

The Discerner

the voice of... **Religion Analysis Service**

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 40, Number 4

October • November • December 2020

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*
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Dave Brittain

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The Discerner editorial team is

Steve Lagoon, Steve Devore, and

Doug Steiner

PO Box 206

Chaska, MN 55318

612-331-3342 / 1-800-562-9153

FAX 612-331-3342

info@ras.org <http://www.ras.org>

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Religion Analysis Service

Board of Reference

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WITH THIS ISSUE

I'm sure that you, as a discerning reader, have already reviewed the cover of this issue of *The Discerner*. Doing so, you were probably surprised to see that our first article title would appear to be more socially and politically oriented than religious and spiritual!

But fear not, Religion Analysis Service has not lost its way or strayed from our purpose!

Rather, our first article for this Discerner issue is a timely exposé on the *occultic origins* of the Black Lives Matter movement as written by Don and Joy Veinot. This is *must reading* concerning this controversial phenomenon that is having an impact across the United States.

Our second article is by our Canadian friend and cult researcher Bary Claud Gaudreault. Gary notes how cults distort and reject the key biblical doctrine of the Trinity, then very clearly shows how Trinity doctrine is grounded in the Word of God.

The third article explains how Early Church Christians also celebrated Christmas. Our fourth article is a brief overview of what the Bible has to say about the problem of cults.

Grounded in Jesus Christ as Our Lord and Savior, we here at RAS also want to wish our readers a very Merry Christmas. [For] “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20, NIV)

And thank you, once again, for your generous gifts that make our ministry possible.

Steve Lagoon

President, Religion Analysis Service

THE OCCULT RELIGION OF #BLACK LIVES MATTER

By Don and Joy Veinot¹

#Black Lives Matter began in 2013. But only recently has it attained great national popularity and prominence. Beginning with the death of George Floyd, the #Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has allegedly been coming to the forefront of national recognition and support for mistreated Americans like Floyd and other Black Americans.

Although the name indicates that black lives really matter to this cause, it has not actually helped black folks make great gains against perceived or real racism. Further, when one examines its underpinnings, it is not actually about the welfare of black people at all. In fact, it has arguably harmed blacks as well as other peoples by bringing in violent outsiders to stir up and lead crowds. These incited activists have then often destroyed neighborhood stores, businesses, and thus badly damaged or destroyed American lives in the process.

As the BLM “onion” was peeled back, it was learned—through its founders own words—that the core group was made up of self-proclaimed Marxists. Their mission is through anarchy and violence—to destroy the nation as founded and install a radically different government in its place. So #Black Lives Matter, though originally believed by most people as being a movement working for police reform and lifting up actual black people, instead became further recognized by many as a Marxist political power grab.

As the “onion” has been peeled back still further, it has become evident that the #Black Lives Matter movement goes much deeper in its aims and is far darker even than its Marxist political agenda. *It is rather a deeply occultic religious group “wearing political garb.”*

When we listen to the founders and leaders of #Black Lives Matter, we discover it is only tangentially a social and political movement. It is guided and informed by the dogma, practices, and dark rituals of an occult religion called Yoruba/Odu Ifa, which originates with the Yoruba people in Western Africa.

One of the major tenets and practices of Odu Ifa is divination – the “calling on” and “calling up” of “supposed spirits of the dead” to engage in “ancestor worship”. Odu Ifa is also the religion of Beyoncé

1 The RAS Editorial Team has modified this article from its original form. However, we have not modified the author’s original intent, discussion, views, or conclusions.

(as exposed by Christian YouTube apologist nefernitty). nefernitty demonstrates in her 15-minute exposé titled “Beyoncé—Black is King – 10+ Times She Celebrates Yoruba/Ifa” that the religion of Ode Ifa is central in Beyoncé’s “Black is King” video.

Beyoncé is far from the only celebrity that is *deeply* involved in dark occultic religion and religious practices. Sadly, young people who follow these superstar celebrities are probably far more aware of occultic ideas and symbolism in their music than they are of the Christianity of their parents and grandparents. And their parents and grandparents probably have a vague understanding, if *any at all*, of the “spiritual” ideas these stars are foisting upon the young.

For the moment, we still have freedom of religion and freedom of worship in the United States of America. So celebrity actors, singers, entertainers, and their followers—as well as the leaders of BLM – do have the freedom to believe and practice as they wish.

