ... “God,” [singular] then, is at the head of the serious letter, but “gods” [plural] of the less serious.”

• *Plato, Epistle 13*

¹¹ Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. 1, pp. 170–171.

¹² Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. 1, pp. 170–173.

¹³ Herodotus, *The Histories, [Book 2, chapter 123](#)*. Herodotus says Egyptians were the first to make statues and temples to gods.

¹⁴ In Martin, *“Pagan Doctrine of the Soul,”* p. 6: Plato says in *Timaeus*: **“We may say that the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God.”** This is pantheism; that the universe contains everything that is God. This is not a biblical teaching.

Pythagoras, Plato, And The Immortal Soul

Origen, the Christian apologist, wrote a book titled *Against Celsus*. Celsus, a pagan opponent of Christianity, was a philosopher of the system called Neo-Platonism. Origen writes that the followers of Celsus:

“... have accepted the doctrine of Pythagoras and Plato regarding the soul, that it is its nature to ascend to the vault of heaven, and in the super-celestial space to behold the sights which are seen by the blessed spectators above. According to you, O Celsus, they also who have accepted the doctrine of the duration of the soul (after death), and who lead a life through which they become heroes, and make their abodes with the gods, are won over by vain hopes.

Probably also they who are persuaded that the soul comes (into the body) from without, and that it will be withdrawn from the power of death, ... let him meet the arguments, which are not lightly advanced among Greeks and Barbarians, regarding the immortality of the soul, or its duration (after death), or the immortality of the thinking principle; and let him prove that these are words which deceive with empty hopes those who give their assent to them ... give birth to no hope at all, on account of the immediate and complete destruction of the soul (after death).”

• *Origen, Against Celsus, [Book III, chapter 80](#)*

The Greek historian and geographer Strabo referred to Plato when he discussed Indian religion in his descriptions and histories of peoples around the world. He compared Indian beliefs with Plato’s,

“They invent fables also, after the manner of Plato, on [1] the immortality of the soul, and [2] on the punishments in invent fables, and other things of this kind.”

• *Strabo, Geography, [Book 15.1.59](#)*

Double Doctrine In Pagan Mystery Teachings

There were also religious practices called mysteries, also called mystery religions. The mysteries were different from the “orthodox” pagan state religions, and originally they operated outside of state control. The pagan rites of the mystery religions also had elaborate secret rituals and teachings. They were experiential rites, many involving music, chanting, darkness, sensory deprivation, sexual acts, blood sacrifice, and drugs (given orally, on the skin, or through vapors) that caused altered states of consciousness. Contact with spirits or gods, real or imagined, was encouraged.¹⁵ Occasionally the rituals ended in violent acts requiring suppression by government officials.

The secrets were hidden, first to excite curiosity for potential initiates, and second to keep certain teachings only for initiates. The best known were the Orphic, the Bacchic, the Eleusian, the Samothracian, the Cabiric and the Mithriac mysteries. These mysteries each had lesser and greater mysteries attached to them. The secrets of the lesser mysteries were openly taught to all who wished to learn. The uninitiated were told many wild and fabulous tales about the gods in order to confuse them and to keep them in ignorance of the truth. The greater mysteries were only for initiates who became qualified to learn them. The initiates were told by degrees the truth of the mysteries.¹⁶ Chapter 17 of Revelation speaks about “Mystery Babylon” which is probably the height of the mystery religion teachings at the end of the age before Christ returns.

These mystery religions have nothing in common with and are the exact opposite of “the mystery” written about by the apostle Paul in Romans 16:25, and powerfully taught in the epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians. There other “good” mysteries found elsewhere else in the New Testament.

Double Doctrine In Gnosticism

The concepts of Double Doctrine and an immortal soul are also the foundation of all Gnostic thought. Gnosis means knowledge. Gnosticism was a system of occult beliefs that used Jewish and Christian terms.

¹⁵ Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. 1, pp. 193–202.

