

Worshiping God in

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Exploring Religious Myths and Fables:

**The True Nature of Syncretizing
Religious Beliefs and Practices**

from the desk of: the Pastor

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There are five references to the term *fables* (which is an *uncomplimentary* term) in the Bible. The term itself is from the Greek term *muthos* – which is translated into English as *myth*, which is a “fictitious tale.” Most of us were introduced to *myths* and *fables* in our language arts studies in school and, in some measure, in our history classes. One vital element that might not have been taught us is that the *myth* is not just a story used to explain some kind of phenomenon or custom. For example: the myth about Demeter’s daughter Persephone being abducted and raped by Saturn, the god of the underworld, is a classic *myth* used to explain why there are four seasons. In reality, it is part of the ancient Eleusinian Religious Mysteries that were the stock and trade of pagan religious rituals that were acted out in order to induce their gods to bless the plowing, sowing, threshing, reaping, and storing of the grain harvests.

Consider the following quote from *The Great Cosmic Mother* by Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor:

Persephone...is the grain harvest who dies once a year and goes to the underworld. There, as the awesome, dreaded, and terrible Death Goddess, she rules over the dead for six months of every year. At the end of this time, in the spring, she is resurrected by her Mother and becomes Kore, the maiden, once again. Kore was the deity of youth and gaiety, the leader of the dancing nymphs [minor nature goddesses]. In these three aspects—the young Maiden, the benevolent Mother, and the Death Goddess—we can see the Triple Goddess of the Moon. (Harper-SanFrancisco; 1987; pp. 166, 167)

As you should be able to understand, the *myth* was used to explain a natural phenomenon in relationship to a pagan Mystery Religion. The nature of the *myth* was simple: (a) To those not initiated into the religion, it was a story with a superficial meaning; and (b) to those who were initiated into the religion, it had a deeper, more profound “spiritual” meaning about how to contact and, in some ways, manipulate a particular god to do the bidding of the initiate. In other words, the objective was to get the god to do man’s will.

It is from this perspective that we should understand the five references to *myths* and *fables* in the Bible, four of which are from Paul’s writings to Timothy and Titus and one is from Peter. Both men are marking out the profound dif-

ference between the worship of the pagan gods and the worship of the God of the Bible – a difference that must be understood by those who are to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth* (John 4:23, 24).

Both men are also demonstrating that there is a body of doctrines that constitute the *orthodoxy* of the “faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) which must be vigorously taught and vigorously defended. All teachers and preachers who preside over congregations claiming to be of the true faith are to be held in strict obedience to the received *faith* and *truth* – and...the congregations are to be held accountable for the things they accept as *orthodoxy*. Those in error are to be rebuked, corrected, and instructed in the *truth*. If they persist in their error, then they are to be avoided...which is the language of *disfellowshipment*. Why such a fuss over doctrine and faith? It is because of the firm belief that: (a) the True Church is God’s depository of His truth (1 Timothy 3:15) and (b) His true ministers are the transmitters of that true faith and doctrine (read 1 Timothy 4:6, 16; 6:3-5, 14, 20; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2, 14-16, 23; 3:14-17; and Titus 1:9-11; 2:1).

Let’s take a brief look at the five references and glean from them a paradigm that will help us in understanding the discussions that follow regarding the true nature of *syncretizing* religious beliefs. This discussion is going to require a spiritual focus that you might not ordinarily give to religious subject matter. Trust me, it will be well worth the effort and will leave you in possession of spiritual wisdom and understanding that you might not otherwise have encountered (read Proverbs 4:7).

It is generally recognized by biblical scholars that the writers of the New Testament were combating all manner of heresies that arose in the fledgling Church. This was especially true of Paul, John, Jude, James, and Peter. What is not generally stated is that these were “Christian” heresies. Both Jewish and Gentile converts into True Christianity were prone to bring into the true faith and doctrine elements of their prior religious associations. In such religious postures, they were prone to “vain discussions,” “unwarranted speculations,” “controversy and disputes about words,” and “godless chatter and conversation” which led them to “reject a godly conscience” and be “delivered to Satan.” This has been the fight of the true faith from the beginning (see Matthew 24:4, 5 and 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15).

What these men of God were fighting is better known as the *syncretization* of religious beliefs. The meaning of the

term is quite revealing. It is the mixing and mingling of opposing and/or contradictory beliefs and principles by unnatural and illogical compromise that is inconsistent with the original belief structures. For example: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 is Paul's argument about the *resurrection of the dead*, which is reaction to a "Christian" heresy in which elements of the pagan belief in the *immortality of the soul* were *syncretized* into the true faith. It also has to do with whether or not Jesus Christ was, in fact, a human being – "God" in the flesh. It was "Christian" Gnosticism. Paul's argument is that the concept being touted by the heretics is a *gross contradiction* of the *orthodoxy* of the true faith.

If the doctrine of the *immortality of the soul* posits that the individual goes *immediately* to his reward or punishment upon his death, then it is a plain *contradiction* of God's clear message from the beginning (see Genesis 3:19-22)! Paul points out in vv. 21-58 that the man of faith must be "born again" into a spirit body *when Christ returns* (vv. 46-52). Why? It is simple: Man is *mortal* and must *put on* incorruption and immortality (vv. 53, 54; see also John 3:3-8). Only at the return of Jesus Christ will the resurrections to eternal life or death begin (see Jesus' comment about past history in John 3:13 and Paul's comment about Jesus Himself in Acts 26:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Those not of the true faith who prove to be incorrigibly wicked must be raised from the dead in a physical body and be *destroyed* (see John 5:25-29; Revelation 20:13-15, and Malachi 4:1-3). The heretics Paul was addressing were *changing God's truth into a lie* (Romans 1:25)! That is the nature of a *syncretic* religion. And...traditional "Christianity" is *syncretic* through and through (at this point, think of Christmas and Easter as two such examples).

Let me paraphrase the first reference in 1 Timothy 1:4-11 because it is the benchmark of the truth involved:

...Stop the men who are teaching wrong doctrines among you. Put an end to the myths and fables they teach...as well as their ideas that one can be saved by finding favor with a chain of angels that lead up to God [this is "Christian" Gnosticism] and wild ideas that cause more questions and arguments than they do to settle people's minds on God's truth.... These false teachers miss the entire concept of God's plan and spend their time arguing and talking about nonsense. They desire to become great teachers of the laws of Moses, but they don't have the slightest idea what Moses shows us in that law.... These laws and all others [in scripture] are made to identify as sinners...those who do things that contradict the glorious gospel of God....

Now, apply that same reasoning to 1 Timothy 4:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; Titus 1; and 2 Peter 1. The common element in

these references is fairly simple: (a) There is a body of orthodox doctrinal truth to which the true Christian is to adhere, and (b) that orthodoxy must not be adulterated with things that compromise or contradict its revealed truth (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Jude 3).

The problem is real amid the 32,000+ "Christian" denominations among the population of the world today. It is a very real problem for the people who are in search of the *truth* of God because they have to wade through so many "orthodoxies" that not only contradict and conflict within the individual denominations...they contradict and conflict among their religious competitors. Some searchers weary quickly. Some settle for something *close*. Some abandon the search altogether because they come to believe that the truth is not worth the effort it takes to find it.

In this issue, my objective is to lead you through a discussion about issues in today's "Christianity" that have the effect of "changing God's truth into a lie" (Romans 1:25). It will be a frank discussion that is supported with appropriate scriptural references and logical discussion. I already know that this discussion will make sense to some and no sense to others. I already know that some will get frustrated because of the change that will be required in their thinking – and they will quit (read John 6:48-68). I realize that centuries of *conditioning* have been spent to get you where you are in your present belief system...and changing that religious paradigm is going to take the influence of God's Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to God's *truth* (John 6:44, 65; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16). Be prepared to invest considerable personal spiritual capital in acquiring the truth of God, if, indeed, that is what you seek here.

Give me this time to convince you about God's *truth* – to make His argument that something has gone awry among men that has tainted His *truth* to the point that He will not even associate His holy name with it (read Exodus 20:1-7, Jeremiah 7:1-16, Matthew 7:21-23, and 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). I promise you that it will be time well spent because you will have opened to you an opportunity to inherit the heavens and the earth with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:15-17; Colossians 1:9-23) and to set out on an *eternal* trek that will absolutely *blow your mortal mind* (1 John 3:1-3).

In Christ's Service,

Larry E. Ford, Pastor
The Seventh Day Christian Assembly

“...If you are Christ's, then you are the seed of Abraham and heirs according to God's promise to him” (Galatians 3:29; read also Genesis 15 and Hebrews 6:13-20).

In This Issue

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The Christmas Myth: What is the *scriptural truth* about the birth of Jesus Christ? Is there any way to *really* determine the *exact date* of His birth? Is there any *specific command* in scripture that we should celebrate His birth in any manner whatsoever? Or, is this simply a tradition of man that overextends itself into a realm of worship that God never required or sanctified? Page 12

The Myth of the Immortal Soul: There is much more to the *myth* of the immortal soul than most people of "faith" know or understand. They can be as Jesus described the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:22: *They worship a God that they really **do not understand** and wrap themselves in religious beliefs that He did not reveal to the world.* The objective of this study, therefore, is to unwrap some of the elements of the *myth* of the immortal soul and to understand why God does not associate His name with such religious concepts. Page 22

The Myth Behind Halloween: The objective of this study is: (a) to acquaint you with the *myth* behind Halloween and (b) to compare that *myth* to the record of God's revelation, the *Holy Bible*. Would *it recommend* that you get involved with *Halloween* and give yourself over to the meaning and religious significance of such a supposedly *hallowed* event that is based on the dead and witches and ghosts and magic and frivolity? The objective, then, is to give you an *assessment* of its *relative worth* and *validity*. Page 27

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The Primacy of “Self”

When one refers to the “primacy of self,” there is intended the idea that no other being can dictate to the individual in matters of *life* how s/he must act, think, live, worship, et cetera, et cetera. In some religious circles, there is a similar concept referred to as “the competency of the *soul* in matters of *religion*.” This concept proposes that *self* – that is, the “soul” – is the Lord and Master of the individual’s religious realm, and no other being can occupy that sacred seat. The given in this situation is that one’s belief/faith paradigm must be maintained under the sufficiency of *God*, not under the sufficiency of *man*. That, of course, can be a Catch-22 situation – that is, a situation designed to ultimately produce good but, instead, sometimes gives rise to bad/evil that counterbalances any good that is ultimately derived from it.

When Martin Luther sought to reform the Roman Catholic Church, he used Habakkuk 2:4 as his justification for the *religious* primacy of self: “...The just shall live by his faith...” (see also Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). When this is coupled with a scripture like Philippians 2:12 (“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”), it appears that “self” is put into a powerfully responsible position regarding faith and salvation. Following this postulate, Luther declared that “Every believer is a priest under Jesus Christ and has the right to read and interpret the scriptures for himself as the Holy Spirit leads him.” So, Luther took for granted that this postulate was true and that it marked a starting point in a line of reasoning aimed at overthrowing the hierarchical government of the Roman Catholic Church. Was this a Catch-22?

The objective of this study is to examine this and other similar postulates and determine their veracity. How much *right* does God give man to read and interpret the scriptures for himself? How *competent* is he to do such a thing? What part does a *soul* play in this? And...what is the true role of the Holy Spirit? The answers to these questions are as intriguing as they are revealing about *God’s will* – and His scriptures are rather plain about it. Read Proverbs 14:12 at this point.

Correctly Handling God’s Revealed Truth

The concept of “soul” plays a prominent role in this discussion. This concept can be the source of one of the *fabes/myths* of which the Apostle Paul spoke in 1 Timothy 1:4-11. As stated above, the “primacy of self” is very much a part of what is called “the competency of the *soul* in matters of religion.” The aim of this part of the discussion is to determine if that concept is faulty because of the use of that term *soul*. If so, what does the larger discussion contribute to our understanding of God’s revelation about any *priesthood* with which the believer might be vested (see 2 Timothy 2:15)?

In 1908, E. Y. Mullins wrote a book titled *The Axioms of Religion* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society) in which he asserted that the *distinctive* belief of Baptists is “the competency of the soul in religion” (Chapter 3: “The Historical Significance of the Baptists”; p. 58). He declared that the principle is a *New Testament* concept. Right away, one might wonder why it has no relationship to anything revealed by God in the *Old Testament*.

Herschel H. Hobbs, author of *The Baptist Faith and Message* – a Southern Baptist publication (Nashville: Convention Press; 1971) – says that the concept:

Entails God’s revelation of himself and man’s ability to receive, understand, and respond to the revelation. For the Christian it involves the presence of the indwelling Christ through the person of the Holy Spirit who guides believers into all spiritual truth...

“Religion is a personal matter between the *soul* and God.”

But it includes all elements of true faith. Out of this principle flow all other elements of Baptist belief such as belief in God in his *triune* revelation, authority of the scriptures, baptism, regenerated church membership, local church autonomy, *priesthood of believers*, social action (both corporate and individual), *soul freedom*, and the separation of church and state.

The *competency of the soul in religion* is the source of such beliefs. (pp. 8, 9; emphasis added)

So, now we have other elements to which we need to pay attention that enter the discussion: (a) the *triune revelation* of God, (b) the *priesthood of the believer*, and (c) *soul free-*

dom. Is it possible that the *fable/myth* problem expands at this point? Let's see.

The renowned comedian, Bill Cosby, once did a routine about some surgery he underwent under local anaesthesia. As the doctor went through his protocol for calling for various surgical instruments, there came a point where he said: "Oops!" Cosby caught that comment and asked: "What do you *mean* when you say 'Oops!?' I know what *I* mean...but what do *you* mean?" This is illustrative of the problem we face when trying to sort out *meaning* from what people say and write. It is possible to agree with what someone *says*, yet disagree with him about what he *means by what he says*. ***It is here that the discussion must be had about meaning because if the concept about the competency of the soul is faulty, then the other elements of the so-called "true faith" become suspect.***

Hobbs says that the concept of the "priesthood of the believer" grants to the believer the "right to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself as he is led by the Holy Spirit." He adds the caveat that the interpretation "...must be in harmony with the overall teachings of the Bible" (Ibid.; p. 10). That caveat also warns us that we must follow Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "...rightly divide [others say "correctly/properly handle"] the word of truth..."