However, the *right* to believe and worship as one chooses is not the same thing as *affirming that all beliefs are equally true or valid*. Some beliefs are false, and some are even dangerous.

One of the Odu Ifa founders of #Black Lives Matter is Patrisse Cullors. Ms. Cullors raised quite a stir amongst conservatives and evangelicals when it was revealed that she and other leaders in the organization are trained and dedicated Marxists. More recently, the deeply occultic religious underpinnings of the group’s core also began coming to light.

Patrisse Cullors was raised as a Jehovah’s Witness (JW) but was drawn to know more about her ancestors and ancestor worship. This led her away from the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society to a more occult form of religious belief and practice.

In “A Prayer for the Runner by Patrisse Cullors”, Patrisse and cofounder Odu Ifa adherent Melina Abdullah engage in an explanatory discussion of their religious faith—and how *integral it is* to what they do in BLM.² Patrisse explains how she was drawn *away* from the JWs and inexorably drawn *to* the West African spirituality of Odu Ifa:

You know I was always someone who almost obsessed about ancestors, Black ancestors in particular, and I wasn’t raised with honoring ancestors necessarily. I was raised Jehovah’s Witness with a little bit of that. As I got older and sort of feel like I was missing something. Ancestor, ancestral worship

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udEnerFMVaY> Approximately 19:42 minutes.

became really important, and as you know, the Fowler Museum is so important because it has, it has a bunch of West African traditional, um, pieces inside that museum, and it was one of the first museums that I went to that was speaking directly to African spirituality.³

Patrisse and Melina spend a fair amount of time discussing calling up, calling on, and enjoying a close fellowship with spirits whom they believe are spirits of deceased Blacks. This, by the way, is divination or necromancy and is expressly forbidden in Leviticus 19:31:

Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God.

Necromancy is the pagan practice of allegedly communicating with the dead (We believe these “spirits” they commune with are *not* spirits of dead people, but evil spirit beings assuming the identity of the dead). These women have *become* mediums and necromancers! A few moments earlier, Melina spoke to her practice of calling up the spirits of the dead:

...become very intimate with the spirits that we call on regularly. Right, like, each of them seems to have a different presence and personality. You, know I laugh a lot with Waukesha, you know. And I didn’t meet her in her body, right, I met her through this work.⁴

Waukesha Wilson was found dead in a Los Angeles jail cell in 2017. As Melina noted, she did not meet Waukesha Wilson when she was living but built a “very intimate” relationship with a spirit *representing itself* as Waukesha Wilson sometime after she died. During the conversation with Melina, Patrisse described the offerings they make to the spirits with whom they are communicating. Patrisse Cullors wants her viewers to be aware of how *central* it is in their rituals to call out the names of the deceased:

It’s a, it is a very important practice, hashtags are for us are way more than a hashtag. It is, um, literally, almost resurrecting a spirit so they can work through us to get the work that we need to get done.”⁵

They are calling on, having intimate relationships with, and actually being *indwelt* by spirits, “so they can work through us to get the work that we need to get done.”

3 Ibid, approx. 26 minutes.

4 Ibid, approx. 25:36.

5 Ibid, approx. 30:00. Latter quote repeated in following sentence.

One might argue that their private religious experiences, worship practices, and core beliefs are theirs – and they are entitled to them – but these issues have no bearing on the movement called #BlackLivesMatter. That might be true *IF* those beliefs and practices were not directly tied to #BLM.

However, this religious belief and these practices are the very *foundation* of BLM. A #BlackLivesMatter “protest” is a religious ceremony dedicated to and guided by the spirits with whom they are in contact. As Melina Abdullah describes it:

When we come out into the streets, and we pray, you know, the first thing that we do when we hear of a murder is we come out. We pray. We pour libations, we build with the community there, where the person’s life was stolen. And it took almost a year for me to realize that this movement is much more than a racial and social justice movement; at its core it’s a spiritual movement. When we say the names, right, so we speak their names, we say her name, say their names, we do that all the time. You kind of invoke that spirit and then those spirits actually become present with you. Right?⁶

Patrisse Cullors fully agrees with Melina, as a few moments later she says, “I believe so many of them work through us.” So when we see these women at the beginning of a “protest,” practicing what seems to be simply mentioning names of those they believe were unjustly killed by police (who are described as hunting down and killing Blacks), they are actually worshipping, invoking and calling on these spirits to guide and enable them and the protestors. Offerings (libations) are made to those spirits in the process!