¹⁶ The ultimate secrets of the pagan religious mysteries are discussed in Dr. Martin’s articles “The Secrets of Ancient Religion Revealed!,” [Parts 1](#) and [Part 2](#) (click the links).

The knowledge was gained either by direct mystical experience or through possession of secret teachings given to initiates.¹⁷ This blending was likely begun by Simon Magus who attempted to buy his way into the mysteries of God:

“Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost [Spirit] was given, he offered them money, Saying, ‘Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost [Spirit].”

• **Acts 8:17–19**

Simon Magus tried to blend pre-Gnostic mystical concepts with elements of early Christianity to begin what historians today call Gnosticism, according to Epiphanius (in *Contra Heresies* ii.1–6).¹⁸

Double Doctrine In History

Double Doctrine is also the basis of all secret political and religious sects, even today. It is the root of all occult and magical teaching almost without exception. In fact, the term “occult” itself means “hidden.” Such occult mysteries were thought to have great spiritual power. Double Doctrine was even used by Jewish philosophers and teachers such as Jacob Luria and Maimonides.¹⁹ The organization called the Illuminati established in the late 1700s was structured on Double Doctrine whereby only those at the top of the organization knew its true goals and methods. Communal and secret societies, so popular during the late 1700s to middle 1800s in Europe and in the United States up to the early 1900s, all had forms of Double Doctrine teaching.²⁰

The Difference Of Biblical Christianity

When Christianity began it was a set of beliefs based on the truth of God and not on deception. That was upsetting to rulers everywhere that Christianity took root. Though Christians were obedient to law, they were considered atheists, not just because they denied the pagan gods, but because Christians exposed religious lies. That exposure directly threatened the political stability of governments.

When the apostle Paul was in Thessalonica, the opposing Gentiles accused that Paul had **“turned the world upside down”** (Acts 17:6) with his teachings. In Ephesus, Paul was accused of exposing idol worship, threatening the livelihood of the idol makers (Acts 19:21–41). In Athens Paul was welcomed by Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who thought he was bringing them news about strange new gods (*daimion*, demons in Greek), one called Jesus, who had been resurrected. Apparently the idea of demons being resurrected was

¹⁷ James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1974), p. 199.

¹⁸ See Dr. Martin’s *The People That History Forgot*, chapters 4, 8, and 17, also Chapter 19, [“Scripture Says: Flee From Idolatry”](#) in Dr. Martin’s book *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*, and Epiphanius in G.R.S. Mead, *Simon Magus* (London: 1892; reprint London: Ares Publishers, 1985).

¹⁹ The Jewish sage Maimonides in the 12th century used Double Doctrine teaching to lead Jews away from a desire to rebuild their Temple. All previous attempts to rebuild it were disastrous for Jews. He also strove to get his Hellenistic and atheistic religious beliefs accepted by fellow Jews. In his lifetime his beliefs were not widely accepted. See Dr. Martin’s articles [“The Greatest Revolution in Human History”](#) and [“Maimonides – Saint and Heretic.”](#)

²⁰ Adam Weishaupt’s, *Apologie der Illuminaten* (written in Old High German, Frankfurt, 1787). George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine were knowledgeable about and discuss the Illuminati in private letters (not to each other). The Anti-Masonic Party, a large political third party flourished in the U.S. between 1827 and 1838. It held Freemasonry with its hidden traditions to be a threat to society. For secret societies in early American politics see James H. Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1980). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries a sizable percentage of the urban male population in America belonged to fraternal organizations that had “secret” traditions and rituals. Most were harmless, but the attraction of secret knowledge is still powerful. See my article, [“Conspiracy in Scripture.”](#)

Modern military, intelligence, and security organizations have structures of information dissemination called “compartmentalization.” Only those with a “need to know” have access to relevant information. As a person’s security clearance and “need to know” increases, he or she is allowed access to more information to perform their job. It is a good way to keep secrets, and control information and people. It also minimizes damage if persons holding parts of information are compromised to reveal secrets.

acceptable to them. They took Paul to speak to the people at the Areopagus on Mars Hill (Acts 17:18–20). He initially had a good reception. He spoke how all men **“are the offspring of God”** and not made with **“gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device”** (Acts 17:29).