You can continue to follow that caveat in Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5, 6; and Revelation 22:18 – all of which carry the warning that you will be reproved by God in some manner and exposed as being a *liar* if you *add to or take away from* God's revelation of His truth. Admittedly, many well-meaning, sincerely religious people do not intentionally *lie* in matters of religious beliefs – but...because of the deception by Satan the Devil and the self-deception they create in their own minds and hearts, they *spread* the lies that are foisted off on them and self-inflicted (see 2 Corinthians 4:1-4; 11:4, 13-15; Romans 1:25; John 8:44; and 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). This matter is serious enough for us to investigate God's word to find His truth about it (see Acts 17:10, 11).

The Triune God

All of the New Testament writers had only the *Old Testament* to use as their reference scriptures. So, the first question with regard to the "triune God" is whether or not this *triune* concept of "God" is an *Old Testament* revelation. After all, it is to the *Old Testament* revelation that Jesus refers when He cites Deuteronomy 8:3 in His defense against Satan's temptation (see Matthew 4:4). So, one might correctly wonder, then, if the *Holy Spirit* would lead anyone to discover the revelation of a single God who reveals Himself in three different "persons" or "faces": a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit. After all, it is the providence of the *Holy Spirit* to lead the believer into all of God's *truth* so that you can

effectively live by every word of God (see John 14:26; 16:13-15).

Deuteronomy 18:21 "ups the ante" in this situation by posing the question: "How shall we *know* the word which the Lord has *not* spoken?" (emphases added). This question suggests that there are those who present a religious argument in which scripture is freely used to "validate" their claims. Read the context of vv. 15-22. Verses 19 and 20 suggest that God will exact a penalty from those who do not teach His word correctly – especially if they mix in the "business" of other gods. Verse 20 warns against speaking *presumptuously* in God's name. It is here that you apply such scriptures as 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 11:4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1; and Jude. What does this discussion teach you? For what are you now going to be looking in religious presentations?

So, following Hobbs's caveat, we can agree that one's interpretation of the scriptures *must be in harmony with the overall teaching of the Bible*. Such a warning is something that is settled upon as being true – in this case, we have shown it to be true by the scriptures themselves. It is very difficult to argue against it. So, let's follow it as we sort through the following concepts from traditional teachings.

If you read the Bible from cover to cover, would you find enough significant *revelation* to determine that there is only one "God" who plays three separate roles? What if I could give you sufficient scriptural revelation that would *contradict* such a notion? Can you be convinced otherwise by that evidence? I know, generally speaking, that it would be very difficult for you to go against the history of "accepted" orthodoxy and believe something that is *strange* to you – even though it comes straight out of the Bible. Nevertheless, let's engage in the conversation and see where the Holy Spirit will lead us in it.

The first mention of "God" in the Old Testament is found in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning *God* created the heaven and the earth" (emphasis added). The Hebrew term for "God" is *elohim*. *Elohim* is generally recognized as a *plural noun* because of the *-im* suffix. It is what is called a *collective noun* – a noun that names a *plurality* like *family*, *group*, *team*, *class*, and *club*. The singular of *elohim* is *el* and *eloah*. Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 show Jesus using the *singular* term as He was dying on the cross: "Eli/Eloi, Eli/Eloi, lama sabachthani."

Take note of the following commentary in *The Scofield Reference Bible* (Oxford Press, 1945 edition, p. 3) in reference to Genesis 1:1:

Elohim (sometimes *El* or *Eloah*), English form of "God," the first of three primary names of Deity, is a uni-plural noun [otherwise known as a *collective noun*] formed from *El* = strength, or the strong one,

and *Alah*, to swear, to bind oneself by an oath, so implying faithfulness. This uni-plurality implied in the name is ***directly*** asserted in Genesis 1:26 (plurality), 27 (unity); see also Genesis 3:22. ***Thus the Trinity is latent in [the term] Elohim.*** (bold-faced and underlined emphases added)

It is evident that Dr. Scofield makes a jump into *Trinitarianism* based on the *plural* nature of the term *elohim*. I believe that he does so because of his *Trinitarian* religious roots. He is not a “believer” who knows that he has been dealt a *lie*. From this point on in his work, he wants any reference to “God” is to be understood by the reader under the umbrella of the *Trinitarian* doctrine. Those who believe in this concept will use Dr. Scofield’s notes as “proof” that the doctrine is *biblical truth*. After all, he has produced an edition of the Bible filled with copious reference notes; so, he must be right. *Knowledge* does not make one *scripturally correct*.

Adam Clarke, in his eight-volume commentary that took him almost 40 years to write, have published, and submitted for public consumption in 1826, admits that *elohim* is a plural noun – the plural form of *el* or *eloah* – and that this Plurality acts in unison with “...one will, one purpose, and one infinite and uncontrollable energy” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary: One-Volume Edition*, Baker Book House, 1967, p. 16). ***But, does he speak contrary to scriptural revelation when he attributes this plurality to a trinity of persons revealed “...in so many parts of the sacred writings...”*** (Ibid.)? Could it be that the majority of professing “Christians” have been led astray about who/what “God” truly is?

Here is a simple example of how they would use scripture to come to the conclusion that there is one God who manifests Himself in three “persons” or “faces.” They read Genesis 1:1 and note the *plurality* – and note that the *plural* form is used throughout Genesis 1. They notice in Genesis 1:2 that the “*Spirit of God*” is also involved in the action. Then they read in Genesis 2:4 that there is also a *Lord God (Yahweh Elohim)* involved in the creation. By some reasoning, they conclude that there is a “God” who is the mightiest of all “gods” (*Elohim*) who manifests Himself in *spirit* for the purpose of creating. He is thereafter called *Lord God* because that is the role He played as the *creator* God. They believe that any reasonable person should be able to see the *three-fold nature* of “God” from those actions – that “...the Trinity is latent in *Elohim*....”

The following comment from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1969 edition; vol. 22; article “Trinity”; p. 241) gives us reason to question such a conclusion:

...Most Christian theologians have found it *impossible* to say what the Bible says about the nature of God *without resorting to something like the orthodox dogma of the Trinity.* (emphasis added)

I cannot cite a specific source, but I remember reading one time that Dr. Billy Graham said that explaining the Trinity was one of the most difficult theological problems he ever faced. Now, add to that the preceding comments made in the article that neither the word *Trinity* nor the *explicit* – that is, the *clearly stated* or *definitely shown* – doctrine appears in any one place in the Bible. That fact alone would restrict one’s ability to explain the doctrine *scripturally*.

One might be concerned if such a so-called *central doctrine* of scripture is not *clearly stated* or *definitely shown*, but has to be clumsily put together from bits and pieces of scripture that really are not related to such a revelation of the nature of “God.” And...*dogma* is a doctrine or belief formally proclaimed by a church body and does not have to be specifically demonstrable from the Bible. An example of this kind of *dogma* is the birth of Jesus Christ on December 24. There is no specific statement in scripture that such was the case...and it can be demonstrated in scripture that the birth took place sometime between mid-September and mid-October.

Here is where we must pay attention to the above-stated caveat that the interpretation must be in *harmony* with the *overall teachings* of the Bible. If you go *outside* the Bible and add into the mix various concepts from *pagan* religions and philosophies, then you have violated God’s warning about *adding to* or *taking away from* God’s revelation. Has this been the case – historically speaking? I ask this because so many are not aware of the history of traditional “Christianity” and how it got to be what it is today and how it acquired the various teachings it presents to the world. I have some quotes that I want you to consider in this discussion – pay close attention to what their authors *say* and *mean*.

Alexander Hislop made the following observation in his phenomenal work *The Two Babylons* (Loizeaux Brothers; 1916; p. 12):

[The Babylonian] Mysteries were long shrouded in darkness....All who have paid the least attention to the literature [and religions] of Greece, Egypt, Phenicia [sic], or Rome are aware of the place which the ‘Mysteries’ occupied in these countries, and that, whatever circumstantial diversities there might be, in all *essential* respects these ‘Mysteries’ in the different countries were the same.

...*Babylon was the primal source from which all these systems flowed*, so the deductions of the most learned historians, on mere historical grounds, have led to the same conclusion.

He subsequently points out how profuse the belief in one “God” was in the ancient world and that the Babylonians used the *equilateral triangle* to symbolize their doctrine of

the Trinity – even created an idol with three heads on one body “...*overlaid with idolatry...*” (emphasis added). Then he excuses the whole mess by saying that this doctrine was deeply-rooted in the ancient nations of the world and that it “...comes out so *distinctly* in Genesis” (pp. 16-18; emphasis added). Does he mean that it is so obvious that any *fool* should be able to see it and understand it?

Now note this comment:

Some have said that the *plural* form of the name of God, in the Hebrew in Genesis, affords no argument for the doctrine of the plurality of persons in the Godhead [that is, one “God” playing three different roles], because the same word in plural is applied to heathen divinities. *But if the supreme divinity in almost all ancient heathen nations was triune, the futility of this objection must be manifest.*

...The *triune* emblem of the supreme Assyrian divinity shows clearly what had been the original patriarchal faith. (Ibid., p. 17; emphases added)

Note the assertion: “...*shows clearly...*” Yet, his discussion shows that the original *pagan* concept was based on three separate “persons” (Nimrod, his wife Semiramis, and, supposedly, their son Horus, who was regarded as the reincarnation of Nimrod through a miraculous birth on the night of December 24) – not one “God” who plays three separate roles. Hislop admits that these three came to be known as the Eternal Father, the Spirit of God incarnate in a human mother, and a divine Son, the fruit of that incarnation.

What we should take away from this discussion is that the doctrine of the Triune God is not simply one that has been revealed in scripture. It is one that has been introduced into so-called “Christian” thought from *paganism*. It began in Babylon and was adopted by other nations, directly or indirectly, and given local “flavors” to make it their very own.

Alvin Boyd Kuhn, author of *Who Is This King of Glory?* (Academy Press; 1944), makes the following assertion based on information from Benjamin Bacon, a Yale theologian:

[There were]...vital changes in early Christianity...to the effect that it has been credibly estimated that Christianity lost one half of its following to Marcion and other Gnostic “heretics” bent on divorcing it from its Jewish affiliations and making it over *in the true likeness of a Hellenistic Mystery cult* of personal redemption. ...[Baron von] Mosheim also says that Origen “*had introduced the Academy*” – Orphic esotericism – “*entire into the fabric of Christian theology.*” Augustine a little later came from sitting at the feet of Plotinus, and, previously tinged with

Manichaeism, introduced the Plotinic-Platonic doctrine of the “three fundamental hypostases” into Christianity as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. (p. 312; emphases added)

Pay close attention to the source of this *additional theology*. Is it coming from *God’s revelation in scripture*? No. It is coming straight out of *Babylonian-inspired paganism*. That would make it very difficult to *harmonize* it with the overall message of scriptures.

Finally, *Britannica* says this:

Initially, both the requirements of monotheism inherited from the Old Testament and the implications of the need to interpret biblical teaching to Greco-Roman paganism to demand that the divine Christ as the Word or *Logos* be seen as subordinate to the Supreme Deity. An alternative solution was to interpret *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three modes of self-disclosure of the one God*, but not as distinct within the being of God itself. (p. 241; emphases added)

It was not until A.D. 325 that the first form of the present traditional Christian doctrine of the *Triune God* was formulated and accepted at Nicaea. It was a finely crafted piece of *syncretism*...a practice that scripture sternly warns against.

In this practice, they continued a long line of acts by which they changed the truth of God into a lie (Romans 1:25) and adopted *pagan* religious and philosophical practices into their concept of “Christianity.” This was a direct violation of God’s warnings in Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and Jeremiah 10:1, 2. Once that line is crossed, the resultant doctrines are *unclean* in God’s sight and not worthy to have His holy name attached to them (see Haggai 2:11-14).

The irony involved in all of the arguments and discussions they had leading up to Nicaea A.D. 325 is that they could have found their answers in scriptures instead of philosophy and pagan beliefs and practices. John wrote in John 1:1-3 that *in the beginning* there were two God-beings who were associated with one another – one of whom created all that was created. The *Word* was the one who became flesh and dwelt among us (v. 14). Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5-11 that the one who became known as Jesus Christ had pre-existed as a God-being who was equal to His companion. He divested Himself of His equality and assumed a *subordinate* position in order to come as the human sacrifice for mankind’s sins (see John 15:13 and Hebrews 10:5-9).

As a result of that unselfish act, the one we now know as the Father took a more discreet position and temporarily surrendered all power in heaven and on earth to His companion (see Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:7-23) in order for Him to bring about the creation and to be in charge of guiding the

plan they had made about expanding their *kind* (see Genesis 1:26-28; Ephesians 1:4-10; 1 John 3:1-3). When this plan will have reached its conclusion, this Jesus – who admitted this subordinate position in many places in scripture (see for examples John 5:17-47; 14:28) – will return all of that power to God the Father and again make Himself subordinate to Him (see 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Read John 14:16, 26 and 15:26 to figure out that the *Holy Spirit* is not a separate “personage” assumed by one God who reveals Himself in three different roles.

The Priesthood of the Believer

How scripturally correct is the concept that each individual believer is *presently* a priest under Jesus Christ? It is vital to understand whether or not this religious concept is true. Why? Well...if it is not true, then there are millions of Christians who are assuming a religious role not presently given to them by God. How serious is that?

There are numerous scriptures that address the sin of *presumption* either directly or indirectly. Sometimes it is addressed as *imaginings of the heart* (Deuteronomy 29:19, 20) or as a *haughty heart* (Psalm 131:1). David prays in Psalm 19:13: “Keep back your servant also from *presumptuous* sins; let them not have dominion over me...” (emphasis added). In Hebrews 5:1-5, Paul says that even Jesus Christ did not *presume* to take upon Himself the honor of being our *high priest*. He was made our High Priest by God the Father (vv. 4, 5).

So, the question remains about whether or not Luther was *presumptuous* in his claim that every individual believer is *presently* a priest under Jesus Christ. If so, then we have to look at all of those who accept at face value that Luther was speaking *God’s truth* when he put out this most pervasive doctrine into traditional Christianity. Are they equally *presumptuous* because they do not do due diligence in *proving* whether or not that doctrine *harmonizes* with the overall message of scripture? What has been the “fruit” of Luther’s teaching?