Find this hard to believe? No one has to take our word on this, because you can hear this from their own lips. In “*The Fight for Black Lives is a Spiritual Movement*” by Hebah Farrag, she writes:

On June 2, 2020, Black Lives Matter’s Los Angeles Chapter sponsored an action in front of Mayor Eric Garcetti’s house, demanding reductions in the city’s funding of police. The action, what many would call a protest, began like a religious ceremony. Melina Abdullah, chair of the Department of Pan-African Studies at California State University, Los Angeles, and co-founder of BLM-LA, opened the event explaining that while the movement is a social justice movement, it is first and foremost a spiritual movement.⁷

6 Ibid, approx. 33:30.

7 <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/the-fight-for-black-lives-is-a-spiritual-movement>

Melina Abdullah led the group in a ritual: the reciting of names of those taken by state violence before their time—ancestors now being called back to animate their own justice. As each name is recited, Dr. Abdullah poured libations on the ground as the group of over 100 chanted “Asé,” a Yoruba term often used by practitioners of Ifa, a faith and divination system that originated in West Africa. This ritual, Dr. Abdullah explained, is a form of worship.

“George Floyd. Asé. Philandro Castille. Asé. Andrew Joseph. Asé. Michael Brown. Asé. Erika Garner. Asé. Harriet Tubman. Asé. Malcom X. Asé. Martin Luther King. Asé.”⁸

Please note that BLM is *first and foremost a spiritual movement* and the chanting and pouring of libations (liquid offerings) “is a form of worship.” BLM has 16 chapters, which fits in nicely to the core teaching of Odu Ifa on the importance of the number 16:

According to oral tradition, the 16 odu ifa were 16 heavenly prophets that came down to Earth and revealed themselves to Orunmila, the prophet of Ifa religion. Orunmila is also known as the deity of wisdom that was present during the creation and allocation of destiny for all human beings.⁹

But there is more:

Each odu contains information associated with the good and the bad. It provides guidance on how to manifest the good and how to keep negative disruptive forces known as Ajogun at bay.

It is through the divinatory processes that the odu currently shaping our lives is revealed to us. This sacred act of divination (performed by an experienced Babalawo or Iyanifa) is what provides the opportunity that allows us to know ourselves better. Furthermore, it allows us the opportunity to know how we can live and maintain a positive life for all.¹⁰

These are the major Odu, and then there are the minor Odu, of which there are 240. Combined there are 256 Odu Ifa in the Ifa corpus which is 16×16 cubed:

256 odu Ifa refers to the complete collection of the Ifa corpus. There are a total of 256 odu that make up the foundation of the Ifa religion. The previously mentioned 16 principle or major odu ifa are considered

8 Ibid, fifth paragraph.

9 *Ifa Religion*

10 16 Odu Ifá Meaning

the pillars of the Ifa corpus. The remaining 240 minor odu ifa are derived from these 16 major odu.¹¹

It should be noted that many black, brown and white Americans who support BLM are, or consider themselves to be, Christian. *Yet these tenets, practices, and occult rituals are deeply anti-Christian and are condemned in the Bible.*

Despite this, BLM now has the allegiance of liberal and progressive as well as some evangelical churches. In addition, they enjoy huge financial backing from major American corporations, sporting franchises, liberal print and social media, and quite a few elected officials. In addition to monetary backing, the trademark of their spiritual movement has been painted on the streets of New York by the mayor, emblazoned on basketball courts and football fields, with the very names of the spirits to be called on stitched on the jerseys and stenciled on the helmets of players. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being funneled into the funding of this religious cult by businesses, corporations, organizations, and even famed retired basketball superstar Michael Jordan, who has pledged to donate 100 million dollars over the next ten years.¹²

It should be apparent to all that these very violent though supposedly “peaceful protests” have absolutely nothing – or very little to do—with racism. It is a religious battle, which few Christians are prepared for and even less unbelievers understand. This is why it is important that you not only read but also pass this understanding on to your brother and sister in Christ.

This is a spiritual battle for the souls of those living in this nation: *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* (Ephesians 6:12)

Don And Joy Vienot are the directors of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Visit their excellent website at <https://midwestoutreach.org>.

¹¹ *Ifa Religion*; 256 Odu Ifa

¹² https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2020/06/21/the_various_faces_of_black_lives_matter.html#!
3rd par.

