



Reality

and



Unreality

**Are we to believe what God says about
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Reality and Unreality

By Art Dappen

God creates REAL things, but men imagine UNREAL things. God created real men who have real heads which think real thoughts. For this reason men have the capacity to perceive God's works, think about them, and even dream about them. However, rather than thinking about God and the marvelous things he created, men have begun to imagine unreal things. Eve imagined that she could become like God. Cain imagined that he could kill his brother Abel. Men eventually imagined that God does not even exist. They began to imagine the existence of other supernatural beings which supposedly could be invoked by the use of idols and rituals. They imagined that natural processes over billions of years could have produced the wonder of life on earth.

Man's imagination has produced thoughts, ideas, concepts, theories, and dreams which are lies because they do not agree with what is really there. Men imagine unreal persons and events, and weave them together into fables, mythology, and fiction stories. Fictitious characters and plots may seem "true-to-life" and have the appearance of reality, but in fact are UNREAL. Fiction is the verbalization of unreal imaginations. In other words, fiction is a lie.

God's words are "truth" because they truly describe the REAL things he created. Truth is the accurate description of the real. Jesus emphasized that his words were truth, and that he really knew what he was talking about because he had come down from heaven: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (John 3: 11-13.)

He also said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63.) Jesus did not try to mix the truth with entertaining fiction to make it more attractive to men. His parables were not fiction; they were either true stories, or else they

were allegories in which each and every person and event in the parable correctly represented something in the real world.

Conversely, man's words become "lies" when they represent the UNREAL things which come out of his imagination. God describes man's imagination as follows: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5.)

"And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me." (Jeremiah 16:12.)

But wicked men refuse to accept God's assessment that their imaginations are evil. They continue to follow their lying imaginations and even rejoice when others learn to think as they do. The famous painter Pablo Picasso praises the human imagination ("Art"), and says that it leads to truth. Picasso said: *"We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies."*

Are we to believe what God says about human imagination, or what Picasso says? Would you rather describe men's lies as "wicked" or "artistic"? Telling lies cannot be justified by calling it "Art". Neither can it be justified by calling it "entertainment" or "literature" or "education" or "evangelism" or "apologetics". Lies are lies, and "no lie is of the truth". (1 John 2:21.)

Truth and Lies

The difference between truth and lies corresponds exactly to the difference between what really exists and what doesn't. There is an enormous difference (as great as the difference between light and darkness) between the things which really DO exist (because God created them) and things which only SEEM to exist in a painting or a sculpture or a story or a philosophy (because a man imagined them and gave them a visible form). True things exist because God gave them existence. They exist outside of man's consciousness. They exist whether or not any man knows it. God uses these true things to communicate information to men.

On the other hand, lies have no existence outside of someone's imagination. They only look like they exist because man's imagination gives them the appearance of reality. A chair is constructed in accordance with God's laws which describe the properties of wood. It serves a real purpose: to sit on. But a "chair that talks" is a lying imagination because it attributes untrue properties to the chair. Such an object does not exist.

People trade these imaginations back and forth, recarve them, repaint them, rewrite them, rename them, and honor one another for being so imaginative. But their lives show the tragic consequences of having followed the lying imaginations of their own hearts: They are filled with pride, vanity, covetousness, envy, hatred, fighting, adultery, and addiction to evil pleasures.

No academic subject is as important as learning to discern between these two basic sources of information (truth and lies). Any program of child training should use only sources of "true" information. Untrue information should be strictly avoided. Jesus Christ is the best source of true information; he said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (John 18:37.) Whoever chooses the truth is choosing Christ.

Visible, but *Not Real*

Every day we see many visible things which are not real. I am not referring to symbols of real things such as the word "CHAIR", a drawing of George Washington, or the celebration of the Passover to commemorate the exodus from Egypt. Rather I am referring to pictures or drawings or words which represent persons and sequences of events which are NOT REAL and never have been.

Untrue images are used to deceive with great success. During the Second World War a dead man was dressed up as a high-ranking officer, and a briefcase containing supposedly secret documents was handcuffed to his wrist. He was left floating offshore where the enemy would find him. They indeed found him, opened the briefcase, believed the documents, and consequently moved their military forces to defend themselves from the supposed attack.

Actually they were moving their forces away from the REAL attack. The attack as described in the dead man's documents did not even exist. The lying appearances confused the enemy.