32,000+ competing, contradicting “Christian” denominations – each believing that it has the “right” to interpret God’s revelation in the sense that they teach it. How does that stack up against the unity and oneness spoken of in Ephesians 4:1-6? It is patently obvious to the observant person that “Christianity” as it exists today is far, far, removed from such *unity* and *oneness*. And, that does not even begin to address the differences of opinions that exist *within* each of those 32,000+ denominations! It even smacks of the comment in Judges 21:25: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right *in his own sight*” (emphasis added).

The idea given by Paul in Hebrews 5:1-11 is that an individual has to be *called* by God to the priestly office. It is

widely assumed that becoming a “Christian” *automatically* puts you into the priestly office from day one. What about those who are only around 10-11 years old when they make their professions of faith? How has the *neophyte* been *trained* for the position? How *equal* is the *neophyte* to someone who has been there for a couple of decades? You can get an idea about this problem when you read 1 Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 5:11-14. The point Paul makes in both cases is that those who are feeding on milk are “...unskilled in the word of righteousness because [they] are [spiritual babes]...” (Hebrews 5:13; emphases added).

Paul was having difficulty teaching these “babes” the more difficult spiritual concepts because they simply were not *spiritually* ready to learn them...they were incapable of *listening attentively to his instruction*. In my educational background and personal experience, I know that it is difficult to listen attentively to something that you do not understand. It is also very difficult to teach someone something that they simply are incapable of grasping.

Paul goes on to say that he has to teach them the *first principles* *again* because they have not sufficiently learned them – even those who had been around long enough to be *teaching* others (5:12). He demonstrates in 6:1, 2 the content of the *first principles*. They must be mastered before one can go on to spiritual maturity. God does not “zap” you on day one so that you are wonderfully and fully spiritually mature. Jesus alludes to this growth process in Luke 18:15-17 (see also 2 Peter 3:18).

In discussing the rules for ordaining ministers in 1 Timothy 5:17-22, Paul says: “Do not be in a hurry to lay the hands of ordination on any man.” Why? Because you might overlook his inexperience, or you might mistake his relative spiritual *zeal* for a spiritual *maturity* that he does not have. The results can be that the one on whom you hastily lay the hands of ordination can become “puffed up” and proud...and be robbed of the very character he needs to have in such an office. Trust me: God is in no hurry. He does not will that untrained *children* should be given the reins that belong in the hands of the *trained* and *mature*.

How can the *disparate* theological conclusions be credited to the leadership of the *Holy Spirit*? Can you say *spiritual schizophrenia*? The Lord God (*Yahweh Elohim*) says in Malachi 3:6 that He is not *duplicitous* – that is, He does not say one thing but mean another. How could a duplicitous, schizophrenic Holy Spirit lead us into all of God’s truth if that truth can be so differently interpreted by *every* individual believer under the leadership of the *same* Holy Spirit?

Hebrews 12 is a lesson in receiving the *training* and *discipline* needed to occupy such an office (note especially v. 10). Hebrews 5:1-10 is Paul’s discussion of how Jesus Christ, as a human, was *trained* for the position of High Priest that He would assume after He had been resurrected from the death He suffered on our behalf (vv. 8, 9). So, His

ascent to His priestly office came *subsequent* to His training and His change from flesh to spirit when He was resurrected from the dead.

You can get another glimpse of this in Hebrews 9:23-10:14. He had to be made *spirit* in order to enter the true Holy of Holies with His own blood for the New Covenant (9:23, 24). Once that was done, He was able to take His place at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest and Advocate (10:12; see also Hebrews 1 and 1 John 2:1).

So, when does the true Christian receive his *priesthood* under Jesus Christ? Revelation 5:9, 10 is a vision for the *future*; it is not *present* reality. It is a vision about true Christians being made *kings* and *priests* on the earth *when Jesus Christ sets up the Kingdom of God* (see also Revelation 11:15 and Zechariah 14:9). Revelation 20:4-6 makes this clearer by showing that the *resurrected* true Christian will occupy three unique rulership positions under Jesus Christ in that Kingdom: *judges, priests, and kings*. *This will not be put into effect until Jesus Christ returns to set up the Kingdom of God*. Once the True Church is changed from flesh to spirit (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), it will be capable of reigning with Christ *forever* thereafter and subduing the enemies of God during that 1,000-year Kingdom Period of reconciliation to the Father (Colossians 1:19, 20).

This is the short story regarding a biblical truth. It harmonizes with the overall message of scripture (see Genesis 1:26-28). The priesthood of the believer is *not* a present reality. The present reality is that the believer is a *student*...a *disciple* in *training* for the future position that he will be given by Jesus Christ. It is presumptuous to think that any newly repentant human being is already prepared for such a position on day one of his conversion.

The Role of “Soul”

However poetic that caption might appear, it is misleading to think in terms of “soul” when discussing spiritual *competency*. Here again, we must ask what is *meant* by the expression “soul” when Hobbs says that doctrine: “Entails God’s revelation of himself and man’s ability to receive, understand, and respond to the revelation.” If Hobbs means something *different* from what any given reader of his work means, then you have a problem in conveying God’s *truth* when attaching disparate meanings to the term.

In typical definitions given to the term, it can mean “a person” (example: “There were 27 *souls* killed in the airplane crash”) and “an entity without material reality, regarded as the spiritual part of a person” (example: “God sent the man’s *soul* to hell for his sins”). This is where we must focus our attention on what is *meant* by the term *soul* when it is asserted that the *soul* is *competent* in matters of religion. If it is, how can a *soul* be sent to *hell* for everlasting

torment? Is it due to *incompetence*? Agreeing with such a notion presupposes that the *soul* has just as much of a chance to be *incompetent* as it does to be *competent*. Is there a *mythology* at work here that supports all of the relationships that exist between souls and going to heaven or hell? You need to understand this.

In his explanation about the creation of man (see Genesis 1:27; 2:7), Hobbs makes the following comment:

Three things may be said about man. His body is akin to the natural elements. His physical life is akin to all animal life. But as a *living soul* he is made in God’s image and likeness. It should be noted that man was made to live forever. It was after he sinned that he became subject to death. However, for that reason man’s animal principle of life shall cease; his body shall return to the ground (Gen. 3:19). But his *soul*, ***the real person***, is immortal. It will never cease to be.

Man is twofold in nature. He is both *spirit* and *body*. Man is *not* a body and has a soul. ***He is a soul and has a body***. The body is mortal; the soul is immortal. (p. 51; emphases added).

What shall we make of this definition of *soul* as it relates to *man*?

It should be plain that Hobbs believes that *soul* is the *real person* in the body-and-soul combination that supposedly makes up man. This concept teaches that the *real person* is not the *body*, but an *invisible, immaterial, immortal soul that thinks, hears, sees, feels, smells, and tastes...and lives on consciously forever, whether or not it occupies a body*. Is this definition revealed in God’s word, or is it a *myth/fable* that has been *added* to God’s revelation by man? If it is a *myth/fable*, from where did it come?

Hobbs references Genesis 1:27 and 2:7 in defining “man.” As shown above, he says “...as a *living soul* [man] is made in the image and likeness of God.” Then, he discusses the idea of the *soul* being the *real person* that is housed in a body. His assertion that “The *competency of the soul in religion* is the source of [the basic Baptist] beliefs” (pp. 8, 9; emphasis added), therefore, must be assessed upon the merits of what he means by the term *soul*.

Let me inject at this point that the expression *living soul* in the *KJV* account of Genesis 2:7 has nothing to do with an *immortal soul*. Genesis 3:22 is very explicit that the Lord God prevented Adam and Eve from gaining *immortality* after casting them out of the Garden of Eden after their sin. That tells me that they were not already *immortal* in any way whatsoever. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 that *immortality* and *incorruption* have to be ***put on*** – and ...that is not possible *until the return of Jesus Christ* (see also

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Hebrews 11:39, 40).

Norman H. Snaith, in his exposition of Genesis 2:7 in *The Interpreter's Bible* ("The Language of the Old Testament," vol. 1, 1952, p. 230) says the following:

...There is not *one single instance in the Old Testament* where the word "soul" should be thought of as that which survives death....If, therefore, the belief in the immortality of the human soul is held to be a *Christian doctrine*, then it should be realized that *it is not a biblical doctrine*. The biblical doctrine is of a resurrection life [that is, raising the dead back to life] for those who "have the spirit" and are "in Christ".... (emphases added)

In effect, Snaith says that there is a difference between what some Christians believe and what the Bible actually teaches.

John Short, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, adds this:

The Christian doctrine [of life-after-death] is *not* one of [innate, inherent] immortality but of resurrection....*There is nothing in Paul's writings nor in the N.T. to suggest that the soul is inherently immortal*. (vol. 10, p. 253; emphases added)

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 uses the same Hebrew word for *soul* as Genesis 2:7. Many translations render it *living person* or *living being*. The term *nephesh* refers to all creatures that are living, breathing beings – even after they have died because they *had been* living, breathing beings.

The Jewish Encyclopedia says:

The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principle exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended.

So, it appears that the concept came from *pagan* religious and philosophical concepts, not from scripture.

The famous Greek historian Herodotus wrote in his work *Euterpe* (chapter 123):

The Egyptians were the first that asserted that the soul of man is immortal....This opinion, some among the Greeks have at different periods of time adopted as their own.

Origen, a Catholic teacher from Alexandria, Egypt, wrote around A.D. 200 that: "Souls are immortal, as God Himself is eternal and immortal" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol.

IV, pp. 314, 402). John Nelson Darby, a leader among the "Plymouth Brethren" during the 1800s, wrote this:

The idea of the immortality of the soul *has no source in the gospel; it comes, on the contrary, from the Platonists...to replace [the doctrine of] the resurrection. This was about the time of Origen*. (*Lectures*, vol. IV; emphases added)

Tertullian of Phoenician North Africa, another Catholic "father" teaching at the same time as Origen, wrote this:

For some things are known, even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many....I may use, therefore, *the opinion of Plato*, when he declares: "Every soul is immortal." (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III, p. 547; emphasis added)

What was Plato's *pagan* concept of the *real person*?

Plato taught that *death* is the separation of the *soul* from the *body* – but the body is the only thing that experiences cessation of *life* (*Gorgias*, Bizzell and Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, Boston, 1990, p. 110). Note his reasoning about the soul's immortality: "Every soul is immortal. ...The soul [is] *un-generated* [that is, not a *created* being] and *immortal*" (*Ibid.*; *Phaedrus*, p. 123b; emphasis added). So, Plato learned from other *pagans* in Egypt that the *soul* was not a *created* entity; therefore, it is *indestructible*. Plato also taught in this vein that only the "fallen" souls need to inhabit bodies in order to regain their places in the heavenly heights. So, souls that *do not fall* from the heavenly heights do not have to go through incarnational cycles to regain their original places.

During the early 300s A.D., another Phoenician North African, Augustine of Hippo, "sanctified" the immortality of the soul in his massive work *The City of God*. He, too, was a *neo-Platonist*. Thomas Aquinas, an Italian scholastic teacher and theologian (A.D. 1225-1274) permanently established the doctrine of the immortality of the soul in the Catholic Church.

In A.D. 1513 at the Lateran Council, the Catholic Church imposed the *death penalty* on all who refused to believe in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul:

Whereas some have dared to assert concerning the nature of the reasonable soul that it is mortal, we, *with the approbation of the sacred council, do condemn and reprobate all those who assert that the intellectual soul is mortal*, seeing, according to the canon of Pope Clement V, that the soul is... immortal;...and we declare that all who adhere to like erroneous assertions *shall be shunned and punished as heretics*. (emphases added)

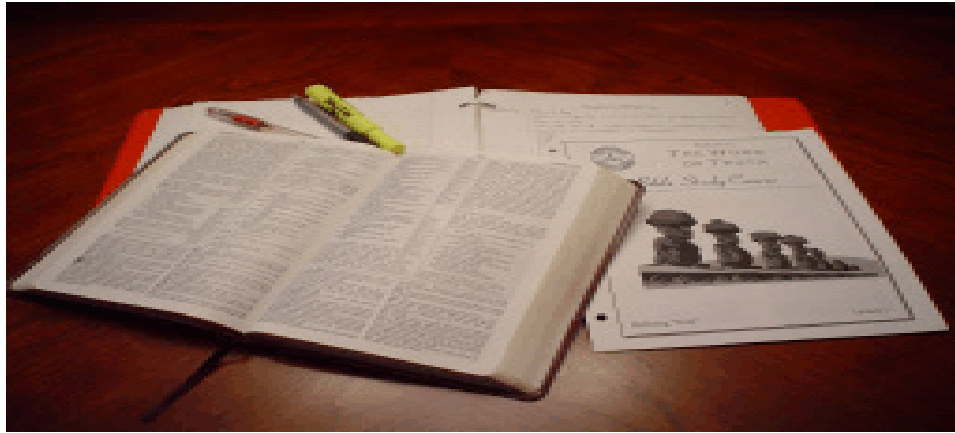
In most cases, the punishment for heresy was *death*.

Conclusion

All of the conversation about the *competency of the soul in matters of religion* falls on its face in light of the revelation about the *paganism* from which major “Christian” doctrines are derived: (1) the Triune God and (2) the immortality of the soul. Included in that conversation is the doctrine

of the *individual priesthood of the believer* – which is not a present-day reality. Major portions of what is called “Christianity” are nothing more than “Christianized” *paganism*. The existence of 32,000+ “Christian” denominations who *contradict* one another’s *individual priesthood* suggests the intrusion of *myths* and *fables*. Are you willing to investigate scripture without the bias of *paganism* and live by every word that proceeds out of God’s mouth?

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The Christmas Myth

The Scriptural Truth About the Birth of Jesus Christ

The popular seasonal song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” presents those who desire to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth* (John 4:23, 24) a peculiar problem. The song suggests that “Christmas” is actually *12 days* long. Why? Who decided that there should be a *12-day* celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ? And...who came up with the *actual date* on which His birth took place? Is the date *December 24* correct, or is it merely a product of turning to *myth* and the *syncretization* of pagan religion into Christianity? Why does the Eastern Orthodox Church observe it on *January 6*? What does all of the gift-giving and seasonal decoration have to do with this event? How does Santa and his elves at the North Pole get mixed in – and the circling of the globe in one night to bring “good little girls and boys” all of those things they requested in their letters to Santa Claus? Most adults got to a point in their lives when they “smelled a rat” about the *Santa fable* – and...went on to perpetuate it with their children as a rite of passage in life.