Then Paul began to teach about the resurrection of a man (Acts 17:30–33), and everyone’s attitude immediately changed. The philosophers and the people laughed and mocked him, and most suddenly lost interest (verse 32). The resurrection of a man was contrary to the lies of the immortal soul, and transmigration of souls.

Immortal Soul And Doctrines Of Demons

First Timothy chapter 4 discusses the latter times:

“Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in THE LATTER TIMES some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats.”

• 1 Timothy 4:1–3

Previously I thought the phrase **“doctrines of devils [demons]”** introduced the list of what those doctrines would be. I now understand that the two objects of the verb should be a single connected unit:

“Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, AND [giving heed to] doctrines of devils [demons] ...”

• 1 Timothy 4:1

What would those doctrines of demons be? They would not only be the doctrines by demons, but they would be doctrines about demons — falsely applied to human beings. They include the teachings of (1) a supposed immortal soul, (2) “endless” punishment in hell (*hades*), and (3) transmigration of souls or reincarnation, as it is commonly termed today. All three of these teachings were what the pagan philosophers taught the common people, but which they themselves did not believe. These teachings were likely confirmed to the people by evil spirits working within the pagan temples, representing themselves as gods or as dead human beings. Consider the experience of evil spirits in the physical realm:

- (1) Spirits are supposedly “immortal” in a relative sense, in that they possess a non-physical nature. They do not have a human soul. Angels or spirits were never humans. They will never have a human soul, nor are they immortal in the present understanding of the term.²¹
- (2) We know that some evil spirits and sinning angels are held captive (1 Peter 3:18–19; 2 Peter 2:4). They experience a confinement that could be considered, to them, a type of “hell.”
- (3) They possess different people over generations, sometimes going from persons to animals. For spirits, this is a form of transmigration of “souls,” Mark 16:9, 17; Luke 8:2, 27–39.

The spirits pass themselves off as the spirits of dead humans and try to convince unwary people that they too have an immortal soul. The apostle Paul tells us that spirits are the objects of the pagan worship.²²

²¹ When the Bible states that every soul that sins shall die, that includes spirit entities such as demons and angels. See Dr. Martin’s chapter 15, **“Can Sinning Angels Be Saved?”** in *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*, and my article **“Spirits Can Die.”**

²² Paul is referring to Psalm 96:4–5 and Isaiah 65:11, both in the Greek LXX (compare with 1 Chronicles 16:25–26).

“For YHWH is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols [demons in the Greek LXX]: but YHWH made the heavens.”

Isaiah 65:11:

“But you are they that forsake YHWH, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop [*THE* demon in the Greek LXX], and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.”

In the future ahead of us people will worship **“devils [demons] and idols”** (Revelation 9:20).

“What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [*daimonion*, demons], and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils [demons]. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils [demons]: you cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils [demons].”

• 1 Corinthians 10:19–21

Did Jesus Use Double Doctrine In His Teaching?

No, He did not. True, Jesus kept information from the people to whom He preached. However, the withheld information was revealed to all people as soon as possible **after** Jesus’ resurrection, which proved He was the Messiah. He also gave the final teaching to the apostles, who were designated by Christ to lead the preaching about the Kingdom of God.²³ In His ministry Jesus only spoke to the people in parables, never plainly. He did so because they would not have understood His message.

“And the disciples came, and said unto him, ‘Why speak you unto them in parables?’ He answered and said unto them, ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.’”

... All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, ‘I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been KEPT SECRET [hidden] from the foundation of the world.’”