15 BIBLICAL REASONS WHY THE CULTS ARE WRONG REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

by Bary Claud Gaudrealt

Introduction

When examining the teachings of major cults active today, almost all of them reject, attack, or distort the Triune Godhead of the Bible and the historic Christian faith. Often, these groups claim that since the Bible does not contain the word “Trinity”, the Trinity must be a false doctrine. They also claim that the early Christian Church did not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Further, the cults argue that the Trinity is based upon secular philosophy and pagan polytheism.

In substitution for biblical Trinity, cultic groups err by offering various forms of Modalism and Tri-Theism. Some suggest that the Godhead was formed of three gods rather than One God in three persons. Others teach that the three persons are illusory or just different aspects of a single divine personality.¹

Is Trinity doctrine Biblical? Is the Trinity taught in both Old and New Testaments? Does the doctrine of the Trinity contradict other Scriptures? We will let the Scriptures² speak for themselves regarding the truth of Trinitarian Doctrine.

I. There Is Only One God.

A. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

B. “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (1 Corinthians 8:5–6)

II. God Refers To Himself In The Plural Form.

A. “And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” (Genesis 1:26)

1 RAS Editorial Note: “Modalism is the theological doctrine that the members of the Trinity are not three distinct persons but rather three modes or forms of activity (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) under which God manifests himself. Tri-Theism is the doctrine that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct Gods.” As defined by <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary> accessed 10/25/2020.

2 The King James Version (KJV) is referenced throughout this article.

B. “And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us...” (Genesis 3:22)

C. “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language...” (Genesis 11:7)

D. “Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?...” (Isaiah 6:8)

III. Within The Godhead There Exists Three Persons.

A. “Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: And now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.” (Isaiah 48:16)

B. “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16–17)

C. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Mathew 28:19)

D. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

IV. All Three Persons In The Godhead Are Referred To As God.

A. The Father is called God.

1. “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father...” (1 Corinthians 1:3)

2. “Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:3)

B. The Son is called God.

1. “In the beginning was the Word. and the Word was with God. and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

2. “And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.” (John 20:28)

3. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13)

C. The Holy Spirit is called God, the Spirit of God and Lord.

1. “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why has thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” (Acts 5:3–4)
2. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Romans 8:9)
3. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Corinthians 3:17)

V. All Three Persons In The Godhead Possess The Attributes Of God.

A. The Father is:

1. Eternal

a. “Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.” (Psalm 93:2)

b. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” (Psalm 90:2)

2. Unchanging

a. “For I am the LORD, I change not...” (Malachi 3:6)

b. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

3. All Present (Omnipresent)

“Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 23:23–24)

4. All Knowing (Omniscient)

a. “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off.” (Psalm 139:1–2)

b. "And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15)

5. All Powerful (Omnipotent)

a. "...the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I Am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." (Genesis 17:1)

b. "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God." (Isaiah 10:21)

B. The Son is:

1. Eternal

a. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: And the government shall be upon his shoulder: And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

b. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

2. Unchanging

a. "And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." (Hebrews 1:12)

b. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

3. All Present

a. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

b. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 28:19)

4. All Knowing

a. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." (John 2:24-25)

b. "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?...And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee..." (John 21:17)

5. All Powerful

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:18)

C. The Holy Spirit is:

1. Eternal

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14)

2. Unchanging

a. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" (Isaiah 40:13)

b. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:4)

3. All Present

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalm 139:7)

4. All Knowing

a. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:9–10)

b. "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." (Isaiah 11:2)

5. All Powerful

a. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

b. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem,

and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

VI. All Three Persons Were Involved In Creation

A. The Father is Creator

a. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

b. “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” (Acts 17:24–25)

B. The Son is Creator (Colossians 1:16–17)

a. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:3)

b. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” (Colossians 1:16–17)

C. The Holy Spirit is Creator

a. “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2)

b. “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.” (Psalm 104:30)

VII. All Three Persons Were At The Baptism Of Christ

“And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice came from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9–11)

VIII. All Three Persons Were Involved In The Atonement Of Christ

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14)

IX. All Three Persons Were Involved In The Resurrection of Christ

A. God raised Christ from the grave.

“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” (Act 2:24)

B. Christ raised Himself from the grave.

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.” (John 2:19–21)

C. The Holy Spirit raised Christ from the grave.

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Romans 8:11)