What is the *scriptural truth* about the birth of Jesus Christ? Is there any way to *really* determine the *exact date* of His birth? Is there any *specific command* in scripture that we should celebrate His birth in any manner whatsoever? Or, is this simply a tradition of man that overextends itself into a realm of worship that God never required or sanctified? I suppose that the conclusion is exposed by the title of this article. The point is simple: You need to know *why* the title draws the conclusion it draws because it suggests, among many things, that *you cannot not worship God in any manner that you choose*.

The Scriptural Record of the Birth of Jesus Christ

Let’s begin with the central issue of this article and work from there. The idea is that you will see the “pieces of the puzzle” fall into place as a progression of information is added to the scriptural record. It is hoped that you will be impressed with the scriptural revelation and let it guide your future faith and practice.

Luke provides the history we need in order to understand this mystery properly. He begins his gospel account by explaining the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25). John’s father was a Levite (from the tribe of Levi, not Judah) – a priest who served in the *course of Abia* (v. 5; Old Testament = *Abijah*) – and his mother was in the lineage of Aaron (the Levite family from which the high priest was chosen). Both were elderly, and Elizabeth was barren (v. 7). So, the birth of John the Baptist was a miraculous birth like Isaac’s (see Genesis 16:1, 2; 17:15-19). If we can get a fix on a date for John’s birth by understanding when the *course of Abia* served their course in the Temple (Luke 1:8, 9), then we can get a fix on when Jesus Christ *might* have been born. Let’s see what happens.

David divided the Levites into *courses* because there were 38,000 of them 30+ years of age and they could not all serve at the same time in the soon-to-be-built Temple (1

Chronicles 23:6). They were assigned periods of service in the Temple by lots (24:5). There were 24 courses selected by lots (24:7-19). If you look at 24:10, you will see that *Abijah’s* (*Abia* = New Testament) lot was the *eighth*. According to Josephus, David “...ordained that one course should minister to God eight days, from Sabbath to Sabbath” (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VII, chapter XIV, paragraph 7). They would serve from noon to noon on those two Sabbaths.

Consider this comment by Dr. William Barclay:

Only at the Passover, at Pentecost and at the Feast of Tabernacles did all the priests serve. For the rest of the year each course only served one week twice a year. (*The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke*, Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1965; pp. 3, 4)

Both quotes show that each course would repeat its service beginning the 25th week after its previous service – unless, of course, a holy day season interrupted the progression.

Barclay’s quote, probably derived from the Talmud, shows that they would also serve three extra weeks during three different holy day seasons. The *Talmud* reveals that the first course began the first week of the Hebrew calendar in the month of Abib (see Exodus 12:2; 13:4). “Passover” in Barclay’s account means the Passover observance plus the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see Leviticus 23:4-6). That is

an eight-day period of time. “Pentecost” is one day. The Fall holy day schedule includes the Feast of Trumpets (1st day), the Day of Atonement (10th day), and the Feast of Tabernacles (15th through 22nd days) during the seventh month (Tishri).

It is generally understood that Jesus Christ was born in the Fall of 4 B.C., but *no one has been able to determine that factually or specifically*. I know that the opinions run between 8 B.C. and 3 B.C. The larger question here, of course, is how to determine when Zacharias served in the Temple. The simplest answer is, of course, that we have to use the Hebrew calendar of his day and harmonize it with our present-day calendar: We have to count the *courses* and figure in any holy days that occur.

A close reading of Luke 1:5-25 does not give even the slightest *hint* about when the described service of Zacharias took place. You cannot find a *hint* about whether he was there for his eight-day week or a single week, say, during Passover, or a two-week combination if a holy day period came at the same time as the eighth course was served, say, during Pentecost. Nevertheless, let’s run a few scenarios to see how the time line would go.

In 5 B.C., the first day of Abib would have occurred on



Saturday, April 8. The first course would have run from noon April 8 until noon April 15. The Passover/Unleavened Bread holy days would have been April 21-28 – he would have served during that week. The third course would have begun at noon April 29. The *eighth* course would have begun June 3, and Pentecost would have coincided with it on June 4. So, Zacharias would have been serving April 21-28 and June 3-10. What does this tell us?

It tells us that Elizabeth could have gotten pregnant in *early May or mid-June of 5 B.C.* Mary would have gotten

pregnant six months later (read Luke 1:23-31) – sometime in *early November or mid-December*. If that was the case, then Mary would have given birth to Jesus sometime in *August or September* of 4 B.C.

When would the *eighth* course have completed its *second* yearly assignment? After Pentecost, there would be no other holy days during which all would serve the *third extra week* until October 16-23 (the Feast of Tabernacles). So, Elizabeth could have gotten pregnant in *late October or early November*. Mary would have gotten pregnant in *late March or early April*. Mary would have given birth in *late November or early December* of 4 B.C. – *but not as late as December 24 or January 6*.

The next possibility comes with the second time the *eighth* course would have served that year: November 25-December 2. Elizabeth could have gotten pregnant by *mid-December*. Mary would have gotten pregnant in *mid-June* of 4 B.C. and given birth to Jesus in *March* of 3 B.C.

Summary

What have we *learned* thus far? There are three salient points:

1. We have not eliminated the *guesswork* at this point, so we will have to find other evidence to be able to draw a more reliable conclusion.
2. We have shown by the above calculations that Jesus’ birth *could not have been* the night of December 24 – after midnight would have made the birth on December 25, according to Roman reckoning.
3. We have shown that the conclusion will have to be driven by the *facts that we can prove* – not by tradition or the syncretization of pagan religion and philosophy: *myth* and *fable* (John 4:23, 24). Lacking sufficient *facts*, we will have to *infer* a conclusion based on the evidence we have available.

So, what’s next? How do we narrow it down to prove our point about the date?

Luke provides two historical references that can narrow it down significantly: (a) the taxation and census by Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-7) and (b) the shepherds attending their flocks in the fields at night (v. 8). Let’s examine both events and see what the information brings.

The Death of Herod the Great

Until more recent scholarship suggested differently, it was believed that Cyrenius served as Roman governor of Syria in A.D. 6/7 and that *proving* anything about the birth

of Jesus relative to a taxation in A.D. 6/7 was a moot point since Jesus is believed to have been born in 4 B.C. Now, according to *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (p. 67), Cyrenius was governor of Syria *twice*: 4 B.C. and A.D. 6 (see also *Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 490). Luke 2:2 seems to indicate that the taxation and census took place during the *first* governorship of Cyrenius in 4 B.C..

In order to avoid a long line of reasoning that might serve more to confuse than to enlighten, let's consider some of the research that has been done to answer the objections to Luke's view of history. Luke, after all, claims that he "...had perfect understanding of all things [about which he was writing in his gospel account]..." that had been recorded in source material by eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. He wanted Theophilus to know the *truth* of his historical account (Luke 1:1-4).

Understand that there is a difference between the *Herod* of Matthew 2 and the *Herod* of Matthew 14 and Luke 23. The *Herod* of Matthew 2 is Herod the Great; the *Herod* of Matthew 14 and Luke 23 is *Herod Antipas*, his son.

Herod the Great died November 27, 4 B.C. – *after* the birth of Jesus Christ (read Matthew 2:19-23). By this historical note, we can know that Jesus was born *before* November 27, 4 B.C. because Herod the Great had ordered the death of the male babies two years and younger, which demonstrates that even *he* did not know the exact date of Jesus' birth ...but He could have been as much as two years old. This action demonstrates that Herod was covering enough time in recent history to be sure that he got the Christ-child. That idea would have assumed a birth sometime between 6 B.C. and November, 4 B.C.

The Governorship of Quirinius

It is widely known that the man to whom Luke was referring was *Quirinius*. *Cyrenius* is merely a different spelling of the name. His actual Roman name was *Publius Sulpicus Quirinius*. It is ascertainable that he was governor of Syria in A.D. 6-7 – about 10-11 years after the birth of Jesus Christ.

As stated above from *Smith's* and *Halley's*, there is evidence that he was also governor in 4 B.C. – although this is disputed...some saying that he served as a "trouble-shooter" for Caesar Augustus at that time. Note the following suggestion from Dr. John Ankerberg's article "Was Luke Wrong About the Census Under Quirinius?":

...Historians know that Quirinius had a *government assignment* in Syria between 12 B.C. to 2 B.C. He was responsible for reducing the number of rebellious mountaineers in the highlands of Pisidia. As such, he was a highly placed military figure in the Near East and highly trusted by Emperor Caesar Au-

gustus. Augustus, knowing of the turmoil in Herod the Great's territory, may well have put his trusted friend Quirinius in charge of a *census enrollment in the region of Syria just before the end of Herod's life*. (emphasis added)

The time period from 7 to 6 B.C. also coincides with the transition period between the rule of the two legates of Syria: Saturninus from 9 to 6 B.C. and Varus from 7 to 4 B.C. The transition of power between these two men took place between 7 to 6 B.C., and Augustus again may have appointed his friend Quirinius to step in and conduct a census taxation when he could not trust anyone else.

The point is this: There is the *possibility* that Quirinius had something to do with a taxation (*census enrollment*) before the one he controlled as governor of Syria in A.D. 6-7. Admittedly, that is forcing the issue in order to tilt the "proof" in my favor. What I want to do here is to point out information that can help in making any *inferences* that make the point about the birth of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the above information might call into question a birth in 4 B.C. So, we will look at other *possibilities* – which is the way sensible investigations are conducted. It is not a "wild guess" when you infer something. Inferences are based on the facts that are presented. The facts suggest something.



The Term "First" in Luke 2:2

In Luke 2:2, he writes that the "...taxing was *first* made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria" (emphases added). It is ascertainable and commonly believed that there was

such a taxation in A.D. 6 – a time at which it is historically ascertainable that Quirinius was governor of Syria. The *taxing* mentioned in Acts 5:37 was under Quirinius, and historians confirm that Judas of Galilee led a revolt that was quickly quashed by the Romans. But...some say that there are grounds for believing that the Luke 2:2 taxation was not the same taxation mentioned in Acts 5:37. They base their assumption on the word *first* in Luke 2:2 and make *inferences* accordingly.

Note this quote from Kenneth F. Doig's work *New Testament Chronology* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Allen Press, 1990):

It can be historically established that Augustus did decree such a specific census. To use this approach [of trying to establish the *earliest* possible date for the birth of Jesus Christ] it is necessary to establish which decree of Augustus would have required a worldwide census, when he decreed it, and when Quirinius (Cyrenius) put it into effect in Judea. (emphases added).

You can tell that there is a level of *uncertainty* attached to the process of narrowing down *possibilities*, but the *possibilities* provide more *certainty* than do *myth, fable, and traditions of men*.

For example, we know that Jesus was born before Herod the Great's death on November 27, 4 B.C. That would be the *latest* date for His birth. If we can know the *earliest* date, then we can see how Zacharias's eighth course figures into the mix. Some try to place it with one of the censuses Augustus conducted in 8 B.C. Barclay, for example, says: "If the fourteen year cycle held good in Syria then this census must have been in 8 B.C. and that year was the year in which Jesus was born" (p.15). Such evidence is not conclusive in this matter.

The Archeological Evidence

Others claim that *archeology* provides another element of "proof." So, let's consider what archeology has to say about the taxation policies of Caesar Augustus – then we can relate that to Luke's use of the term *first* in 2:2.

Gary Habermas, in his work *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus Christ* (1996, pp. 171-173), points out that the matter of Luke's *taxing* can be resolved through *archeological discoveries*. For example: An ancient Latin inscription called the "Titulus Venetus" shows that a census took place in Syria and Judea in A.D. 5-6 and that it was typical of the types of taxation executed between 23 B.C. and about A.D. 257 according to Caesar Augustus' pattern. Generally speaking, they were taken every 14 years. Such a spacing of censuses would not help to prove Jesus'

birth in 4 B.C., but other factors might.

Robert Boyd, in his work *Tells, Tombs, and Treasure* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969; p. 175), says that the archeologist Sir William Ramsay discovered several inscriptions that indicated that Quirinius was governor of Syria on two occasions – the first being prior to A.D. 6. Boyd places the first census in 6-5 B.C. How does that fit into the scenario we are pursuing?

Were these censuses/taxations always at 14-year inter-



vals? In the *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Craig Evans and Stanley Porter, editors; InterVarsity, 2000) says this:

Evidence indicates that Egyptian censuses [under Roman control] were taken at 7-year intervals during the reign of Augustus and can be established with indirect and direct evidence for the years of 11-10 B.C., 4-3 B.C., A.D. 4 and 5, and A.D. 11 and 12.

If that was true for *Egypt*, then might it also have been true for other parts of the Roman Empire?

Here are four points we need to consider:

1. A taxation-census was a fairly common procedure in the Roman Empire and it did occur in Judea, in particular.
2. Persons were required to return to their home city in order to fulfill the requirements of the process.
3. These procedures were apparently employed during the reign of Augustus, which was 37 B.C. to A.D. 14, placing it well within the general time

frame of Jesus' birth.

4. The date of the specific taxation recounted by Luke could very possibly have been 6-5 B.C. [as proposed by Boyd], which would also be helpful in attempting to find a more exact date for Jesus' birth. (www3.telus.net/trbrooks/first_census.htm)

Dr. Ankerberg points out in his article that Augustus knew about Herod's paranoia and instability (example: frequently asking Augustus' permission to change his will being one piece of evidence) and might have extended the Egyptian census/taxation in 5-4 B.C. to Judea because he anticipated problems if Herod died.

Luke's mention of this decree by Caesar Augustus is the only historical reference...but, we can see its historical *plausibility*. With the above information at hand, then, we can understand the concept surrounding the use of the term *first* in Luke 2:2. Most translators translate v. 2 to read: "This was the *first* census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria." The Greek term from which the English term *first* is translated provides the basis for the next argument.

