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John 8:32

Anachronisms

Right off the bat, I'd like to address just two concerns touching Christian worship and involving anachronisms. I suppose most of us are fairly adept at spotting *anachronisms* — things, concepts, and people misplaced in time — when we encounter them in pop culture:

“Hey! That Ferrari doesn't belong in the background of this sword-and-sandal flick!” But when it comes to vitally important issues like *Biblical worship and eschatology* (last-things doctrines), most people are oblivious to such glaring chronological errors. Allow me, then, to point out 2 anachronisms that prevail in (professing) Christian circles today;

1. The Bible clearly teaches that the *miraculous sign-gifts* were given by God to *mark* the hand-picked *Apostles* as the *authentic* Gospel-carriers in the *1st C., AD.* That generation was the most vulnerable; certification was crucial.

God still performs miracles today, of course, but there are no modern apostles; each and every sign-gift served a specific purpose (authentication) and was bestowed during the *foundational era* of the NT Church. When that era passed, the Church was given the inerrant, infallible and *immutable written* Word of God as an enduring witness. God left nothing out of that testimony that could have better informed us now.

2. We decry the use of modern music (sometimes) in our worship, but are you aware that your *hymns* were neither approved nor widely used until *1700 years beyond the apostles*? What did Christians sing throughout the ages? The Psalms, “**God’s Hymnbook.**” Note well: there is *no Biblical warrant for composing man-made, uninspired songs to replace or even supplement the Spirit-breathed Psalms.*

To claim, “we’ve *always* sung the hymns, right from the beginning!” is to play

with history and truth. Where is the hymn composed by Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, another apostle, or Christ Himself, and in continuous use for 20 centuries? Nothing of the sort exists. Furthermore, consider these Biblical facts: Paul encouraged his fellow Christians to *speak* to one another (Eph. 5:19) and to *teach and admonish* one another (Col. 3:16) in “psalms and hymns and *spiritual* songs.” Then look at how the *inspired* Psalms are presented in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX). Each of the terms Paul used— psalm, hymn, or (spiritual) song—shows up as *the* title or *one of the 2 or 3* titles used in combination (see Psalm 76) for various Psalms. What’s the point? 1st C. Christians were intimately familiar with that Greek OT; it was quoted far more often than the Hebrew OT in the New Testament, including Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. When he told them to share psalms-hymns-spiritual songs with each other

and to use them in worship, they knew what he was saying: turn to The Psalms! Once again, there is no NT command or even a hint for God's people to *write* new psalms-hymns-songs for the purpose of enhancing public corporate worship. God is not impressed with our uninspired hymns, no matter how beautiful and pious they may sound to us. We must worship God by His design, with *His* "hymn book," the 150 *God-directed* Psalms. So am *I* the one engaging in anachronism on this? No. Without a Scriptural warrant for new compositions to be used in God-pleasing worship, the proponents of man-made hymnody are the ones who are attempting to inject our current, unbiblical practice into our corporate Christian past. If you ever feel compelled to complain about the use of contemporary "praise and worship" music (in reality, it is neither), think again about your unwarranted use of hymns as well. Only God-approved worship is truly worship.

Biblical Basis

I will unashamedly and unreservedly state that the Bible - the perfect written record of God-spoken truth for all ages - is the ultimate and sole authority directing and governing all of my worldview decisions. As a woefully-fallible sinner myself, I know better than to trust any other fallible human teacher, one who is necessarily limited by time, space, and sin-impaired judgment, just as I am. We can't live without trusting fellow humans to a certain extent, but the Truth (John 14:6) delivers all *essential* truth to His people, and it's our eternal and spiritual lifeblood. In all things, as the Holy Spirit enables, I will trust Christ. Christ *is* — and always was — the Word of God. What God is and wills, and what He has spoken are embodied in Jesus Christ; hear *Him!* (Deut 18:15-22; Mt 17:1-8). The Bible, in turn, is the inerrant and infallible record of the testimony of and to

the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is not God, but it perfectly reflects and communicates all that is true about God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To me, the biggest fool on earth is the *professing* Christian trying to live without a growing, sustaining knowledge of what the Bible teaches in every area of life. What are such persons thinking, if they're thinking at all? It's practical atheism, atheism in daily living and practice. If you're determined to sort everything out on your own, you're determined to fail, and to fail *eternally*. On the other hand, the *sane* way to go is also, to use an apparent oxymoron, *transcendently practical*. All I mean by that is this: in God's universe (make no mistake, it *is* God's universe), it makes zero sense to fight the holy, all-powerful King who is forever secure in His throne. And you, one who has less power than a gnat by comparison, *you (!)* are going to challenge Him?!? That's not only the height of arrogance, but of folly as well. Still,

that is the way of the ungodly (Psalm 1); in a word, *rebellion* against the authority of the Creator-King to whom we are all subject. The point here is that “Bible-believing Christian” should be seen as a *redundancy*, since no *true* Christian ignores or despises the Bible or fails to regularly be informed by it in decision-making. Again, the Bible is *God speaking* (understand that in the *present* tense if you wish, since God exists in what we might call “the eternal now,” and His Word is eternally true, past, present, and future: Isa 40:7; Heb 13:8).