I think you would agree that Mickey Mouse is very visible, but not real. In Disneyland a person walks around in a Mickey Mouse costume, but that person is not really named "Mickey Mouse". He has another name. No real live person exists in all the universe who is named "Mickey Mouse", who consists of a mouse wearing clothes, and who can talk like a man. My dear friend, how do you classify the untrue image of Mickey Mouse? Do you accept Picasso's assessment that Mickey is a lie which leads to the truth? Or do you believe God's assessment that man's imagination is continually thinking evil? Do you discount the danger of the "Mickey Mouse Lie" because you believe he is just an innocent cartoon figure which hurts no one? If so, you have accepted a lie disguised as a cartoon. How many other lies have you accepted into your life because they were disguised as something else? Don't you realize that untrue images exist for the purpose of misinforming and confusing, not for the purpose of enlightenment?

Choose a Smooth Stone

David chose a smooth stone, and with it he neutralized, and canceled out all of Goliath's weapons. You too will "choose a smooth stone" when you realize that a lie is a lie, no matter what name it has been given. Once you firmly understand that "No lie is of the truth", you can bypass Satan's entire arsenal of camouflaged weapons: lies disguised as cartoons; lies disguised as science; lies disguised as classic literature; lies disguised as best sellers; lies disguised as requirements to graduate; lies disguised as company policy; lies disguised as your favorite music; lies disguised as business astuteness, lies disguised as laws; lies disguised as cosmetics; lies disguised as family entertainment; lies disguised as statistics; lies disguised as progress; lies disguised as patriotism; lies disguised as national security; lies disguised as news reports; lies disguised as politics (pretty easy to see this one); lies disguised as jokes; lies disguised as games; lies disguised as credit; lies disguised as riches; lies disguised as top priorities; lies disguised as

our “rights”; and even lies disguised as orthodox theology. The list goes on and on without end.

Human imagination wraps all its lies in pretty packages. Our task as disciples of Jesus is to expose and tear down all the lies which our lives have embraced. From this time forward we are to learn to love God and obey his will, instead of following some man’s imagination, be it called “Art” or “Mickey Mouse” or “Progress” or “Baal”. Every fictitious character causes the human mind to move farther away from that which is real, from that which is truth, and from that which comes from God.

Hollywood, How Can Anyone Take You Seriously?

The movie industry might possibly be the world champion fabricator of unreal things that are visible. Most of the women on screen are not really married to the person whom they call their “husband”. The businessmen there are not really business men. They are actors. The scientists are not really scientists. They are actors. The mobsters are not really criminals. They are actors. The people kicking each other are not really fighting. The cars which burst into flames are not really careening out of control. Someone is controlling them very carefully, and earning thousands of dollars to do so. The accidents all happen on purpose. The people who seem so surprised are not surprised at all. The people who are weeping have learned to shed tears for pay. An important award is offered each year for the best “special effects” in a film, which are unreal things that look real. And I am expected to believe that all this “leads to truth”, as Picasso said?

A. W. Tozer objected to movies used for Christian purposes. He wrote: *“It is more than an etymological accident that the word “hypocrite” comes from the stage. It means actor... An actor is one who assumes a character other than his own and plays it for effect... To pretend to pray, to simulate godly sorrow, to play at worship before the camera for effect – how utterly shocking to the reverent heart! How can Christians who approve this gross pretense ever understand the value of sincerity as taught by our Lord? What will be the end of a generation of Christians fed on such a diet of deception disguised as the faith of our fathers?”*

The action you see on the movie screen (or on television) is not really happening. The images one sees do not correspond to the world which God created, and the things which happen there do not reflect the same laws of cause and effect. The sequence of events on screen do not have to obey the physical or moral laws which God created in the real universe. Objects can float in mid-air as if the law of gravity had been abolished, and evil behavior can be portrayed as having no painful consequences, as if the laws of God's judgment had been canceled.

Science Doesn't Take Hollywood Seriously

Because the "visible" events on the movie screen do not derive from the laws of the real world, no scientist studies them in an effort to discover truth. No astronomer would waste his time studying the skies in a Hollywood flick. No general would study the wars. No investor would study the economic trends in the movie. No psychologist would investigate people's "behavior" on the screen, knowing that such behavior is all fake. No chemist or physicist would try to get experimental data from the moving picture. No traffic engineer would study the faulty highway which caused the "accident" to happen. No policeman would examine the faces, looking for a suspect. No lawyer would study what happens on the screen, looking for a way to defend a man who had committed murder there.