The Greek term *protos* was used by Luke in 2:2. It is different from other Greek terms that can be translated "first": *anōthen* (Luke 1:3), *deuteroprotos* (Luke 6:1), and *mia* (Matthew 28:1). *Protos* looks back to a time when there were no censuses – not forward to additional censuses. In other words, it is the *first* of several. Here you have a *possibility*: If Quirinius was governor of Syria in 6-4 B.C., then that would be the *first* census when he was governor – and...the *historian* Luke knew that to be true.

However, the prefix *pro-* carries with it the meaning that this census could have been taken *before Quirinius became governor of Syria in A.D. 6*. That being the case, Luke 2:2 could be translated: "This was the census *before* the one taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria." As Doig concludes:

It would stand to reason that the word "first" is uniquely used here as if to suggest an event preceding another....It has been suggested that....Luke was not saying that Quirinius was governor at the time of the first census. The Greek usage can be interpreted to say: "This census was before that [census] when Quirinius was governor of Syria." Perhaps a better translation would be: "This census was the first before that under the prefectureship of Quirinius in Syria."

If that was the case, then there would be no dispute between scripture and history. If that was the case, then we're back to a possible birth in 4 B.C. This gives us enough inform-

ation to conclude that Luke's account is not *historically inaccurate* as some claim.

Dr. Ankerberg includes this quote in his article:

Edwin Yamauchi comments, "...this is a case where we do have something recorded in the New Testament which is not directly correlated by extra-biblical evidence. *This doesn't mean that it did not happen*, however, because there are many things that occur only in a given text without corroborative evidence of other texts or inscriptions." (emphasis added)

While this information is not *conclusive*, it is *helpful*. One might well wonder, for example, who witnessed the argument between Michael the Archangel and the devil about the body of Moses after his death (see Jude 9). Yet, people of faith accept this scripture as *fact* that such an argument took place because it is part of the scripture believed to have been *inspired by God* (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The Shepherds in the Fields

When I was a young Southern Baptist minister, the 1967 *Sunday School Quarterly* (October to December) discussed the birth of Jesus Christ in the December section. The author who wrote the Christmas section admitted that Jesus *was not born* on December 24 because of several factors that have to be considered. One of the factors that he had to admit was that *the shepherds would not have been in the fields at night during that time of the year because of the severe cold and rain*.

His explanation for the December 24 celebration of His



birth was, essentially, *tradition*. This is a tacit admission that most who observe Christmas are either too firmly entrenched in the *tradition* (no matter how *pagan* it is com-

monly known to be), or they are either incapable of or unwilling to be bothered with doing the research.

It is widely agreed upon among Bible scholars that the shepherds would not have been out in the fields *at night* in December. Several factors determine this conclusion: (a) It is the rainy season; (b) it is miserably cold; and (c) snow is not uncommon. It does not preclude their being out in the fields during the day...if weather permitted. You must remember that this is another puzzle piece that we are using to get the bigger picture of Jesus' birth. It is useful for our research. If we are to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24), then why should we allow *tradition* to dictate that we should accept December 24 as the legitimate date of the birth of Jesus Christ? *Truth* does not support the claim.

The Nativity Scene

The nativity scene that is usually set up at Christmas features the parents, the babe in the manger, some shepherds, the three Magi, and an assortment of animals. Alvin Boyd Kuhn, who was not a Christian in the sense that we generally recognize, has an interesting take on this in his work *Who Is This King of Glory?* (Elizabeth, NJ: Academy Press, 1944). He also uses an *archeological discovery* to validate his own point about the *pagan* quality of traditional Christianity – that is, carvings on the walls of the temple of Luxor (Egypt) dating to about 1700 B.C. that are now located in a European museum.

He describes the carvings as depicting a nativity scene, complete with an angelic pronouncement to shepherds attending their flocks at night, annunciation by an angel to a virgin, and three Magi adoring an infant. He asserts that Egypt used the symbol of an eastern star foreshadowing a coming deity – complete with Egyptians kneeling at the shrine of a Madonna and child... Isis and Horus, who was called Iusa by the Egyptians and supposedly born the night of December 24 amid all of the same trappings described in the Bible about the birth of Jesus of Nazareth (pp. x, xi).

Alexander Hislop, in his work *The Two Babylons* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1959) adds this note:

...From Assyria, Egypt, and Greece, we have cumulative and overwhelming evidence, all conspiring to

demonstrate that the child worshiped in the arms of the goddess-mother in all these countries in the very character of Ninus or Nin, "the Son," was Nimrod, son of Cush. A feature here, an incident there, may have been borrowed from some succeeding hero; but it seems impossible to doubt, that of that child Nimrod was the proto-type, the grand original. (p. 50)

This demonstrates that there was a predisposition by some "leaders" in the "Church," during the A.D. 300s when Constantine "married" the Roman State to Roman "Christianity," to accept such *mythology* by *syncretizing* pagan religious *myths* into "Christianity" and passing off the resulting combination as God's truth.

Constantine and the Bishop of Rome conspired to *syncretize* pagan religion and philosophy into "Christianity" in order to support the Roman Empire's adoption of "Christianity" as the state religion and make it more palatable to the Empire's pagan population who would be forced to accept it as their own. As my History professor at Norman Junior College (Southern Baptist; Norman Park, GA) put it in the Fall Quarter of 1965: "The Pope told them that all who wanted to become Christians could line up in front of the priests and be baptized. Those who did not want to do so could line up in front of the henchmen."

This *syncretization* is especially noteworthy because *this* above-mentioned child was born on the night of December 24...and his birth was thereafter celebrated with a decorated, lighted tree (that represented his supposed divine father, the Sun God to whom Constantine had been a devotee) under which gifts were placed because this Sun God was the giver of gifts to mankind. His supposed father

was Nimrod, whom Shem slew for his great apostasy (refer to the July-September issue of *Spirit and Truth*). You can get a more detailed explanation of this in our free book "...And God Remembered Babylon..." (You have to request it at our website www.the.seventhdaychristianassembly.org; there are limited hard-bound copies available).

As the Sun God, he supposedly impregnated his widow, Semiramis, with a single beam of sunlight in order to be *reincarnated* in the child produced by that action. A log was burned throughout the night to represent the *reincarnation*



process: being changed from *matter* to *spirit* (represented by the smoke) and being reborn from the ashes as the “Branch of God” – the lighted tree that miraculously appeared the next morning (see Isaiah 11:1). You might recognize some of the “Phoenix” elements in this mythology.

What is not generally admitted is that there was a *counterfeit* form of the birth of the Son of God scattered among the *pagan religions millennia* before the event actually took place – right down to the angel, star, shepherds, Magi, and manger scene. I propose in the *Babylon* book mentioned above that it was predicated on the prophecy in Genesis 3:15. Even the Hebrew wording of Eve’s exclamation in Genesis 4:1 can be translated: “I have gotten a man, *even the Lord*.” Such a translation would show that Eve expected *her seed* to be the one whom the Lord God promised to deal with the sins of mankind. Once Cain was cursed for killing Abel, other women and their sons probably began to claim to be the appointed mother and son. It was there that *mythology* and *fable* took over.

One definition of the term *myth* is that it is a story invented as a *veiled explanation of a truth*. That being the case, it is possible for the *invented story* to be accepted as the *actual truth*, instead of as the *symbolic representation* of that truth. The “Christmas” story is the *myth*, not the *actual truth* of the historic event.

Here is what we can say about the actual nativity scene at the time of the birth of Jesus:

1. Jesus was born *before* the shepherds came to the barn stall, but the shepherds did not linger at the scene once they confirmed the angel’s message (read Luke 2:8-18).
2. The Magi (there is no mention of how many there were – some say that there were as many as 12) did not come to the *barn stall* to see Jesus. Joseph and Mary had already moved into a *house* by the time they got there (see Matthew 2:11, 12).
- (3) The three types of gifts they brought by no means indicates that there were only *three* Magi. The *gold* was a symbol of a king; the *myrrh* a symbol of the bitterness of the torture and crucifixion – and preparation for burial; and the *frankincense* was a gift for the adoration of the divinity of the Son of God.

Some believe the *legend* that the Magi were later converted by the Apostle Thomas. That, of course, would have been well over 30 years after the birth of Jesus. Depending on how old all of the Magi were, that would be quite a coincidence!

How did the Magi know about the birth of the Christ?

The answer to that question actually supports Alvin Boyd Kuhn’s claims (cited above) about the wall of the Luxor Temple. In the *KJV* account, they are called “wise men.” They came from the “east” claiming to have been guided by “his star” (Matthew 2:2). Their knowledge that the child would become the “King of the Jews” (v. 2) indicates that they were familiar with Old Testament scriptures – prophecies in particular. Therefore, they could have been familiar with Numbers 24:17, Isaiah 9:6, 7; 60:1-3; and Micah 5:2-4.

The term *magi* comes from the old Persian term *magus*, which primarily means “magician.” You can see an example of this in Acts 8:9-11 in the person of Simon *Magus*. *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* says that “They are credited all over the East with certain secret learning which in remote antiquity distinguished Egypt and Chaldea” (p. 188). These men do not appear to have been from Egypt because they “...came from the east to Jerusalem” (Matthew 2:1). They might or might not have been converts to Judaism – there is no indication one way or another, but the Jews had been held captive in both Babylon and Persia.

Another *legend* supported by the Greek Orthodox



Church claims that they arrived with a military escort of 1,000 from the east bank of the Euphrates River. They, supposedly, were following a prophecy of *Zoroaster* about a coming Redeemer whose arrival would be announced by a star. Twelve of the holiest priests of Zoroaster were called upon to follow the star (which was in the form of a baby with a cross). The journey took two years, and their provisions were provided by a miracle (Ibid.; p. 189).

If that *legend* is based on *truth*, then it is apparent that the “star” they followed was not a *fixed star* in space. The *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich A Greek/English Lexicon* indicates that the Greek term *aster* can be “living beings endowed with reason” (p. 117; see Revelation 12:4 where *stars* is

symbolically meant to represent *angels*).

The short version of the discussion about the generally accepted concept of the nativity scene is that it is *myth*. It is not God's revelation of His truth.

The Twelve Days of Christmas

The popular song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is more than just a simple ditty about the number of gifts one person gave another over a period of 12 days at Christmas time. It is, in fact, a key to the *pagan* nature of the religious celebration of *another Jesus* spoken of by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:4 – a "Jesus" that many assume is the true Jesus revealed in scripture. Let's understand how this works.

As is typical in many aspects of *mystery religions*, there is what are called the *esoteric* and *exoteric* meanings of the *myths* involved. In order to preserve the "truth" of a particular "mystery" from being mutilated and sullied among the illiterate and unappreciative masses, the purveyors of any particular religious "mystery" used what we might call in modern parlance *misdirection* and *disguise* – the so-called practical purpose of the *myth*.

Esoteric means that something about the *myth* is un-



known by the uninitiated general mind. Many will read the myths about Thor, Icarus and Dedalus, Odysseus, Demeter and Persephone, et cetera and see only the superficial, simple fictional story. That simple, superficial understanding is what makes it *exoteric* in the minds of the illiterate and unappreciative. Few in modern times understand that these were religious dramas acted out upon a stage for the instruction and worship of the *initiated* members of that particular religious group. Such religious dramas are largely considered to be the forerunners of our modern theater.

"The 12 Days of Christmas" is a case in point. It is commonly revealed among the Catholics that the song was creat-

ed to allow the persecuted Catholics of 16th Century England to *secretly* practice their religion and avoid death or imprisonment for openly teaching or writing about it. You can look up the explanation on SmartGuy.com.

Ann Ball's *Handbook of Catholic Sacramentals* says that the famous song was written in England as a *catechism song* for young Catholics when it was illegal to practice or teach the Catholic Faith. The composer *hid* the meanings of the various gifts to help children remember 12 critical lessons of faith. Instead of referring to an earthly suitor, the "true love" mentioned in the song really refers to God. The "me" who receives the presents is symbolic of every baptized person.

SmartGuy.com reveals the following:

Many people mistakenly assume that the twelve days precede the birth of Jesus, and end on December 25th. This is incorrect. The twelve days begin with the birth of the Christ child, and end on January 6th, the Feast of Epiphany. They chronicle the twelve days that the Wise Men followed the star which led them to the manger where baby Jesus lay. *Though entirely secular in its appearance, the song actually contains much deeper meaning.* (emphasis added)

The last sentence shows the difference between the *exoteric* and the *esoteric* nature of the song.

The crossroadsinitiative.com website (among several others) gives a brief explanation of the "gifts" in the song:

"Twelve Days of Christmas" refer to the eight days of the Christmas Octave from December 25 to New Years Day, and the four additional days up to and including the eve of January 6, the traditional date of the Epiphany. In the USA and many other countries, Epiphany is now celebrated on the first Sunday after New Years, so the exact number 12 does not necessarily apply. But the point is, don't throw out the [Christmas] tree on the 26th – the birth of the Savior can't be celebrated adequately in one day. Let the celebration continue at least through the Feast of the Epiphany – if not through the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

What follows is the general understanding of the 12 days and the "gifts" involved:

1. *A Partridge in a Pear Tree*: Jesus Christ is symbolized as a mother partridge that feigns injury to decoy predators from helpless nestlings.
2. *Two turtle doves*: The Old and New Testaments

3. Three French Hens: Faith, Hope, and Charity
4. Four Calling Birds: The Four Gospels
5. Five Golden Rings: The Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
6. Six Geese A-laying: Six days of Creation [Why not seven?]
7. Seven Swans A-swimming: The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit
8. Eight Maids A-milking: Eight Beatitudes
9. Nine Ladies Dancing: The Nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit
10. Ten Lords A-leaping: The 10 Commandments
11. Eleven Pipers Piping: The 11 Faithful Disciples [Why not include *Matthias*, who replaced Judas Iscariot?]
12. 12 Drummers Drumming: The 12 Articles of the Apostles' Creed.