X. All Three Persons Were Involved In The Sending Of The Holy Spirit To Indwell Believers At Pentecost

A. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26) B. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” (John 15:26)

XI. All Three Persons Were Involved In The Salvation Of The Church

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” (1 Peter 1:2)

XII. All Three Persons Bring About Unity In The Church

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:4–6)

XIII. All Three Persons Were Involved In The Gifting Of The Church

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6)

XIV. All Three Persons Indwell The Christian

A. The Father indwells the Christian.

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (2 Corinthians 6:16)

B. The Son indwells the Christian.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

C. The Holy Spirit indwells the Christian.

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19)

XV. All Three Persons Are Involved In The Maturing Christian Life

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Jude 20–21)

XV. All Three Persons Are Mentioned In The Benediction Of Saint Paul

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthian 13:14)

Conclusion

A careful search of Holy Scripture, comparing Scripture with Scripture, both in Old and New Testaments, conclusively proves the glorious doctrinal Truth and Existence of the Trinity.

And so, in reflecting this Biblical Truth in creedal language, the Athanasian Creed begins:

“We worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence. For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.”³

ORIGINS OF THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY—FROM EPIPHANY TO CHRISTMAS

By Steve Lagoon

Introduction

It is frequently explained that the early Christian Church co-opted the Christian holiday from earlier pagan holidays. It is usually suggested that early church leaders, in recognizing the popularity and the threat of their religious competitors of the Roman Empire during the fourth century AD, shrewdly adapted and Christianized secular festivals like Sol Invictus and Saturnalia. This view is called by scholars the History of Religions Theory.

History Of Religions Theory

The History of Religions Theory (HRT) is the standard explanation for the origins of the Christmas holiday for most historians and reference materials. That is, until recently. A new generation of scholars is reexamining and increasingly challenging the arguments underpinning the standard HRT explanation.

Indeed, actual historical evidence supports the conclusion that the Christmas holiday has its origins in the Epiphany holiday and the Biblical nativity accounts.

3 <http://www.talentshare.org/~mm9n/articles/TrinityDoctrines/3.htm>

Epiphany & Calculations Theory

The Feast of Epiphany can be traced back as early the turn of the third century (about AD 200). From its earliest beginnings, Epiphany celebrated aspects of Christ's nativity, the visit of the Magi, and most importantly, the birth of Jesus. It was essentially Christmas by another name.

But there was another current that ran through the early church. There were many that held to the belief that Christ was actually born on 25 December. They believed this based upon historical evidence and calculations; so, this tradition is known as Calculations Theory (CT).

Eventually these two streams of Christian tradition intersected in the Christmas holiday. The transition occurred gradually, so that by the middle of the fourth century the primary Christian festival celebrating Christ's birth transferred from Epiphany to Christmas. Correspondingly, the nature of Epiphany shifted, with a greater focus on the visit of the Magi.

Christmas Was Not Derived From Pagan Holidays

While Hippolytus and other church fathers believed that Christ was born on December 25th, the first mention of the Christmas holiday was in the middle of the fourth century:

The first mention in the West of a festival on the now traditional date is in an almanac of 354, which Furius Dionysius Philocalus, a calligrapher, illuminated for the use of Christians in Rome. It contained an entry under 25 December, *natus Christus in Betleem Judeae*, "Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judaea."¹

So, in AD 354 Rome, a chronologer included Christmas in his index of holiday celebrations. It is typical of many people to assume Christmas had taken the place of pagan festivals observed on the same date. However, Kurt Simmons argues against that proposition:

The fact that reference to *Sol Invictus* and the Nativity occurs in the same codex argues against the latter being derived from the former. If the intention was to Christianize the festival *Sol Invictus* by offering the Nativity as a substitute, we would expect reference to *Sol Invictus* to be suppressed to conceal it as the source. That both appear in the codex shows that the owner who commissioned the work felt there was nothing to hide by the coincidence of these occurring the same day. In fact,

¹ J C J Metford, *Dictionary of Christian Lore and Legend*, London (Thames and Hudson, Ltd, 1983), 67.

that Christmas and Natilis sol Invictus occur on the same day is just as capable of the opposite inference; viz. that Aurelian chose December 25th for the festival Sol Invictus because it was already popular with Christians.²

Simmons alerted us to a constant bias among certain scholars, who always assume that where borrowing may have occurred, it is the Christians who have borrowed from the pagans. In fact, such reasoning merely reflects a prejudice against Christianity not in accord with the historical discipline.