Let’s back up for a moment. I’m not recommending turning to God merely out of fear for our skins because He is all-powerful and able to grant our thoughtless, suicidal wish to live apart from Him eternally (though *not* in comfort, by any stretch of the imagination!). Coming from the lips of Jesus, we know all of that is true (Luke 12:4-5) , but the nominal “Christian” who despises time spent

in learning the way and will of God despises God Himself, and that person will share the fate of the *known* ungodly. Such a person forfeits hope of salvation and drains his own lifeblood. He/she will go through this life in a fog and be led by evil hands into the eternal pit, from which there is no hope of rescue — *ever*. It is so obviously far, far better to receive The Word as our unerring guide through this life and into the next. If you want to know the truth, you must know The Truth Himself. To whom shall we go for the words of eternal life? Only to Him (John 6:68-69). Don't expect Him to come to you in a private dream, vision, or "word of knowledge." That, too, would be redundant and even *counter-productive*, since He has already been thoroughly revealed in the pages of the **unchanging Bible**. As the Holy Spirit leads us to understand the Holy Book that **He** ultimately authored in every part, we will find Christ and all essential guidance. "Gray areas" will disappear.

Challenge to the Churches

As you might have learned from your own life-experience, sometimes brutal honesty is necessary. Sometimes folks need to be shocked and shaken from lethargy and sleep, and jolted awake. Before it's too late. I hope it's not too late for anyone who happens upon this to benefit from what follows.

First things first. This challenge goes out only to those churches that profess to be Protestant/Baptist. I'm not speaking to the world-control cults that masquerade as God-fearing religions, by which I mean Islam, Eastern Orthodoxy, LDS (Mormons), and Roman Catholicism. "Christendom," like Mohammed-ism, is all about church-statism and not about Christ. True *Christianity* centers on the *lone mediator* of the new, everlasting covenant (1 Tim 2:5, Acts 4:12, Heb 12:24, 13:20), appointed by God the Father. There is no room in true *Biblical*

Christianity for another god (Isa 44:6), a sharer of His glory (Isa 42:8), or co-mediating savior (Isa 43:11). Romanists and “Orthodox,” Mary is not to be worshiped, no matter how you try to redefine the term to avoid the charge. Mary is in heaven, yes, by God’s grace in saving a sinner, but she is absolutely *not* the “Queen of Heaven.” Read her own words recorded in God’s Word: my spirit has rejoiced in *God...my...Savior* — Luke 1:47. And Mary’s being blessed *above all women*? Read Judges 5:24, where Deborah and Barak sang, “*Most blessed among women is Jael*” (the background story is in Judges 4:4-22). So what was said about the blessed virgin Mary — I agree with every word of *that*, but not her supposed *perpetual* virginity nor her supposed sinlessness and deity! — was also said about Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite: “most blessed among women.” Now Jael was not the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, but God saw fit to *confer* that honor upon another woman

who was in need of salvation as much as any other sinful human being. That's right, Mary was born in sin, the original sin of *Adam*, *her* many-generations-removed father. *Her* father was not God the Father, and *that's* why Jesus was not an inheritor of original sin, but Mary was. Jesus was *uniquely* conceived by God the Holy Spirit, Who proceeded from the Father; Mary was born of two *human* parents who were themselves conceived in sin *and* sin-committers, so the state of original sin passed to her from her *father*. The doctrine of Mary's "Immaculate Conception" falls apart instantly in this light. And if you insist on *her* sinlessness at birth, *her* mother had to have been born in sinless perfection, *her* mother, *etc.*, all the way back to Eve! Do you really want to argue with God and say that because you want to make Mary sinless, then *Eve* never actually sinned, and *Eve*, too, (and all those mothers in between her and Mary) lived a perfect life? Leaving aside all of this,

nowhere in Scripture is Mary cited as an exception to the chain of original sin inheritance (see Rom 1-5, where it should appear if that were true). And was she even a leader in the church? Nope. Hers was a role that remained in the background, and that by God's design as both the Author of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21) and man's salvation (Heb 5:9, 12:2). Christians should respect and love Mary as a fellow Christian, but she herself would be utterly horrified to hear that millions of deluded souls have regarded her as no less than God!

So before we turn to that challenge directed to Protestants, the simple message to Romanists, Orthodox, and Muslims (you'd be amazed at how many Muslims, too, are engaged in mariolatry): drop your idolatry. Stop worshiping unbiblical idol-gods of your own making or of another human's unfettered imagination. We all need to be tethered to The Word constantly. He is our only lifeline.