• Matthew 13:10–11, 34–35

The apostles themselves had difficulty understanding the teachings of Jesus. They did not understand until after the resurrection when the risen Messiah explained how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Him (Luke 24:44–48; Acts 1:3), and after the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. Dr. Martin at the conclusion of his article “[The Recognition of Universal Reconciliation – Part 2](#),” expressed his understanding that God and Jesus did indeed use Double Doctrine to teach. There is a difference between “Double Doctrine” as man uses it, and God delaying access to knowledge. God never lies (Hebrews 6:18). He may withhold or hide information from His children (as good parents do, sometimes for a long time), but He never lies.

Does Christianity Teach Double Doctrine?

The pagan Neo-Platonist Celsus in fact accused Christians of practicing a secret system of belief, of teaching “Double Doctrine.” The early scholar and Christian apologist Origen responded [extended quote]:

“Moreover, since he [Celsus] frequently calls the Christian doctrine a secret system (of belief), we must confute him on this point also, since almost the entire world is better acquainted with what Christians preach than with the favorite opinions of philosophers. For who is ignorant of the statement

- [1] that Jesus was born of a virgin, and
- [2] that He was crucified, and
- [3] that His resurrection is an article of faith among many, and
- [4] that a general judgment is announced to come,

in which the wicked are to be punished according to their deserts, and the righteous to be duly rewarded? And yet the mystery of the resurrection, not being understood, is made a subject of ridicule among unbelievers. In these circumstances, to speak of the Christian doctrine as a secret system, is altogether absurd.

But that there should be certain doctrines, not made known to the multitude, which are (revealed) after the exoteric ones have been taught, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain

²³ Dr. Martin’s article “[The Real Meaning of Biblical Words](#)” explains how Jesus **always** used parables to keep information from the people. See Matthew 13:13–15 (citing Isaiah 6:9–10); John 6:44, 65, 8:43, 12:37–40. This temporary withholding of information by Jesus was done to serve the people, not to rule over them.

truths are exoteric and others esoteric. Some of the hearers of Pythagoras were content with his *ipse dixit* [an unsupported assertion]; while others were taught in secret those doctrines which were not deemed fit to be communicated to profane and insufficiently prepared ears.

Moreover, all the mysteries that are celebrated everywhere throughout Greece and barbarous countries, although held in secret, have no discredit thrown upon them, so that it is in vain that he endeavors to calumniate [deliberately make false statements about] the secret doctrines of Christianity, seeing he does not correctly understand its nature."

• *Origen, Against Celsus, 1.7*²⁴

Unlike pagan religions and mysteries, Christianity was not a secret sect or religion, but because of persecution Christians met privately while willing to speak to anyone who would listen. Origen felt that just because some people did not understand or could not accept what he called **"the mystery of the resurrection,"** that did not itself mean Christianity was a secret religion.

Celsus had some reason to think that Christianity was a **"secret system,"** although as Origen pointed out, Christianity was far more open and straightforward than other beliefs. That being said, some Christian teachers did in fact teach a form of Double Doctrine. Surprisingly, after criticizing Celsus, even Origen himself did not teach the full gospel of Christ to "common" people. Not long after the apostles died some Christian teachers, Origen among others, incorporated the Platonic teaching method of Double Doctrine. Perhaps they even justified it by a misunderstanding of Jesus' parables.

Early Christian Teachers Of Double Doctrine?

Origen strongly believed in and taught universal reconciliation of all people, "in Christ." Nonetheless he held back that full teaching from unbelievers. Perhaps it was the influence of the Alexandrian culture where Plato was honored for his wisdom second only to the Bible. In any case, Origen taught Double Doctrine regarding universal reconciliation. Why did he hold back and not teach the full truth to all people? The reason was given by Origen himself, again in his book *Against Celsus*. He believed that proclaiming the biblical teaching of universal reconciliation to the unconverted might be dangerous for them. Origen held back the truth for the same reason that pagan philosophers told lies to the people. He felt that the teaching of universal reconciliation should be presented guardedly. He writes about the purification of sinners through Christian atonement in light of universal reconciliation:

"But the remarks which might be made on this topic are neither to be made at all, ... [but] for the sake of those who are with difficulty restrained, even by fear of eternal [aeternum, age-lasting in Latin] punishment, from plunging into any degree of wickedness, and into the flood of evils which result from sin."