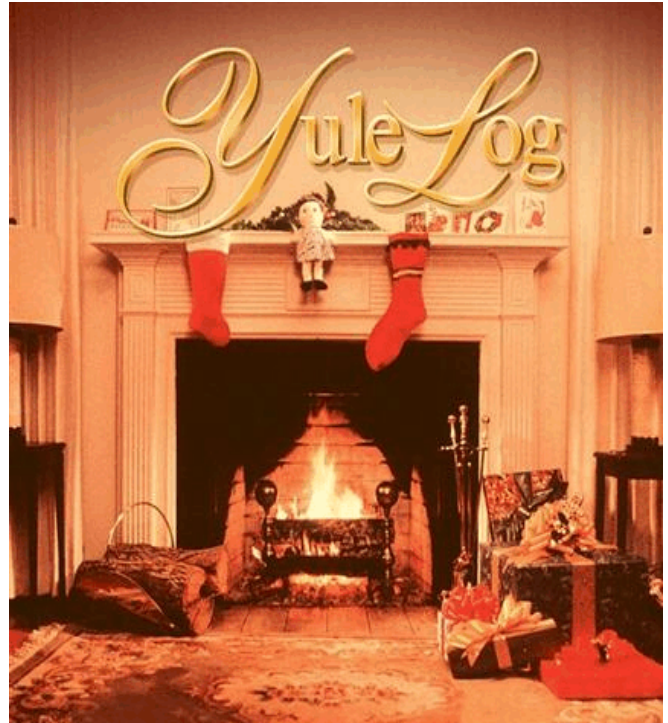
The problem here is that this explanation does not get to the heart of the matter about the *myth* involved with the concept of the 12 days of "Christmas." Even in its *secret* meaning to the Catholics of the 16th Century, this is still an *exoteric* explanation of the *esotericism* from which it was borrowed. I will give you one example that will suffice for this article. An expanded explanation will be in the article that follows this one.

This explanation is given in the *Codex Marcianus* by Epiphanius, who was a Greek Orthodox Church "Father" who fought "Christian" heresies in and out of the Greek Church:

...Christ was born on the sixth day of January, after thirteen days of the winter solstice and the increase of the light and day...The Idolaters, celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of December a feast called *Saturnalia* among the Romans, *Kronia* among the Egyptians, and the *Kikellia* among the Alexandrians. For on the twenty-fifth day of December the division takes place which is the solstice, and the day begins to lengthen its light, receiving an increase, and there are thirteen days of it up to the sixth day of January, until the day of the birth of Christ. (emphasis added)

He finishes this discourse by quoting a Syrian wise man named Ephraim who says that such a religious idea among the *pagans* was a foreshadow of Jesus Christ Himself and His 12 Apostles! There is no logical reason to look among *pagan* religious practices to find a foreshadow of the *real* Jesus Christ. It is simply another example of how traditional "Christianity" has borrowed *myth-based* pagan religious practices and used them in worship of God – a thing that He abhors. This was the long, hard fight the Lord God had with Israel over and over again.

Conclusion



Deuteronomy 12:29-32 is the Lord God's command to His people to avoid being snared by inquiries into the religious practices of the *pagans* – especially adopting them as a means by which they would worship Him. They would suffer dire consequences for doing so (read Deuteronomy 28 and 2). Jeremiah 10 is a reiteration of this warning not to learn the way of the heathens. The specific basis of our argument in this article is formed around such like warnings in numerous places in the Old and New Testaments (see also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-22).

It is widely recognized that the Christmas *myth* is a combination of *pagan* religious rites and practices and the scriptural records about the birth of Jesus Christ. That combination makes it *unacceptable* to God. The date of birth, tree, lights, gifts, yule log, wassail bowl, mistletoe, et cetera were all adopted from *paganism*. It is very easy for you to verify that claim.

It is generally accepted that Jesus Christ was born some-

time between mid-September and mid-October in 4 B.C. Make note of the *uncertainty* about the exact date. In the face of that widespread *uncertainty*, how can there be a *specific* date of December 24? In the different scenarios presented in this article, I have demonstrated that December 24 *cannot be* the date of His birth – nor could it have taken place on January 6. Various historical questions about Herod and Quirinius help us to narrow the scope to some extent, but they do not erase the *uncertainty*.

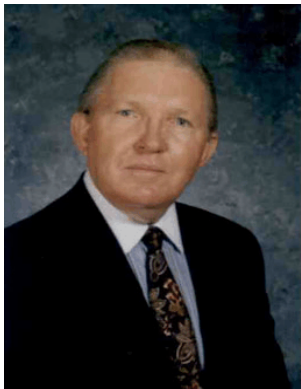
There is no *direct* or *indirect* command by God that we should observe Jesus' birth date. Does that strike you as being *remarkable*? Does it seem *remarkable* that God should leave us in the dark about the *exact* date of His birth? Does it seem to you to be *remarkable* that the only way people have come to observe the Christmas *myth* is by combining the *pagan* elements with a historical account in the Bible that He was, indeed, God come in the flesh? Of course, the *Word* who became flesh in Jesus Christ was the *Lord God* of the Old Testament... not His companion who was thereafter known as "the Father" (read John 1:1-3, 14-18; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:12-20; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; and Hebrews 1). Why would God accept the worship based on a *myth* like that of Christmas? After all, it is, by its *pagan* character, an *affront* to His holy name (Exodus 20:1-7). If He admonishes us not to mix and mingle pagan practices with His revealed truth, why should we disobey Him and then claim to be His people? Why would He change His

mind about such things merely because of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (see Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; and James 1:17)?



The paramount responsibility of the person who wishes to be a true Christian and worship God in spirit and truth is to "rightly divide the word of truth" (see John 4:23, 24 and 2 Timothy 2:15). If you study through God's word and pay attention to what He says, you will find that He does not accept worship that is a mixture of scripture, pagan beliefs and practices, and man's unscriptural traditions.

The first four of the Ten Commandments put the true worshiper on notice that He is a jealous God who is unwilling to share His glory with any other so-called "god" (see Exodus 20:1-11, Deuteronomy 12:29-32, and Jeremiah 10:1-16). To mix and mingle such pagan beliefs and practices into scriptural revelation is adding to God's revelation, which is prohibited by God (see Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32, Proverbs 30:5, 6, Revelation 22:18, 19, and Matthew 4:4).



So, if you are sincerely seeking to learn God's truth and to do His revealed will, you will need some guidance to help you focus on them and to know how to discover them in God's word. Our aim in our website is not to dazzle you with our technological expertise. It is to reveal to you the truth of God's holy word and to increase your faith in it. We are providing to you some of the most basic tools that you will need for your quest by offering the *Bible Study Course*, *A Statement of Beliefs*, and other literature. If you will study them thoroughly and look up all scriptural references provided, you will learn things that you might not otherwise have ever learned among mainstream "Christianity."

Please contact us and let us know how we can serve you. Pose your questions and make your requests. As long as we have the financial wherewithal to do so, we will make our resources available to you free of charge. We trust God to bless our efforts and to bless you with eyes that see and ears that hear.

Larry E. Ford, Pastor
The Seventh Day Christian Assembly

The Myth of the Immortal Soul

Herschel H. Hobbs gives us one of the most common definitions of *man*; yet, it is not a definition that all people of “faith” *really* understand or believe. He cites three things about man that he considers important: (1) Man’s *body* is related to the natural elements; (2) his *physical life* is related to all animal life; and (3) as a *living soul*, man is made in the image of God. Hobbs goes on to explain that God’s sentence of *death* upon man if he sinned would result in the cessation of his *animal principle* – that is, his *body* would disintegrate and turn back into the natural elements from which he was created. His point is summed up in the following statement: “...His *soul*, ***the real person***, is immortal. It will never cease to be [that is, exist]....Man is not a *body* and has a *soul*. He is a *soul* and has a *body*” (*The Baptist Faith and Message*, Convention Press: Nashville, 1971; p. 51; emphasis added). So, the *real person* will never actually ***die*** for the sins he commits. Only the *body* will suffer the fate known as ***death***. The ***real person*** is the *immortal soul* and lives forever.

There is much more to this *myth* about the immortal soul than most people of “faith” know or understand. They are as Jesus described the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:22: *They worship a God that they really do not understand and wrap themselves in religious beliefs that He did not reveal to the world*. The objective of this study, therefore, is to unwrap some of the elements of the *myth* of the immortal soul and to understand why God does not associate His name with such religious concepts. Please pay close attention to the discussion so that you can understand how this subject involves “Christian” heresies that men like John, Peter, Paul, and Jude fought against and warned future generations of Christians about. It involves *another* Jesus, *another* gospel, and *another* spirit spread far and wide in the name of *Jesus Christ*. Before beginning this study, read John 4:23, 24; Matthew 24:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1-3; and Jude. They highlight the problem found in 32,000+ “Christian” denominations that basically oppose one another.

The Source of the Myth

During the 1940s, a professor of Comparative Religions named Alvin Boyd Kuhn wrote a series of books that take to task traditional Christian teachings about the historical “Christ.” His focus is centered mainly upon the Roman Catholic teachings, but it includes any other “Christian” groups that, in his mind, derive their teachings from the Roman Catholic model. The book from which I will use quotes is *Who is This King of Glory?* (Elizabeth, NJ: Academy Press; 1944). Kuhn bases his conclusions on the discovery of the Rosetta Stone (1796) because, he claims, it provides valuable information about the religious concepts of ancient Egypt that contradict claims of traditional “Christianity.”

In the Introduction of the book, he declares that the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the *Pyramid Texts*, and the *Book of Thoth* provide enough “proof” to allow him to say: “The entire body of Christian doctrinism is now seen to be nothing but revamped and terribly mutilated Egyptianism” (p. ix).

From that thesis, he concludes that “Only by acknowledging and regaining its parenthood in that sublime pagan source will Christianity rise at last to its true nobility and splendor” (p. x).

Kuhn’s concept is relatively simple: Egyptian papyri scrolls provide *proof* that the Egyptian religion taught about an *Egyptian Jesus* who raised the dead, healed the sick, blind, and lame – who was born during the night of December 24 complete with angelic announcement to shepherds, visitation by three Magi, and a child’s birth in an animal stall. All of the things supposedly done by the so-called historical Jesus were merely dim shadows of this original Egyptian Christ. Here is his surprise conclusion: “Egypt’s Christ was not a living person” (p. xi; emphases added).

What, then, was he? A *mythical* character. He never *really* existed, but the *myth*, according to Kuhn, gave him life! So, Kuhn proclaims:

The myth is the only true narrative of the reality of human experience. It is the only ultimately true his-

tory ever written. It is a picture and portrayal of the only veridical [truthful] history ever lived....Real as history is, it is finally less *true* than the myth. The myth is always and forever true; actual history is never more than an imperfect approximation to the truth of life. Even as a perfectly faithful record of what actually happened, book history is far from being true. (p. 25)

Kuhn, therefore, concludes that the so-called “historical Jesus” had been the central character in the myths and religious dramas of most ancient pagan religions for thousands of years prior to His supposed birth in Bethlehem. It is here that we can learn some valuable lessons about what the Apostle Paul calls *another Jesus*, *another gospel*, and *another spirit* (2 Corinthians 11:4).

We can also get a much better idea about Paul’s remarks about *myths* and *fables* to Timothy and Titus in 1 Timothy 4:6, 16; 6:3-5, 14, 20; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2, 14-16, 23; 3:14-17; and Titus 1:9-11; 2:1. *He is not warning them about harmless, fictitious stories used to explain some natural occurrence or social custom!* He is warning them about *religious teachings and practices* that seek to *supplant* the true gospel. He is warning them about *deceitful* “Christian” doctrines that, in effect, make a colossal *lie* of God’s scriptural revelation of His plan, thoughts, and ways! By reducing their religious teachings to *myth* and *fable*, according to their definition, they make any *historical confirmation* of the interactions of the “historical Jesus” with real human beings totally *impossible*.

Kuhn says this:

What was known of old, and must now be proclaimed anew with clarion blast, is that the myth, as employed by ancient illuminati in Biblical scripture, is not fiction, but the truest of all history. (Ibid.)

He explains that the *myth* makes it possible to understand the *central figure* in early Christianity and all previous religious systems in a way that present-day religions do not and have not understood. What is the real nature of the *myth*? Just this:

...[It is] the perennial reminder to all men of all religions of *their own divine endowment*, and to serve as dynamic instruction in the methods of attaining its progressive evolution in and through history. (Ibid.; p. 26; emphasis added)

The *myth*, then, teaches about man’s *personal spiritual endowment with divinity* and the instruction he needs to *evolve* – that is, to gradually develop from one stage to another – into the fullest actualization of that *inherent* divinity...what

Kuhn calls “The... knowledge that every man must be *his own savior*” (Ibid.; p. 30; emphases added).

Here, then, is where the *myth* of the *immortal soul* figures into the mix. Read the following quote very carefully because it is the linchpin – the thing that holds together all of the various parts of his argument – in this entire discussion about the *myth* and *fable*:

With transcendent genius the Sages formulated the system of myths, allegories, fables, parables, numerical structures and astrological pictographs [examples: Orion’s belt and the Big Dipper] such as the zodiac and the planispheres or uranographs to supplement the central ceremonial drama...The *divinity in man* being a portion of the ineffable glory of the sun, and necessarily typified by it, the great portrayal was built upon the solar allegory, and the successful phases of *man’s divinization* were enacted around the solar year in accordance with the significance of the orb’s monthly and seasonal positions. (Ibid.; pp. 30, 31; emphases added)

What is Kuhn saying by this?

He is saying that the *zodiac’s* astrological symbols and the planets’ positions relative to the sun during a 12-month revolution around it are the link to understanding the evolutionary development of the *immortal soul*:

[The] two daily and annual operations, the alternate victory and defeat of the sun, typify of course the very gist of the whole human drama, the soul’s descent into its “death” in the mortal body and its recurring resurrection therefrom. This is the core of the central theme in all religious scripture. (Ibid.; p. 31)

He is talking about a series of *reincarnations* that the immortal soul must go through in order to ultimately achieve its own *Christ* identity. Interestingly enough, there are 12 of them that are required.

So, what we have learned here is as follows:

1. The source of the religious *myth* is ancient Egyptian religious practices.
2. The *myth* is connected to the astrological signs of the zodiac.
3. The astrological signs of the zodiac are lessons about the *gradual evolution* of the *immortal soul* whereby it saves itself in order to become an individual *Christ*...the divine offspring of the Sun.