Since the images on the screen do not represent the laws of reality, it is hard to understand then why millions of people would study them more than they study their natural surroundings. They watch the screen more than they "watch and pray". Many of them experience it even more than they experience real life. Certainly the full-color screen stimulates their feelings and thoughts, but such impressions cannot lead to "truth" because they were generated by lying images.

Picasso is correct in saying that "Art is a lie", but he is wrong in saying that such lies "make us realize truth". That is like saying that prostitution is immorality, but it makes us realize purity, or embezzling money is stealing, but it makes us realize honesty. It's the same lie as the serpent told Eve in the beginning: that

disobeying God will make us more like God. How could anyone take such arguments seriously? Is anything so obviously false as this type of reasoning? Yet even Eve, a perfect woman, believed it then, and most people still believe it today.

Picasso's error is believed by the vast majority of educators today who think that their students will discover "truth" through imaginative fictitious literature. Picasso's error is believed by most parents, who think that watching movies and televised drama will lead to something beneficial in their children. Picasso's error is believed by most churches who believe that clowns and actors and puppets can be used to convey "truth" to the lost.

Fiction and fantasy are not harmless. They are tools of deception. It is a serious sin to create untrue universes, imaginary characters, and unreal events. This is not following the example of Jesus and the apostles. To falsify reality is to bear false witness. Christians should be true witnesses of what God has done, not perpetrators of vain imaginations.

Observation, not Imagination

God commands men to use their powers of observation, not their powers of imagination. How many times does he command us to "Watch", "Look", or "Hear"? Now how many times does he command us to "Imagine"? Human imagination is never mentioned as a positive thing in Scripture. The reason for that is the fact that we were created by an infinitely superior being, and he wants us to be followers of him, not followers of our own vain imagination. God wants us to OBSERVE him, LEARN of him, and IMITATE him. He does not want us to fabricate unreal images. He does not want to be represented by painted clowns, talking animals, or golden calves.

If you think that human imagination is not harmful, you may not have considered why God hates idols. What the Bible calls "idols" were the first crude attempt to do what the television screen does today: to divert man's attention from reality to that which is unreal. The Bible explains that God does not need man-made images to express his reality. He has already provided another means through which mankind can understand the Creator, as

expressed in the following verse: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” (Acts 17: 24-28.)

In this Scriptural statement we see that God created the world and its contents in such a way that man can search for God, and find him there. The purpose of creation was communication: to display his glory to the angels and to men. Just as there is a correspondence between the visible words on this page and the invisible ideas being expressed , so also there is a correspondence between the things that happen in the real world and its unseen Creator. God is continually communicating with mankind through a full color screen that is not 26 inches wide, but stretches in three dimensions from horizon to horizon. The nature of God can be investigated by examining the world which he created. God can be known through the events which happen in the real world. This is essentially what the Bible also says in another place: “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed 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... (Romans 1:19-20)

Since God is invisible (like most of reality), he has designed visible processes and laws which represent his power and intelligence. The careful study of these visible things will lead to the knowledge of the true intelligence behind them. However, people tend to stop observing the real world around them, and begin to imagine unreal worlds of fantasy. Once they stop observing the real world, they stop communicating with God.

A wooden idol is a perfect example of a visible product of human imagination which interferes with the knowledge of God. The idol was imagined and created by a human being in accordance with human thoughts, not the thoughts of God. The idol looks like a

person, but is not a person. It looks like it has eyes, but cannot see. It looks like it has legs, but cannot walk; it needs to be carried by men. It supposedly has power to bring good harvests or healing or victory over one's enemies if it is given certain sacrifices, but such sacrifices are being offered to NO ONE! The idol in no way represents the things which God desires to communicate to mankind. God severely disapproves of the "false prophets" who promote such idols, and who imagine a message which did not come from above. It came from their own heart, that is, from their own imagination.

The idol has a "jamming" effect. "Jamming" means to interfere with the clear reception of radio signals. "Jamming the air waves" means to broadcast noise on the same frequency that an adversary is trying to use for communication. For example, the Nazis would "jam" the radio frequencies used by the English during World War 2. The loud static which the Nazis generated would prevent the allies of the English from hearing the communication.