• *Origen, Against Celsus, 6:26*

Origen wrote and taught this to unbelievers. Universal reconciliation was not part of the Gospel of Christ for Origen even though he taught strongly within the church that all men would be saved. He also knew that most Christians held to the same doctrine of universal reconciliation.²⁵

Jerome was an irascible but productive 4th century AD scholar, writer, translator, publisher and "father of the church." Jerome wrote contradictory statements about his own beliefs, for example he was on both sides of the subject of universal salvation. But like Origen, Jerome wrote that universal salvation should not be promoted to unbelievers. He thought the terrors of punishment would keep people in line and that unrepentant people might react badly if they understood the full extent of God's grace:

"All of which nevertheless they allow should not now be openly told to those with whom fear yet acts as a motive, and who may be kept from sinning by the terror of punishment. But this question we ought to leave to the wisdom of God alone, whose judgments as well as mercies are by

²⁴ "Early Church Fathers," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. IV, *The Fathers of the Third Century*. Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.7.

²⁵ See my article, "[The Recognition of Universal Reconciliation, Part 3.](#)" DWS

weight and measure, and who well knows whom and how long, He ought to judge.”

• *Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah, Book 18, chapter 66*

Job And The Immortal Soul

The patriarch Job asked an important question that goes to the central issue regarding a supposed immortal soul. He asked this question while undergoing intense physical suffering. The question involves you and all humanity: **“If a man die, shall he live again?”** (Job 14:14). The answer to this question is yes, but the obvious inference is that the dead are not alive. One is either alive or dead.²⁶

All have sinned (Romans 5:12) and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The soul that sins shall not remain alive in another state of existence or state of being, it shall die: **“the soul that sins, it shall die”** (Ezekiel 18:4). In light of this, let us enlarge the context and look at the Job passage again:

“So man lies down, and rises not: till the heavens be no more, they SHALL NOT AWAKE, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he LIVE again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. You shall call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire to the work of your hands.”

• *Job 14:12–15*

This clear passage in Job is not describing an immortal soul. It is a statement that the dead are dead. They are unconscious, nonexistent — for a period of time — until God calls them and, as Job said, **“till my change come”** and the dead who **“sleep”** to be made to be **“awake.”** The dead are not immortal. They do not have an immortal soul. Immortality can only come from God when He opens your mind to receive His grace.

At the time Job expressed his thoughts, written after his experience of great loss and suffering, he understood that the resurrection would not occur until the heavens cease to exist. He was content to wait **“until my change come.”**

It is doubtful Job understood much, and probably knew nothing, about the new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21:1–8; we cannot tell from what he wrote. To be sure, for the vast percentage of humanity their resurrection will not occur until after the Kingdom of God has been on earth for 1,000 years, the new heavens and the new earth are created, and the Great White Throne judgment begins, fitting with what Job wrote. Paul later wrote, **“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?”** (1 Corinthians 15:12).

Early Christian Teachers Of An Immortal Soul

About 150 AD, Justin Martyr wrote about those he did not consider to be true Christians:

“... who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth of resurrection], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians.”

• *Justin Martyr, Dialogues with Trypho, 80*

Not long after Justin wrote those words, another early church father openly declared a belief in an “immortal soul.” That person was Athenagoras of Athens in about 177 AD:

“Our belief rests on a most infallible guarantee — the purpose of him who fashioned us, according to which he made man of an immortal soul and a body.”

... For if the whole nature of men in general is composed of an immortal soul and a body which was fitted to it in the creation ... men, in respect of the soul, have from their first origin an

²⁶ See my article [“Pope John Paul II Is in Hell.”](#) From there all the various articles on the ASK website are listed that discuss issues related to immortality and salvation. DWS

unchangeable continuance, but in respect of the body obtain immortality by means of change.”