The 12 Stages of Actualizing the *Christ* in You

From that, we can understand that Jeremiah 10:1-16 is not just a warning about reading your horoscope in the daily newspaper. It is a warning about transgressing Exodus 20:1-7 and Deuteronomy 12:29-32.

Here's an interesting bit of information that can be found in W. L. Wilmshurst's book *The Meaning of Masonry* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1980):

1. The Craft and Arch degrees of Masonry are *esoteric* instruction in *soul development* – what is called *self-knowledge*.
2. It is a *sacramental* system behind which is concealed the doctrine and symbols that are understood only by the initiated – a *reality* that lies behind the outward symbols.
3. The doctrines and symbols are acted out to express the means by which the *soul* can learn to ultimately escape the physical body through the process of *regeneration*.
4. The doctrines and symbols are actually *consistent* with those taught by every religious system outside of the ranks of Masonry.
5. The Masonic doctrine presupposes that every *soul* born into this world has existed somewhere else at other times and that it will exist somewhere else after its journey in its present body is ended.
6. The Masonic doctrine presupposes that the *soul* needs to inhabit a physical body in order for it to interact with the physical world so that it can learn and perform all of the required functions it needs for a particular phase of its progressive *regeneration*.

This is the same claim (with superficial differences) that Kuhn makes in his book. It is probably the source of the modern-day, politically correct, religious progressives who claim that all religions are all taking different paths to the same goal. It smacks of the concept that the individual *soul* must take its own unique journey through progressive incarnations to achieve its own “salvation.”

Would Paul's comment in Ephesians 2:8-10 address that notion? Paul, after all, was in more than one wrestling match with Gnostic “Christians” for teaching *another Jesus*, *another gospel*, and *another spirit* (2 Corinthians 11:4). Why would he warn true believers that there are no works that an *individual* can do to achieve its own salvation? He points to faith in the *historical Jesus* – that man is the workmanship of God in Jesus Christ (read Ephesians 1:4-14). Are you getting the idea yet?

Wilmshurst says that “...the evolution of man into superman was always the purpose of the ancient Mysteries” and the temporal world is the diametric opposite of the more real world from which the soul came. The various degrees of the Masonic order enable the soul to accelerate its return to the more real world – the divine kingdom that lies hidden and undeveloped *within all humans* which we have failed to enter – through self-knowledge and self-discipline (Ibid.; pp. 47, 49). He adds a statement that sounds very much like it was used by Martin Luther:

...Every Mason is intended to be the High Priest of his own personal temple and to make of it a place where he and Deity may meet. (Ibid., p. 97)

All in all, there is a *process* by which the *apotheosis* (the *deification*) of the individual must take place.

The specifics of this process are too long and involved for the space I have in this article, so I will highlight the major points made by Kuhn. He says that spiritual power and intelligence are the “Christ” *in humans*, and they are divided into 12 parts. The *soul* will pass through 12 grades of *being*, one at a time, in order to acquire vital experiences at each level until it absorbs the essence of all of nature. Once this knowledge and experience is gained and unified within the *soul* (referred to as the “12 intelligences”), the *soul's* regeneration will be complete, and it will emerge as an individual, actualized “Christ” (Kuhn; pp. 207, 208).

With the proviso that “Ignorance is ever the gaoler and knowledge [gnosis] is the only release” (Ibid.), he explains that the Egyptian model shows the *soul* passing through 12 successive dungeons that are each guarded by a specific god. The *soul* would be captive in each dungeon until it could figure out either the name or number of the particular god that guards it. Once successful at that task, the god would release the *soul* to the next level (Ibid.). Does this sound anything like the computer game “Dungeons and Dragons” or “Ladders”? Kuhn says that the *dungeon* represents the ignorant condition of the *soul* when it is imprisoned in matter (the *body* it inhabits during an incarnational state).

By citing the ancient philosopher Proclus, he summarizes thus:

...The twelve “rays” of the solar Logos become at last in men and gods the twelve faculties of spiritual intelligence the evolution of which makes man in his aeonial career [consisting of 12 different indefinite periods of time] a *Christ*, instructing and training his “twelve disciples” within the confines of his own individuality. (Ibid.; emphases added)

Need I say more? Need I point out that there are also among us those who supposedly *heal* with the invocation of angels and the use of *12 rays of light* that are from a “divine” source? They call themselves “Lightworkers.” They believe that the 12 rays are the fabric of the entire divine creation and that the integration and harmonization of the 12 Rays are important aspects of the evolutionary process of the *soul*.

Barbara Marx Hubbard is a proponent of the evolution of the *immortal soul* from a physical body to a body of light. The stars and planets figure in significantly in the process that will take *homo sapiens* to a state called *homo universalis*. Here is how she defines *soul* and describes the evolutionary process:

The Soul is a five-pointed star six inches above the head of an individual. Acting as a bridge it hovers between form (our bodies) and essence (Spirit). The Soul is not Spirit. The Soul purifies the personality (body, mind, emotions) for the entrance of Spirit. When a strong personality is cleansed, the Soul departs and Spirit enters the body.

For millions of years humanity has been preparing the personality for this event and we are now on the threshold. The electrical waves presently dropping to Earth from Aquarius, Jupiter and Uranus will accelerate a Soul Infusion. This is a global event. (Night-lightnews.com/EsotericAstrology)

Kuhn and Wilmschurst would point out that there is a *kinship* of “spirit” among all groups who teach about the evolution of the immortal soul. Hobbs probably would not agree with that, but his definition of the *real person* does not seem to be very much different.

What God Has Revealed

It is important to understand how different God’s scriptural revelation is to the above-cited references. You can see that all of the proponents of the immortality of the soul do not teach the same “doctrine.” If you are desirous of worshipping God in *spirit* and in *truth*, then you must understand God’s doctrine about the make-up of the human.

The first mention of the creation of man is in Genesis 1:26 – the main point being that God (*Elohim*) planned to create a being that would be in His “image.” That Hebrew word is *tselem*. In this scriptural context, it shows that God intended man to be a *representative figure* of God – that is, man’s outward figure would be the same as God’s (head, torso, legs, feet, et cetera). It also means that man would be a *typical example* of a class, group, and quality of creature that will *subsequently* come into existence. In modern parlance, it is about the same as having a *virtual* being become

an *actual* being. In other words, it appears that God did not intend that man should always exist as a dust-born body of flesh – that He had in mind another state of existence for man after his experience in the flesh.

All other living, breathing beings (*nephesh*) created by God were not created in the image of God. They would live, reproduce their own kinds, and die and return to the earth from which they were made *en masse* – not just a *single* male and a *single* female like the first man and woman. No creature other than man was intended to be a *virtual* or *actual* representative figure of God.

However, man would have something in common with the other *nephesh*: They would breathe the same way (that is, taking oxygen out of the air they breathe and breathing out carbon dioxide into the atmosphere around them); that “breath of life” (Hebrew = *ruach* and is often translated as *spirit*) would cease in them upon their commonly-held death; and they would disintegrate into the dust of the earth (see Ecclesiastes 3:18-22; Psalm 103:14).

The main difference between man and other living, breathing beings is that man would be afforded the opportunity to move on to an *actualization* of his intended “God” state. The other living, breathing beings have no such *transcendent* purpose – that is, *potential* (not *innate ability*) – to go beyond the limits of their present fleshly, physical existence.

Genesis 2:7 is a very short record that man was created from the *dust of the earth*. He was not an *immortal soul* imprisoned in a temporary body of flesh. His *real person* was the fleshly body created from the dust of the earth. Paul gives us two examples of this in his letters to the Corinthians: (a) 1 Corinthians 15:46-54 explains that the *earthly body* was given *first* and the *spiritual body* will be *put on* at a time of God’s own choosing (vv. 35-45 showing that the earthly body is capable of dying and rotting away, but with the prospect of being transformed into a different type of body); and (b) 2 Corinthians 4:6 through 5:10 shows that man is presently an *earthen vessel* (4:7) to whom God gives spiritual enlightenment (see also 1 Corinthians 2:7-16). Paul says in 4:11 that we are *mortal* (capable of dying – that is, capable of having our physical and mental functions shutting down and becoming totally inoperable). We should know that we can look forward to being raised from this condition of *death* to a newer, better form of life. Our spiritual growth and development in Jesus Christ makes this possible (4:14-18).

Second Corinthians 5:1-10 is an explanation about how that process works. Verse 1 explains that the present *earthen vessel* will be *dissolved* (that is, returned to its dust), but it will be replaced by a body that is the product of God’s work, not man’s. This present *earthen vessel* is a burdensome body, but it will be replaced with an *eternal body* (vv. 2-4). God has created us to follow this pattern and has given

us an *earnest* (something given as a pledge for binding a commitment) of His Holy Spirit to demonstrate that He will complete the work He has begun in us (see Philippians 1:6; John 14:15-18, 26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:38; and Ephesians 1:13, 14). If we endure in His truth, then He will give us the *spirit body* He originally intended us to have so that we can be actual members of His family (see Hebrews 2; Ephesians 1:4-14; Colossians 1:21-23; and 1 John 3:1-3). In the meantime, we *yearn* to be clothed with the spirit body that God planned to be our ultimate state.

As you might well realize, there are many things that *sound like* the true Christian has much in common with pagan beliefs and practices (see Proverbs 14:12). We do not. Paul calls the “look-alikes” *deceitful workers, masqueraders, minions of Satan, and false apostles* (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; see also Matthew 24:4, 5). He calls them *perverters of the true gospel* (Galatians 1:6-9). The Apostle John says that those who say that Jesus *did not come in the flesh* are *anti-christs* (1 John 4:1-3; see also 1 Corinthians 15:12-58). This is not the first time in history that God’s true people have been confronted with the monstrous lies of Gnosticism and the like. The history of Israel has been strewn with the carcasses of those who fell for that lie.

The Jewish Encyclopedia says this:

The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principle exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended.

Considering how many in Israel attached themselves to the pagan gods, it is no surprise that they adopted religious concepts from them and “normalized” them into the fabric of the

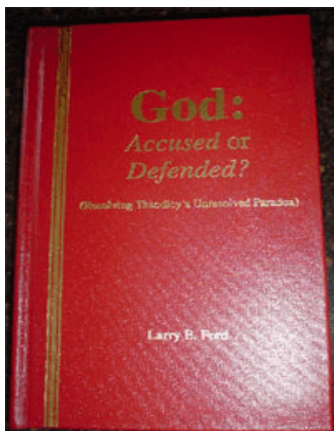
religion that God revealed to Israel (see Deuteronomy 29:10-29).

Traditional Christianity has been no different as it has spread among the Gentile nations. As a matter of fact, in principle, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has actually *replaced* the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, except in those cases where it is taught that the body and soul are inseparable components. Consider this from *The Interpreter’s Bible* (vol. 12; pp. 524, 525) in reference to Revelation 20:5, 11-15:

This second or general resurrection is apparently physical, i.e., the souls of both the righteous and the wicked which went to hades (Sheol) at death are now reunited with their earthly bodies....Also, it may be inferred that without a physical body the saved could not enjoy the blessings of eternal life on earth nor could the wicked be suitably punished in the fiery lake.

Do you understand, at the least, how traditional Christianity has become *inextricably* tied to the *myth* of the *immortal soul*? Do you understand that it is ascertainable that the concept is *mythical paganism*? How can God’s revelation in the Bible be so surreptitiously hijacked and changed into a lie (Romans 1:25)? The *myth* is nothing more than a worship of the *creature rather than the Creator!* Unless and until you come that realization, you will never come to understand Jesus’ comment in John 4:23, 24 about worshiping God in spirit and in *truth*.

May the God of truth bless you with eyes that see and ears that hear.



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THE MYTH BEHIND HALLOWEEN



What is so *hallowed* about *Halloween*? The answer to that question is given over and over every year as local newspapers and television commentators make comments about the observance that comes every October 31. The trouble with most descriptions and explanations, however, is that they are not given as *criticism* – *assessments* of their relative worth and validity. In many cases, they are given as mere *explanations* and *descriptions*. In many other cases, they are actually *recommendations* for the celebration of that so-called *hallowed evening*—you know, recommendations to join in the fun and frivolity and to participate in the *commercial value* of the celebration by spending your money on treats and decorations. In the end, it boils down to a question about why the evening is even considered to be *hallowed* in the face of such gross commercialization of a night of “...ghoulies and ghosties and four-legged beasties and things that go ‘bump’

in the night.” It boils down to a question about whether or not *Christians* should be involved in it on any level.

So, the objective of this study is: (a) to acquaint you with the *myth* behind Halloween and (b) to compare that *myth* to the record of God’s revelation, the *Holy Bible*, to see if *it* would *recommend* that you get involved with *Halloween* and give yourself over to the meaning and religious significance of such a *hallowed* event that is based on the dead and witches and ghosts and magic and frivolity. The objective is to give you an *assessment* of its *relative worth* and *validity*. At the end of the discussion, it is hoped that you will have a clearer picture of God’s will about it.



Differences Make a Difference

It is an interesting exercise in research to find some of the motivations and intentions behind various beliefs and practices – not necessarily involving *religious* beliefs and practices. It is possible to read books on various subjects and encounter statements that open a window of insight into motivations and intentions behind those subjects that serve as vehicles by which knowledge about a totally different subject can be understood. That is especially true with regard to subjects about how certain *religious beliefs* percolated from one level to another and became dispersed into many different forms of the original. Let me give you an example of what I mean by that statement.

In her book *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth*, a 500-page tome about how Patriarchal religion has warred against Matriarchal religion, Barbara Mor offers the following information, among an abundance of other information, to help prove her point:

...[The Catholic Church] quickly moved to secure its power through the forceful elimination of all rival religious beliefs.

This is why *pagan religion* survived through at least a thousand years of Christian rule in Europe: power rested in the countryside. Missionaries were counseled by the Roman pope to *accommodate pagan religion where it couldn’t be overcome*. Thus there are Christian churches throughout Europe built upon the sites of pagan temples, both pagan and Christian deities are pictured in many early European church reliefs. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991; p. 321; emphases added)

She goes on to give examples of how this worked, including the fact that *Christian symbols* were incorporated into ancient *pagan festivals*: Christmas at Winter Solstice (Roman = Saturnalia) with the tree and gift-giving being *pagan* cus-

toms originating in the Goddess rituals; Santa Claus from Norse goddess worship; Scandinavian *Jul* (yule) celebrating the Winter Solstice when the sun rolled toward its northernmost point (Swedish = *hjul*); and Easter, based on the Saxon goddess *Oestre* (from which the name of the female estrus-cycle is derived), the *pagan* festival of spring that celebrates the year's rebirth and resurrection.