In the same way, an idol or a film or a novel "jams" the communication between God and man by interjecting a false universe into the true universe. Cute little Mickey Mouse effectively captures the child's attention and thoughts, turning them away from the real world and from the God of reality. God is not the God of Mickey Mouse. He is not the God of any fictitious character. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Mat 22:32.)

What about "Christian" fiction? Authors who use God and Jesus in their novels are false witnesses. They are taking the name of the Lord in vain by including him in an untrue story. I'm sorry if that sounds harsh, but that's the way it is. The knowledge of God can only come through true words, not through fanciful art, exciting drama, mythology or untrue stories. Christians are exhorted to think about things which are "true", "honest", "just" and "pure", not things which are products of human imagination. Moses, the prophets, and Jesus Christ taught that the way to know God is through hearing the Word of God, and doing it.

Why are people attracted to puppets and clowns and made-up stories and animals that talk? Are the amazing workings of God's creation boring or insufficient to train a child?

As I am writing these words, a reddish wasp, about one inch long, landed directly in front of me, carrying a green caterpillar in its mouth. The caterpillar is about one and a half inches long and so heavy that the wasp cannot fly with it more than a short distance. The wasp seems tired. It is resting, while its stinger is going up and down. My seven year old daughter has now started to watch the wasp too. She is asking me whether scorpions are more dangerous than wasps. She also asked me if Noah took scorpions on the ark. I suggested that the fan air might be disturbing the wasp, so she turned it off. A few minutes later the wasp tried to fly, but went down into the waste basket. Now it has crawled out again, and flown down to the floor. It left its cargo on the lower corner of my daughter's sleeping mat, and flew up to the fluorescent light. My daughter now is asking me many things: "Are inchworms bad? Are caterpillars bad?" I explain that some caterpillars eat the leaves of the trees. "Why do wasps have stings? Do they have eggs, little eggs? What if we could watch it every day? What if we could watch it lay its eggs and watch them hatch? That would be lots of fun, right?"

Let this little wasp be a reminder to you that children can learn to seek the knowledge which of God put into the creation if we parents will point it out to them, rather than giving them make-believe. We do not need to follow the lead of the unbelievers, who use fantasy to attract the child's attention. We have a thousand times more real things we can use to delight the children, and they don't cost a penny. We just need to open up our eyes and use the REAL WORLD to teach our children. This takes effort on our part, and the temptation is to just shove the children off to watch a video of something easy and unreal. We parents need to repent of using fiction as a baby-sitter.

Jesus and the apostles showed us how to spread the knowledge of the truth: by being true witnesses of what God has done. We need to use the tools of discipleship (true words), not the tools of deception (fables and fiction). Select books for your children which use the real world and true stories in order to teach. Avoid the imaginary worlds of fantasy and fairy tales. Avoid the "spiritual fiction" which is so rampant in the church today.

Learn to recognize the work of deceiving spirits. The Bible is the

best example of how the Spirit of God handles biographical material. The Spirit of Truth does not add imaginary details to biographical material in order to “adorn” the truth. Such twisting of the truth is the mark of spirits of deception. In every generation God has called believers of good testimony, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to bear witness to his mighty acts. Seek books written by such people, and you will find them. “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (Mat 7:16.) Likewise, don’t expect to find words of truth among fables and fiction.

Jesus said to pray that God would send more laborers into his harvest. One of the important requirements for God’s servants is that they must be true witnesses. Teach your children to observe the world around them and accurately describe it in words. The people who are perishing desperately needs true witnesses to explain to them the works of God.

Luke noted that he had faithfully recorded the historical events: “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus...” (Luke 1:3.) Children should not be trained to write untrue accounts. If the words “creative writing” mean making up fictitious words, it would be better for children to NOT learn to be “creative”. A better word to describe mature writing would be “faithful”. God is searching for “faithful” men who will speak the truth, and not deviate from it. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. 2:2.)

The Seat of the Scornful

The unbelievers belittle and mock the people who love the truth. Pilate skeptically said, “What is Truth?” The famous English novelist Charles Dickens invented a character whom he named Thomas Gradgrind and who was “a man of realities. A man of facts and calculations.” Dickens put these words into Mr. Gradgrind’s mouth: “Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of

reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!”