For as Simmons made clear, the evidence can just as well be interpreted in the opposite direction; that pagans borrowed the 25 December date from Christian Christmas celebrations.

At the very least, strictly neutral or dispassionate historians should withhold judgment on the question until more historical data becomes available. In the meantime, historians that allege the Church borrowed the Christmas date from pagan holidays should either prove their assertions, or present them as possible reconstructions rather than as facts.

The Celebration Of Christ's Birth In The Early Church!

We must consider some truly amazing information concerning the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in the very early period of the Christian Church. For instance, Fried and Tabori noted the early observance of Christ Nativity:

In the second century A. D., early Christians marked the Nativity celebrations by observing Christ's birth with a reverent feast.³

We have already seen that the Church celebrated the birth of Christ with the feast of Epiphany as early as AD 200. Fried and Tabori point to a time as early as the "second century" (AD 100 to 200) in which the birth of Christ was celebrated. Ace Collins traced the celebration even earlier:

The early church did not celebrate the birth of Christ at all until 125, when Telesphorus, the second century bishop of Rome,

2 Kurt M. Simmons, *The Origins of Christmas and the Date of Christ's Birth*, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 58/2, 2015, 302. Retrieved April 13, 2020. from website: https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/58/58-2/JETS_58-2_299-324_Simmons.pdf, retrieved on November 13, 2020

3 The Christmas Almanac, Natasha Tabori Fried & Lena Tabori Editors, New York (Welcome Books, 2003), 193.

declared that church services should be held to memorialize “the Nativity of our Lord and Savior.”⁴

Wow, Collins asserted that the church in Rome celebrated the birth of Christ already in 125 AD! Finally, McCollister explained that Christ’s birth was celebrated with music all the way back to the close of the Apostolic Age:

Although the music of the season was normally reserved for the litanies (musical prayers in the Mass), as early as [AD] 100 the Bishop of Rome urged his people to “sing in celebration of our Lord’s birth.”⁵

Krythe explained the ancient origin of the great Christmas Hymn “*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*” which is based upon the joyful angelic announcement in Luke 2:14 of Christ’s birth:

At Christmas A.D. 129 Bishop Telesphorus of Rome urged his people to gather in the churches and sing the ‘Gloria in Excelsis Deo’ or the ‘Angels’ Song’.⁶

Ace Collins filled in the details:

While the shepherds’ story of why they came to see the Babe in the manger is easily identified in all the stanzas, for many who sing this old song, the chorus is an enigma. ‘Gloria in excelsis Deo’ means, in English, ‘Glory to God in the highest,’ a phrase that played an important part of worship at church masses dating back to 130 A.D. During that period, Pope Telesphorus issued a decree that on that day of the Lord’s birth all churches should have special evening services. He also ordered that, at these masses, after the reading of certain Scripture or the conclusion of specific prayers, the congregation should always sing the words ‘Gloria in excelsis Deo’. Historical church documents reveal that monks carried this executive order throughout the land and that by the third century [AD 200–300] it was a practice used by most churches at Christmas services.⁷

Conclusion

This evidence is totally contrary to what is so confidently asserted by most scholarly sources, which regularly point to the fourth century as

4 Ace Collins, *Stories Behind the Great Traditions of Christmas*, Grand Rapids MI (Zondervan, 2003), 12.

5 John C. McCollister, *The Christian Book of Why*, New York (Testament Books, 1983, 1999 Edition), 214.

6 Maymie R. Krythe, *All About Christmas*, 145.

7 Ace Collins, *Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas*, Grand Rapids MI (Zondervan, 2001), 20.

the time the Church began to celebrate and observe the birth of Jesus Christ.

We should bear in mind that the Apostolic Age closed about AD 100 with the passing from this world of the apostle John. In other words, it is documented that Christians have celebrated the birth of Christ from the very beginning of the Church – even going back to the Apostolic Age!

THE BIBLE AND CULTS

By Steve Lagoon

In this article we shall consider the problem of cults, and what the Bible has to say about how Christians should face the phenomenon of heretics and their heresies.

Although the word “cult” has fallen on hard times, we continue to use the term to identify groups that claim to be Christian, but who do not uphold essential Christian doctrines, particularly concerning those related to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Augustine’s Dictum

Augustine stated: “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.”