Okay, fellow “Protestants,” it’s your turn to get a dose of brutal honesty. You’re getting it from nobody special. I’ll freely admit that for several years now, I have not been a member of a visible church body. The specific reasons for that — my personal “odyssey” from the Missouri-Synod Lutheranism I was born into, to the PCA church I transferred into, to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America flock I intended to join but didn’t — could fill a book. I may yet write that book if God wills it, but right here and now, I think it’s irrelevant. My purpose in this essay is to call the attention of the visible Church at large to two elephants in the chapel, so to speak.

Unbudging elephant #1 is careless and false worship of the *true* God, which, though not considered by many to be idol-worship, is idolatry by God’s definition nonetheless (Second and *Fourth* Commandments of the ever-binding

moral Law of God, see Exodus 20 & 32; Leviticus 10, the “strange fire” episode of Nadab and Abihu; Uzziah’s crossing over into priestly privileges from his civil government position, 2 Chronicles 26, *etc.*). The fact is that there are *thousands* of denominations that differ primarily in worship practice distinctives, and each leadership group considers itself to be purer-than-thou on such matters. I get that; it’s human nature on display in the church sphere. On an individual level, I’m the same way: I think that my couple of decades’ worth of fairly intense personal theological study has brought me to a level of confidence in the truth of my convictions that just may be unjustified. I’m aware of that, too. The last thing I’d ever want to do is to set myself up as a Protestant “pope” in exile! [or *another* one, maybe?] I’m guessing that some of you self-described “dedicated churchmen” loathe the likes of me already. Perhaps you see me as someone who’s lobbying hand

grenades into the Church from the outside. And perhaps there's some resentment along these lines: "Hey, that's *our* prerogative to throw grenades at *each other!* But an *outsider?* No way!" [recall that I've spent much of my life in Reformed circles, eyes and ears open]. In order to clear things up for any reader of this essay, let me zero in on these facts concerning my perspective;

1. By God's *grace* alone, through His *bestowed gift of my faith* in *Jesus Christ alone*, I am a saved sinner. It is only because my salvation has been *won* by God the Son *for me* that I can have any assurance to say that. He did what I could never do, and He did it all in and to perfection, so **HIS** work on my behalf can't possibly be undone. *Sola deo gloria:* to Him alone belongs the glory! I belong to the *true, invisible* church because of *Him*.

2. Because Christ (only) is the Head of His own church, *you* (church official or congregant) can't keep me out of it for your own reasons. Yes, you can bar me from membership or impose conditions that effectively turn me away from your *visible* church body, but *Christ* has paid for my membership in the true Israel of God (Gal 6:16, 3:24) and the congregation of Heaven with His precious blood *AND* His imputed righteousness (Rom 4:5-8).
3. I would love to join a Biblically-faithful congregation, enjoy the fellowship, and actively contribute to it in every possible way. Here's the problem: which denomination lines up closest with the perfect and unchanging Bible regarding the *preaching* of the *whole counsel* of God, church government, ordinances, and God-pleasing worship practice?

Believe it or not, I can offer a fairly objective answer to that question. I've already revealed that I'm not a member of any local church, so when I say that I think the RP's have got it right — the Reformed Presbyterians who sing only God's inspired Psalms when worshiping Him — it's not an advertisement. In the interest of full disclosure, minus some distracting details, I'll say that I could easily have been writing today as a member in good standing of a Seattle RPCNA church. They'd received my approved transfer of membership from a PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) flock, which I'd left on good terms, though I'd come to reject their use of uninspired hymns and musical instruments in worship and observance of manmade "holy days" (Christ-mass and Easter). [two ironies: just months before, I'd paid for 100+ Trinity Hymnals, and the previous December, my height was put to use in decorating the chapel! minds can change — even *quickly*]

The *lone* obstacle that prevented me from joining that RP church was this: I was honest enough to say to the pastor in one-on-one discussions that I was becoming increasingly convinced that the most God-honoring eschatological (“last things”) position was that of the *preterists*. And — this may not be an accurate assessment, but I’ll put it out there for consideration — when I referred to *J. Stuart Russell*, author of the 19th C. book, *The Parousia*, he immediately associated *J.S.* with the Jehovah’s Witness founder, *Charles Taze Russell*, and I think that association never fully left his mind. From that point on, throughout our exchanges in person and via email, I could see that the wall of resistance was being built, and membership could be available, but only with this non-negotiable (and verbally expressed) qualifying condition: I could not (ever) express my views on eschatology, since I was “not necessarily” a heretic, but I *was* definitely “in error.” This pastor

was looking out for his flock, as well he should, and I understand that. From copies of some of our emails that have survived, I can relive the sting of his assertions that I would be a “disruptive” influence on the other sheep, and when I offered that I was only interested in taking my Commander at His word in *all* things, he asked, “Has he commanded you to be disruptive?” Well, that was it. Message received and noted. I shan’t darken your doors anymore.