• *Athenagoras, On the Resurrection*²⁷

After Athenagoras most Christian teachers and leaders clearly incorporated unbiblical Platonic and neo-Platonic concepts into their Christian beliefs. After Christianity became a legally recognized and then a protected religion by the Roman government during the reign of Emperor Constantine, Christianity became politically and socially acceptable. Political opportunists became church leaders and incorporated the familiar and popular Platonic concepts about the nature of the soul and rewards into their teaching. The teaching of Double Doctrine for the purpose of social control accompanied the teaching of an immortal soul.

God’s Reward?

One imagined attraction of the immortal soul doctrine is the supposed promise of immediate reward. God does indeed promise rewards, but in His own time-frame to those who seek Him. The desire to seek Him is also a gift from God. In order to gain that reward, one must first believe God exists, and then express faith in Him, all as a prerequisite for that reward. That reward will come at the believer’s resurrection from the dead.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must [1] believe that he is, and [2] [believe] that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

• *Hebrews 11:6*

This verse is embedded within a larger text that talks about those of faith in the Old Testament who had not yet received their reward. None of the dead saints have been resurrected to their reward — not one! Moses and the others to this day have not yet gained his future reward since their death (Hebrews 11:24–26). All rewards after death are in the context of a bodily resurrection (Matthew 5:12, 6:1, 4, 6, 18). Remember, Scripture makes clear that even our will to believe comes from God (Ephesians 1:11; Philippians 2:13).

Progressive Revelation And Double Doctrine

We have seen that Jesus held back teaching from the people, temporarily. God the Father also seems to use the method of “Double Doctrine.” He withholds teaching from the great mass of humanity and gives it to a select few that He has called out to receive the truth of God in this age. God is sovereign and He keeps secrets, such as the day of Christ’s return, which Jesus refused to reveal to His apostles: **“But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”** (Matthew 24:36, and Mark 13:32).

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ And he said unto them, ‘It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.”

• *Acts 1:6–7*

On a day coming in the future, the waiting will be over for all of us.

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.”

• *1 Thessalonians 5:1–2*

“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will.”

• *Ephesians 1:10–11*

²⁷ See www.monachos.net/patristics/athenagoras_res.shtml. Translation by B.P. Pratten, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2. Chapters 13, 15 and 16, respectively. In chapter 20 Athenagoras again says that the soul remains immortal after the body dissolves to dust. In chapter 24 he writes **“For such an end as this, I suppose, belongs to beasts and cattle, not to men possessed of an immortal soul and rational judgment.”**

As the last days approach in our future, perilous times will come (2 Timothy 3:1) that will require us all to hold fast to our faith:

“... until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

• **1 Timothy 6:14–15**

God will reveal all secrets which He truly calls mysteries (*mysterion* is the Greek root word).²⁸ Keeping secrets is not lying. The greatest and final Mystery was revealed to the apostle Paul and others around 63 AD. They in turn presented them to the world. At present that greatest mystery is available to everyone.

Lies Of The Past, Lies Of The Present

The apostle Paul makes direct reference to those rulers and philosophers, the wise, who promoted and perpetuated great falsehoods, such as the immortal soul, hell, and trinity doctrines. Keep in mind that what Paul is expressing applies to the “wise” today, just as much as it did in his own day:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [back] the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”

• **Romans 1:18–22**

By holding back truth with Double Doctrine teachings, the wise of the world become fools, and are left to their own lusts by God. This means that they purposely give up the truths they know and falsely declare those truths to be lies. Paul says they are “**without excuse**” as they “**changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator**” (Romans 1:25). How foolish. They do this to maintain power over other people. This is staggering in its implications. Let us unpack these verses to the end of Romans chapter 1 about the wise of the world:

- They are ungodly [irreverent] (verse 18).
- They are unrighteous [unjust] (verse 18).
- They “**hold the truth,**” retaining it for themselves alone (verse 18).
- They know and understand “**that which may be known of God**” (verse 19).
- They are wise enough to comprehend the invisible things from what is clearly seen in God’s creation (verse 19).
- They understand God’s power (verse 20).
- They understand the nature of His Godhead (verse 20).
- They therefore have no excuse (verse 20).
- Although they KNOW God, they refuse to glorify Him as God (verse 21).
- They are not thankful to God, in spite of their knowledge (a gift to them from God, verse 21).
- They are vain in their imaginations [in their reasonings] (verse 21).

²⁸ See Dr. Martin’s article, “[The History of the Revelation of the Mystery](#).” Study all instances of “mystery” (there are several different kinds of “mysteries”) to understand the things God chooses to hide and then reveal at the proper times: Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Romans 11:25, 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7, 4:1, 13:2, 14:2, 15:51; Ephesians 1:9, 3:3f, 9, 5:32, 6:19; Colossians 1:26f, 2:2, 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Timothy 3:9, 16; Revelation 1:20, 10:7, 17:5, 7.

- Their hearts are darkened [unintelligent] (verse 21).
- They think they were wise, but become fools [stupid] (verse 22).
- They begin to consider part of God’s glory had characteristics of creatures (verse 22)..
- They stupidly convince themselves to imagine the glory of God was manifest within man, animals, and even small creatures (verse 23).
- They imagine they were all part of God (verse 23).
- They imagine God was everywhere and everything is part of God (verse 23).

So, God gives them over to their own lusts, to uncleanness, dishonoring their own bodies (verse 24).

- They change the truth (verse 25) and make it into **“THE lie”** [definite article in Greek] (verse 25).
- They worship what they know to be false (verse 25).
- They think they could serve creatures (verse 25).
- They ignore the creator [while worshipping false gods and serving creatures] (verse 25).
- They are given up by God to all sorts of perversions (verse 26).
- They will pay and suffer in their own bodies (verse 27).
- They deliberately refuse to retain God in the knowledge of their minds (verse 28).
- They have developed reprobate minds [disqualified to judge], given to them by God (verse 28).
- They commit all sorts of evils (verses 29–31).
- They shall receive God’s judgment of death, not life (verse 32).

What a sordid mess these ungodly “wise of the world” are! This comes about because they did not wish to retain the knowledge of God in their hearts. Note that evil progresses worse and worse. Such is the description by the apostle Paul. He described the past (particularly the immediate post-flood world), Paul’s own day, and it applies to our day.

Note that during the process of decline and degeneracy, Paul says they **KNEW** the truth! Note also that most all the verbs in this latter part of the chapter are present tense in Greek. The same progression is occurring with the wise, the rulers, and the philosophers of the world today. Human nature does not change without God’s intervention, without His giving of His Holy Spirit.

This should not surprise anyone because lying to others and to ourselves, is a common human fault. Rulers lying to their subjects is seen almost as a prerogative of officials around the world and throughout history. Nonetheless it is a great evil that shall increase in intensity in the future:

“Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”

• 1 Timothy 4:1–2

Immortality In The Bible

The Bible is unambiguous and straightforward about immortality. No Double Doctrine on this subject! Scripture clearly tells us who possesses immortality at present, and who will have it in the future. At this time, prior to Christ’s return, only one human being has attained and possesses immortality.