I have found Augustine’s dictum to be most helpful. He emphasized that in the essential and core teachings of the faith,¹ Christians should be unified, and when groups depart from these essentials, other Christians must part from them.

But Augustine wisely recognized that there are areas of biblical teaching concerning theology, doctrine, and practice that, although important, are of a secondary status.

Finally, Augustine affirmed that at all times, Christians must treat others with love. I am reminded of the statement by Francis Shaeffer in which he called love “the final apologetic.”²

¹ These are also sometimes referred to as the “Cardinal Doctrines.”

² Francis Shaeffer, *The Mark of a Christian*, Downers Grove IL (Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 58.

Classification of cults

There are two primary categories or definitions of cults. At *Religion Analysis Service*, we use the term *cult* primarily to refer to movements that claim to be Christian, but whose actual teachings have seriously departed from biblical orthodoxy. Of particular importance is the degree to which these cults have aberrant views related to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Theological cults often have authoritarian prophetic leaders providing new inspired teachings or revelations for their followers. Usually, the traditional Christian denominations are attacked as out of touch with God, and the new movement is necessary to restore the truth in its purity (i.e., the Restorationist movements).

Sociological/Psychological Cults

In modern popular usage, the term cult usually refers to religious movements that are destructive to the members of the movement. The leaders of these movements use coercion, manipulation, and other psychological techniques to brainwash and indoctrinate their members. The cultic lifestyle usually includes for members a severe personality change, isolation from family and loved ones, change in life goals, a total dedication to the movement, and a rejection of former beliefs. Further, members often become victims of physical, sexual, financial, and psychological abuse.

The art of cultism-deception

Cultic groups often use the same terminology as traditional Christian denominations, but they have redefined the terms, giving them meanings different from their normal usage. The apostle Peter referred to the way in which false teachers distort the biblical message: “which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16).

That cults should use deception should not be a surprise. The apostle Paul warned:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

Nor should the fact that cults arise in the first place be surprising. The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch” (Acts 20:28–31).

There is truth

Of course, all of the above assumes that there is truth, and it can be known. The truth is primarily found in the living and written Word of God. Jesus is the living Word of God who left the glories of heaven to set men free from sin: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

When he stood before Pilate, Pilate asked Jesus “What is truth?” (John 18:38).

Jesus anticipated such questions, and said of truth: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). And it is concerning the truth of Jesus that the cults err. And it is the truth that Christians are called to proclaim, but in a loving manner, as the apostle Paul proclaimed (cf. Ephesians 4:15).

Is it necessary to name the names of heretics?

Some may object to exposing false teachers and organizations by name. But confronted with heretics himself, the apostle Paul did not hesitate to name names. This had two purposes. One, it helped protect Christians by warning them of those purveyors of false teaching that sought to shipwreck their souls. Second, it served as a condemnation of the false teachers themselves, with the hope that it would bring them to repentance. Consider these examples from the pens of the apostles:

“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Timothy 2:16–18).

“Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works” (2 Timothy 4:14).

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica” (2 Timothy 4:10).

Paul, then, took no prisoners, as it were. He felt it was proper, and even necessary, to call out false teachers by name. We at Religion Analysis Service have followed this biblical example, publishing exposés and critiques of such false teachings in our quarterly journal, *The Discerner*.

The biblical call to challenge and expose false teachers

Again, this is in accord with the apostle Paul’s admonishment:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

Some may question this approach of calling out error. But we answer with the apostle Paul:

“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16).

Wolves in sheep’s clothing

Jesus warned of the danger of false prophets:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:15–23).

We can understand from Jesus’ teaching about false prophets that false teachers arise within the congregation. We are right to combat the unbiblical ideas that the world offers. But more insidious is the way that Satan attacks the church from within. John warned about such ones:

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19).

We must be on the guard against those who arise within the context of a local church, but who have become infected with some false teaching. This is where it is vital that the pastoral leaders of the church engage in their calling of protecting the flock (cf. Acts 20:28–31).

In Jesus’ teaching about wolves in sheep clothing, he also emphasized that “by their fruits ye shall know them.” It is important that we understand that the ‘fruit’ of a false prophet is false prophecy; that the fruit of a false teacher is false teaching.

But Jesus taught that the test for a false prophet or teacher was their teachings, and how faithful those teachings were or are to God’s word.