See here how Dickens scorns the study of truth! Worldly wise men like Picasso and Dickens admit that their own works are not factual, even “lies”, and then invent imaginary, narrow-minded characters such as Mr. Gradgrind to vilify the virtue of studying facts. Why did Dickens name him “Gradgrind”? The word “grind” implies tedious labor. Is the study of facts really a “grind”, as Dickens insinuates?

Were not Mr. Gradgrind’s words really a reference to the words of Jesus Christ? Read them again, and you will see their hidden significance. Dickens is actually paraphrasing Jesus, who said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Mat. 4:4.) and “Sanctify them in thy truth. Thy Word is truth.” (John 17:17.)

Did Dickens mean that “Facts” are too dry, not flavorful, not enjoyable, and that we need clever make-believe to be entertained and feel happy. What kind of people would need lies to feel better? Dickens separated from his wife (the mother of their ten children) and lived with a mistress named Nelly Ternan for several years before his death.

However, men of integrity don’t need to find enjoyment in worldly imagination. The Truth is pure joy to them. “Charity...rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” (1Cor. 13:6.)

Did Dickens mean that “Facts” cannot adequately express social evils that need to be corrected? Actually, just the opposite is the case. It is easy for guilty men to use fiction to falsely accuse the innocent, but only the Facts really prove anyone to be guilty or innocent. Without the facts, there is no defense against any group of Nazis which condemns another group, turning public opinion against them. Without the facts, anyone can step up and claim that your house belongs to him. Only the facts of true history prove whether any nation’s behavior has provoked the wrath of God or not. What can fiction prove in court? Nothing at all. Every witness

swears to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. What can fiction discover in the laboratory? Nothing at all. Experimental observation cannot be imaginary.

Fiction cannot express the real problem, because fiction itself is part of the problem! The root problem is that men love lies more than they love the truth. Nor can fiction express the real solution, which is the solution which God gives: that men should repent of their lies and humbly ask God to teach them his truth. Fiction cannot build faith in God, because faith comes from hearing the TRUTH, not from hearing lies. Fiction in all its forms leads men away from the person of Jesus Christ.

The literature which the world calls the “Classics” is no more than fiction... human imagination... the “lies” to which Picasso was referring, wrapped in majestic language. F.B.Meyer stated: “The keen, intelligent, and well-informed intellectual can be completely ignorant of true knowledge.” Elegant fiction does not “lead us to the truth” any more than poorly written fiction, for it is only imagination. What good is it to dress a pig in an elegant dress? Such are the authors who dress up a lie in creative and expressive words and call it “fiction”.

The apostles did not need fiction. Fiction is like the shifting sand upon which the foolish man built his house. The apostles had something REAL to announce, and Jesus worked with them, confirming the message with miraculous healings. Christians are the ones who should be showing the world how to live without the need for fiction: how to live a life that glorifies the God of truth.

Only the truth, that rock which emanates from eternity past, and endures until eternity future, is the solid foundation upon which we and our children must build.

The Bible is a book of facts which describes the past, the present, and the future of this REAL creation. The truth of Jesus Christ’s words was established by the facts of his life, death, and resurrection. The disciples of Jesus must be a people who hold to the facts and who abstain from fiction.

Only swindlers, false prophets, and criminals want to do away with the Bible in particular and facts in general. The task before us is to be a people of truth, and teach our children the way of truth.

Art Dappen (1946-2006) was a leader in the homeschool movement in Mexico. He served for over 30 years as a missionary with his wife of 35 years, Linn. Art's ministry included the creation and free distribution of a Spanish reading program for homeschoolers. About two years before his home-going, he and Linn added seven Mexican orphans to their family, making them the parents of seventeen. Two married daughters in the U.S. have blessed them with 13 grandchildren (so far). Linn and the rest of the family continue to live and minister in Mexico.

Art received his high school education at an elite boarding school in Connecticut, and continued on to university. One day, as a new Christian in a graduate-level chemistry class, he came to a realization. As he studied the equations on the blackboard, the thought came to him: "Jesus Christ did not dedicate his life to what is written on that blackboard." He left school and purposed to serve the Lord.

A daughter said, "He always felt it was a privilege to throw it all away."

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