“I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickens all things [literally ‘makes all alive’], and before Christ Jesus, ... That you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only has immortality [Greek root word *athanasia*], dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor”

can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

• **1 Timothy 6:13–16**

Note that at present only Jesus Christ has immortality. No other human being has immortality (verse 16) — not now, and not until Jesus returns to earth. Yet eventually all shall be made alive in the future (verse 13), just as all shall be saved (1 Timothy 2:4–6, 4:9–10, and 2 Timothy 2:11) and gain immortality. First Timothy 6:13–16 specifically answers Job’s question: **“If a man die, shall he live again?”** Yes. All shall die, but all shall live again, all shall be quickened. Christ alone has immortality at this present time, but the apostle Paul states precisely **when** more people will receive the same immortality that Christ has now:

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption [Greek root word *aphtharsia*], and this mortal must put on immortality [Greek root *athanasia*]. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption [*aphtharsia*], and this mortal shall have put on immortality [*athanasia*], then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

• **1 Corinthians 15:53–54**

Paul states that immortality must be **“put on.”** It is not a possession at present for anyone except Christ. It is an event to come in the future. For more details read all of Paul’s description of the resurrection body in 1 Corinthians 15:35–58.²⁹ Immortality at the resurrection will be **“put on”** like a coat or a garment.

“And if Christ [Messiah] be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ [Messiah] from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.”

• **Romans 8:10–11**

Evil spirits for millennia have lied to people around the world, and they continue to do so today. Pagan religious and political leaders lied about the immortal soul to maintain control over “common” people (who often ran amuck, acting like animals, or worse). Early church leaders also saw the necessity to keep the masses in fear so that they could be more easily controlled.

God does not do such things. God does not lie (Numbers 23:19). It is impossible for Him to do so (Hebrews 6:18). However, God does conceal knowledge from His children (Proverbs 25:2) until He sees fit for them to know His secrets.³⁰ God hides mysteries when He chooses to do so, and reveals them when He chooses.

Paul’s Ministry — And Ours

Paul as a servant of God stated plainly the example he expected the Corinthians to follow, and they had problems with morality. We also should follow Paul’s example in speaking honestly and making the truth plain to everyone. There should be no hidden truths among us, no mysteries.

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the

²⁹ There is a difference between the two Greek roots *aphtharsia* (incorruption) and *athanasia* (immortality). *Athanasia* occurs 3 times in the New Testament. *Aphtharsia* occurs 8 times: 4 times as “incorruption,” 2 times as “immortality,” and 2 as “sincerity.” The two verses in the King James Version translated “immortality” should be translated “incorruption.” **“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality [*athanasia*, incorruption], eternal [eonian] life”** (Romans 2:7).
Read 2 Timothy 1:10:

“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who [1] has abolished death, and [2] has brought life and [3] immortality [*athanasia*, incorruption] to light through the gospel.”

While incorruption is an attribute within immortality and is related to “eonian” or “age-lasting” life (Romans 2:7) and the abolishment of death (2 Timothy 1:10), these verses tell us that the “incorruption” is something to be desired, but it is not yet the present possession of believers.

³⁰ God allows people to deceive themselves, sometimes with help from spirits. Read 1 Kings 22:13–26 where God commissioned a spirit to deceive the Kings of Israel and Judah through false prophets, resulting in a lost battle with the King and army of Syria (1 Kings 22:29–40). See Chapter 3, **“Progressive Revelation”** in Dr. Martin’s *Essentials of New Testament Doctrine*.

hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

• *1 Corinthians 4:5*

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty [shame], not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully [not adulterating it]; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid [and it is not], it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world [age] has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ [the Messiah], who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

• *2 Corinthians 4:1-4*

The light of the truth of the Gospel of the Messiah, who is the Image of God, is what must be communicated to the world. Every mystery that God has revealed is now available to be proclaimed and understood by you and by everyone (Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7, 4:1; Ephesians 1:9, 3:3-4, 9, 5:32, 6:19; and Colossians 1:26-27, 2:2, 4:3). It is God's responsibility to preserve and unveil mysteries, not ours.

Our responsibility is to make available and to teach the full Gospel of Christ and God. No biblical teaching today can justifiably be hidden from our fellow human beings. We should be willing to tell every human being: **"you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"** (John 8:32).

Source material, Dr. Ernest L. Martin, 1963
David Sielaff, 2006, 2023