Likewise, with Jesus’ metaphor of wolves in sheep’s clothing, we see the use of deception, for the danger lurks not from an obvious enemy, outside the Church, but rather from subtle attack inside, with Satan appearing as an angel of light (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13–15).

The need for discernment

Of course, taking seriously the biblical call to uphold truth and expose heresy requires that Christians practice discernment. We must “try” the spirits to determine if they are from God as the apostle John exhorted:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4: 1–3).

John’s standard for testing the orthodoxy of a teacher was what they said about Jesus Christ. If a teacher denies essential biblical truth about the person or work of Christ (i.e., denying Christ’s deity or incarnation, etc.), they are to be rejected as false teachers.

Jude exhorted Christians that in the face of false teachings, we must take seriously the importance of fighting them and standing for Truth:

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Paul wrote Titus to encourage him of the value of reaching out to those blinded by false teachers:

“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9).

Some question the value of interacting with cultists, arguing that it is just a waste of time. But the apostle Paul clearly believed that there was value in attempting to save souls from their enslavement to the Devil (cf. 2 Timothy 2:23–26).

The sufficiency of Scripture

Cults often promote alternative sources and standards of truth from the Bible. While paying lip service to the Bible, the reality is far different. Cults promote their own pseudo sources of authority.

What all the cults have in common is the denial of the full and sole sufficiency of Scripture. In effect, to the cultist mentality, the Bible is simply not enough. Cult leaders impose upon their followers their own fallible and false teachings in the place of God’s biblical truth. But the apostle Paul made clear that the Bible alone contains the fullness of God’s message to mankind:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

On the other hand, cultists are misled and blinded by the “vain jangling” of false teachers:

“From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Timothy 1:6–7).

Another Jesus, another Spirit, another gospel?

When cult members are confronted, they always claim to believe in Jesus. But it is at this point that I sometimes ask the cultist, “Which Jesus do you believe in?” Usually there is a confused pause, and I follow by saying that the apostle Paul warned against those purveying a false Jesus, a false Spirit, and a false gospel. So, which one are you teaching, the real Jesus or a false Jesus; the real gospel or a false gospel?

As Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Indeed, having the right Jesus and the right gospel is so essential that Paul warned:

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6–9).

That’s right. Even if an angel comes to us preaching another gospel, we are not to believe it.

A Spiritual battle

While it is a noble calling to reach out to those trapped by the cults, we must remember that it is ultimately a spiritual battle. Paul stated:

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Therefore, evangelism to cultists must be pursued with great caution. Those engaging with cultists must be upheld by the prayers of the saints. They must enter the spiritual battlefield prepared. This means that they have taken the time to learn about the cult’s false teachings and how to counter them with the Word of God.

Most importantly, it means that the Christian is a constant student of God’s word. In Paul’s last word to the Church, he gave this charge to Timothy, and by extension, to all Christian believers:

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:1–3).

The better we know biblical truth, the more able we will be to instantly recognize the false claims of false teachers.

QUIZ: BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Identify the correct Bible Book for each of the following verses (King James Version). The exact citation is located in the answer key.

1. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
 - a. Matthew
 - b. Romans
 - c. James
 - d. 1 John
2. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”
 - a. Genesis
 - b. Job
 - c. Hebrews
 - d. James
3. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
 - a. Psalms
 - b. Habakkuk
 - c. Romans
 - d. 1 John

4. "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."
- a. Genesis
 - b. Joshua
 - c. 1 Samuel
 - d. Job
5. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
- a. Proverbs
 - b. Psalms
 - c. Ecclesiastes
 - d. Isaiah
6. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
- a. Genesis
 - b. Exodus
 - c. Psalms
 - d. James
7. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
- a. Ester
 - b. Job
 - c. Proverbs
 - d. Isaiah
8. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
- a. Hebrews
 - b. 1 John
 - c. Jude
 - d. 1 Peter

9. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

- a. Matthew
- b. Acts
- c. 1 Corinthians
- d. Revelation

10. "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

- a. Ezekiel
- b. Mark
- c. 2 Corinthians
- d. Galatians

Answers:

One: b (Romans 1:16); Two: c (Hebrews 9:27); Three: d (1 John 1:9); Four: d (Job 1:21); Five: b (Psalm 139:23-24); Six: a (Genesis 1:1); Seven: d (Isaiah 5:20); Eight: c (Jude 1:3); Nine: a (Matthew 5:16); Ten: d (Galatians 4:16).

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