The continued point I am making in this issue is that it is *common knowledge* that "Christianity" has *accommodated paganism* where it couldn't be overcome. It has been shown in the other articles in this issue that the *myth* has been the method used to perpetuate the religious beliefs of *pagan* religions – and they are very similar in their structures as demonstrated by Mor's examples above. The way the Catholic church *accommodated* them was to take the *pagan* beliefs and practices and give them a "Christian" meaning and significance with which the *pagans* could be comfortable.

Malachi Martin, in his historical fiction *Windswept House* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), had one of his characters say this about the "Slavic Pope" (an obvious reference to Pope John Paul II): "...He claims to include *all religions* in his ministry, but *without any of the usual old insistence that everybody become Roman Catholic*" (emphases added). I can understand that such a position is possible if you want to *accommodate* (that is, to make something suitable by changing it in order to have room for it) other religions outside of the scope of your own.

I can understand how people can look at *similarities* and draw the conclusion of *kinship* – you know, like the theory of evolution does with the similarities among *hominids* (*Hominidae*)...mammals with human-like features. They even look at the embryos of a chicken, a shark, and a human and note *similarities* that occur at some points in the embryonic development. Based on those *similarities*, they make the great conclusive jump of logic to *kinship*. In like manner, some reason that since there are *similarities of beliefs* among the religions of the world, then they are all *kin* and are working toward the same goal under the direction of the same "God." Well, the problem that eventually emerges and causes all of the various groups to remain encamped with their own is summed up thus: ***Differences make a difference!***

It has already been shown that the superficial similarities can obscure the differences that exist. A man once remarked

to me that we believed pretty much the same things. I asked him to elaborate; whereupon, he cited a couple examples: (a) we both believed in the Kingdom of God; and (b) we both believed in Jesus Christ. My reply was this: (a) He believed in a Kingdom of God made up of Christians who, at the return of Jesus Christ will be changed to *immortal* flesh-and-bone (no blood) *humans*; (b) I believe in a Kingdom of God made up of Christians who will be changed into *spirit beings* possessed of self-existent life like God Himself; (c) he believed in a Jesus Christ who had been Michael the Archangel, the brother of Lucifer; and (d) I believe in a Jesus Christ who was originally a God-being who was the companion of the God we now know as the Father (see John 1:1-3, Hebrews 1, and Philippians 2:5-11). In certain aspects, the *words* are *similar*, but the *meanings* are very *different*.

Now, if you attach the word *hallowed* to this concept of a celebrated evening, does that make it *kin* to the *hallowed* aspect of God's name in Matthew 6:9? There is *possibility*, but that term presupposes that there also exists the *impossibility*. This is where you have to concentrate your attention on what God's word *reveals* to you (see John 17:17). If you come to understand that such a relationship is *impossible*, according to God's revealed truth, then you have the revelation of God's *will* about your involvement in the *hallowed evening*.

You have God's revelation about how ***differences make a difference***.

The Myth Behind Halloween

There was in the pagan religions the celebration of the autumn equinoctial festivals and winter solstitial festivals during which a special privilege was granted to a "fool" to practice ribaldry at the expense of his master. Understand that this was part of a *religious celebration* when the higher and lower, the *god* and irresponsible *joker*, were placed on the same level playing field. In the celebration of the phases of the *immortal soul's* development, this was acted out to celebrate the coming *divinization* of the soul. On the seventh day, *fools were considered to be sacred...hallowed* – that is, regarded as being *holy*. Why? The number seven (7) was the number of *completion* and symbolized the raising of the *animal* man to his *human-divine* dignity on the Sabbath, the symbolic seventh and last day of this incarnational cycle.



HALLOWEEN

In the *mythology* that you have encountered, perhaps you remember the legends of sorcerers turning the hero and/or his men into animals. If you have ever read *The Odyssey* by Homer, then you should remember when the enchantress Circe turned Odysseus's men into pigs. Perhaps you remember when a sorcerer appeared to men as an animal – or when animals spoke to men (Native American myth/legends). These *myths* are the bases upon which the *initiated* understood the incarnation of the *divine soul* in man's animal body. Such religious dramas were acted out in *animal masks* made of animal skins. The Halloween animal mask is a surviving relic and replica of the same thing. Their reason for doing such a thing was because of the *kinship* they felt with *nature*.

You can read Romans 1:18-23 to grasp what God thinks of such practices. Paul says that man in general has had access to the knowledge of God's truth, but he has suppressed it through his wickedness. How? By becoming *fools* and putting man and other creatures on the same level as God! This is the thrust of the first four of the Ten Commandments: God claims that *nothing* in His creation is on the same level as He (read also Isaiah 55:8, 9). They came to believe and teach that *man* has the ability of *self-perpetuation* to godhood *inherent* in the *real person* (the soul) that lives *temporarily* in the animal body. **That concept changes the glory of the incorruptible God.** He considers that to be patently unacceptable. That religious ritual symbolically represents the claim that the *immortal soul's* journey is the drama of human life. The *mask* symbolizes the *outer* personality of the animal man.

During these celebrations, there was much drunkenness and orgies. The intoxication was the symbol of the "Wine of Immortality" by which man would forget his divine nature. They ate meals in which the cooked animals were violently dismembered and ripped apart. It's rather like the activity symbolized the tremendous struggle that was taking place to leave the *animal* and join the *divine*. So, the orgies and drunkenness and buffoonery typified the conflict in which the god-man and the animal-man intoxicate one another until the *higher* neutralizes the *lower* and man becomes a wise and sober being – capable of ascending to a higher level of spiritual evolution. It is a celebration of the union

and dissolution of the soul and body.

Here is where *numerology* is also used to impress upon the initiates the *religious symbolism* contained in Nature's cycles. If you have studied very much into ancient history and literature, you have probably had some experience with the importance that certain *numbers* hold. The number **666** in Revelation 13:18 is one example from the Bible. You might realize that in the Bible the numbers one, two, three, four, seven, ten, twelve, twenty-four, thirty, forty, seventy, three hundred, and others are used repeatedly – and...some have thought that they are "special" numbers that hold "special" *spiritual* significance for the initiated.

What is "special" about 12 disciples? The age of 12? Some would say that 12 represents the transformation of the



natural, unregenerate state of humanity as it evolves into the spiritual kingdom. The number 30 represents the completed perfection in the soul's evolution. So, it would be significant that, at 12 years of age, Jesus told His mother that He had to be about His Father's business (Luke 2:40-52), and the age of 12 is considered the point at which a person becomes "accountable" for his actions. It would be significant that Jesus entered His ministry at age 30 (Luke 3:23), as did the priestly family of Israel (see Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47 for examples). Gnostics consider the number 12 to represent the *three* powers of *spirit* subdivided into *twelve* aspects of spiritual intelligence. The Egyptians displayed this concept in their pyramids: *four sides of triangles: 4x3 = 12*

points of spiritual intelligence that the soul must acquire in order to complete its full evolution into divinity.

The number 40 represents the symbolic period of the incubation of a seed in the ground (or, *matter* – the soul is considered to be God's *seed* in the flesh made from dirt). To the initiates, it symbolizes one stage of the 12 incarnational periods the soul needs to reach perfection. The vernal and autumnal equinoxes and the summer and winter solstices mark the points at which the 40-day periods would begin. May Day ends the 40 days from the vernal equinox; Easter ends the 40 days from Lent; Candlemas ends the 40 days from Christmas; February 2nd (the Purification of the Virgin) supposedly marks the 40 days of purification that Mary went through after Jesus' birth on the night of December 24th; and Halloween ends the 40 days from the autumnal equinox. So,

to some, *numbers* are keys used to unlock spiritual mysteries for the advancement of the soul's evolution to divinity. *Halloween* as we know it today is a relic (a *surviving* part of) – a *vestige* (a *degenerated* part of something that was more fully developed at an earlier stage) – of a *pagan religious custom* in ancient history.

What you should understand about this is simple: Halloween is merely another part of *pagan mythology* that people have been duped into accepting – some for the religious value (*esoteric*) and some for the fun and frivolity (*exoteric*). Just because someone does not understand any more than the *exoteric* value of the celebration does not mean that God is any less displeased with it. It is still an affront to Him that people are so ignorantly celebrating things that they do not understand (see John 4:19-24). Whether you do this with *esoteric* or *exoteric* understanding, it is still an abomination to God because of the source from which it is derived (read again Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and Jeremiah 10:1-15).

There is a reason that Isaiah was inspired to write:

And when they say to you, “Consult the necromancers and witches who chirp and mutter,” should not God's people consult Him? Should His people consult the dead for the benefit of the living? He says: “Check these witches' words against the word of God! If their messages do not reflect what is in My law and testimony, then it is because I have not sent them; ***they have no light of truth in them.***” (Author's paraphrase based on translations from *Modern Language, Living Bible, and Revised Standard Version*; emphases added)

Those with an *exoteric* leanings in this matter will not understand the serious nature of God's warning because they are *spiritually ignorant* of God's truth (see Romans 8:5-8).

The Problem With Spiritual Ignorance

In Romans 10:3, Paul stresses the fact that the spiritually ignorant rely on their own righteousness rather than God's. This is called *self-righteousness*. In Paul's speech before the *pagan Athenians* (Acts 17), he notes their devotion to an array of different “gods.” He notes that they even have an idol dedicated to the “Unknown God”...simply to avoid disrespecting any “god” they might have not included among their idols. Paul says that they *ignorantly worship* this “unknown god” (v. 23). *Ignorance* means that someone has a lack of knowledge or experience – a lack of awareness – of something. All of us are *ignorant* about something, so the problem is not whether or not you are *ignorant*. Hosea suggests that *ignorance* is dangerous and destructive – especially if someone has an opportunity to move beyond *ignorance* to *knowledge*. Those who *reject* knowledge are in a

most precarious position. Read Hosea 4:6 and Romans 1:18-32 so that you can get the full impact of that statement.

Those who are *wilfully ignorant* are especially vulnerable to God's wrath. Read Romans 1:32. What does it say? Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. What does it say? Read Exodus 22:18 and Deuteronomy 18:10-12. What do they say? Read 1 Samuel 15:23. What does it say? Read Galatians 5:16-21. What does it say? Are you now *ignorant* of God's revealed will concerning such practices as we have discussed above? If you are, then it is either because of a lack of ability to understand what you have read, or it is because you are *wilfully ignorant*. The point is this: Personal curiosity can help you to overcome *ignorance*. It is not a dread disease that has no cure. If you desire to overcome your spiritual *ignorance*, there are sources and people who can assist you with that (read Romans 10 for more understanding about combating spiritual *ignorance*).



It is no secret that the God of the Bible abhors the religious and philosophical concepts of *paganism* (read Leviticus 26:14-39). Since *Halloween* has been adopted from *pagan religious practices*, then it is no great surprise that God abhors it. Leviticus 18 and 20:1-8 are other pieces of this puzzle that can take away spiritual *ignorance*. God's attitude is *predictable* because of these revelations – enough so that the person who wants to worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth* (John 4:23, 24) doesn't have to *guess* or *wonder* what His attitude is. It is also *predictable* that He wants you to

think the same way He thinks (see Romans 12:9 and Leviticus 20:7).



You do not have to be *ignorant* or *conflicted* about how God thinks and about what He expects His people to think. In this article, along with the others above, you have received sufficient enlightenment to understand that even the *exoteric* superficiality of the fun and frivolity do not recommend themselves for God's stamp of approval. Countless people have fun and thoroughly enjoy some of the grossest aspects of *debauchery* and *dissipation* imaginable, but...that does not make it acceptable in God's sight (Psalm 19:7-14).

Countless others *delight* in causing pain and misery to others. Even when the *fun* and *frivolity* seem to be *harmless*, it does not recommend itself to God's standard of expected behavior. All of that is *selfishness*, not *love* in the sense that God defines it. A "good witch" like Elizabeth Montgomery's *Samantha* in the television series "Bewitched" is no less a witch. I submit to you that there are demonic forces that are "good" – but that "good" is wrapped in so much *selfishness* that it serves no *godly* purpose at all except to worship the *creature* rather than the *Creator* (see Matthew 7:21-23 and 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15).

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There are people and organizations who are rightly aligned with the God of Truth who can assist you in learning how to continue your journey out of spiritual *ignorance*. Your part, of course, is to have the *curiosity* and the *willingness* to commit yourself to the journey. Please contact us if you desire our assistance in this effort. If we are not in close enough proximity to you to provide more personal assistance, we have friends in other similar organizations that we can recommend to you. We can even give them your contact information if you desire it. We are not the lone voice in the world that understands God's truth and will. There are others around the world who also understand and are willing to help you. Let us help you. Thank you.

...Just One More Thing:

The articles in this issue of *Spirit and Truth* lay out the groundwork for you to understand God's truth. They demonstrate in various ways how fully the *human* society has been wrapped up very cozily with those religious concepts that focus our attention on the *creature* rather than the *Creator*. Consider the following as you ponder God's word and how you will respond to it: God's True Church is the "Pillar and Ground of the Truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). With around 32,000+ different "Christian" organizations in the world, have you ever asked yourself how they could all be right when it comes to teaching God's revealed truth?

Consider the many conflicting doctrines you find among these denominations and the many ways in which they contradict one another as a result. Think about God's revealed warnings about those who will come in the name of Jesus Christ and do many wonderful works...yet, be His enemies (see Matthew 7:21-23; 24:4, 5). Ponder God's revealed warning about those who will come preaching another Jesus, another gospel, and another Spirit – masquerading as the ministers of righteousness (see 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15) – and those who will slip in unawares and preach a perverted gospel (see Jude 3, 4; Galatians 1:6-9). Meditate on the Apostle Paul's question to the Corinthians: "Is Christ divided?" (see 1 Corinthians 1:13). Let us help you at www.theseventhdaychristianassembly.org.

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