Which brings us to **unbudging elephant #2**: There are pastors and teachers and even whole congregations, synods, and denominations holding to each and every possible (and frankly, *impossible*) view of eschatology within Christianity. You’ll be able to find a well-known public champion for your own view. *Unless* it’s preterism. I can almost hear many a reader say at this point, “Well, yeah, there’s a reason for that!” To which I reply, “But no *Bible-supported* reason!”

My Open Challenge to All Futurist
(non- “Full” or Consistent Preterist)
Pastors, Teachers and Promoters

Show me, from the Bible alone, that:

1. Jesus Christ did *not* teach that His return in the glory of His Father, with His angels, for judgment and deliverance would occur before all of the people He personally spoke to during His earthly ministry would be dead. In other words, explain to me how I’m misunderstanding Mt 16:27-28; Mark 8:38-9:1; Luke 9:26-27; Mt 10:22-23; John 14:3 (He would not *return* to *them*, but to *us*, who live 1985 years in the future, and who have never seen Him?); Luke 18:6-8 (He still hasn’t avenged His own elect “*speedily?*”); Luke 19:11-27 (the Master *didn’t* return to the same servants, but to their great-great-great (50x great-) grandsons? And He rewarded and punished *them* for their ancient *ancestors’* responses to His commands? Isn’t it

rather obvious that the same people to whom the commands were given are the same people to whom the Master returned for judgment? Show me how I got that wrong, or that this parable *doesn't* relate to the return of The Master); same deal with Luke 20:9-19 (I'm applying that wrong, too? It had nothing to do with the evil leaders in Jerusalem in the 1st C. AD? Really? The Bible says that those scribes and pharisees "*knew* He had spoken this parable against them"); Rev 1 & 22 (undoubtedly now aware of even the "day and hour" of His return, Jesus Christ Himself revealed through His angel TO John that He would be coming *quickly*, all of the events described were *near, at hand, and must shortly* take place, and once again, He testified, "SURELY, I am coming *quickly*," Rev 22:20). I could go on for hours, but until some faithful student of Christ can show me how an alternative interpretation of His words *in each case cited* makes more sense, I won't budge.

2. (Show me from the Bible alone that...)
Jesus and *EVERY* Holy Spirit-led New Testament writer either a) did NOT expect the events of the “time of the end” (of the *age*) to occur within a generation (about 40 years in Biblical terms), or that b) they were *off by 1945 years and counting!* (caution! keep John 16:33 in mind when formulating your answer; also the fact that the Holy Spirit — God — can **NOT** lie, Titus 1:2). Those are the parameters; those are the treacherous waters which you must successfully navigate: Either Jesus was ignorant and mistaken in his [<note: *no caps*] own understanding and/or failed to communicate to his disciples what was true, or a man claiming to be the Son of God spun deliberate falsehoods, and could not have been God. I don't see how any true Christian can even imply that Jesus talked right past His own hand-picked disciples or right past His own generation of sinners in desperate need of the one true hope, deceiving them all.

3. Along the same lines, show me from the Bible alone that Christ *ignored* His own church-in-the-cradle (in the 1st C. AD), when newborn believers faced persecution and death from not only the Jews — always — but also from the ruling Romans (especially AD 63-68 under Nero). Convince me that all of the promises about avenging *them*, the *most-persecuted generation of believers*, were just empty rhetoric, and that all those promises really were meant to apply to some future generation, and that generation is *ours* (or not; who knows? maybe the Lord will “tarry” even longer than 1945 years past AD 70, despite what has been written in Heb 10:37). Be careful here, too. If Jesus offered *false hope* to his contemporaries — I mean that’s what they understood him to say, and he let them go on in false hope — we must realize that this man who claimed to be the I AM (God) was not God, not the Christ-Messiah sent from God, and just another lying sinner. If

one believes something to be true and then says something that doesn't align with that belief/knowledge, deception is occurring; deception proceeds from a deceiver. No matter how intentional or professedly *unintentional* the deception is, deception *is* going on, and it *is* harmful to someone in the end. But God is above *all* falsehood (see Psalm 119, Num 23:19, 1 Sam 15:29, Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18, Rev 3:14). Just one deceptive statement that runs counter to what is known by the speaker marks a person as a liar, and immediately disqualifies him as God. The point is obvious: you just can't have a "savior" who ever told a lie because that person is a sinner in need of salvation, too, by someone who *is* sinless, who never lies. If Jesus of Nazareth deceived the people of his generation by telling them that either the end-times prophecies didn't apply to them, but to a far-far-*far* distant generation, or that the promises of hope *did* apply to them, when he thought otherwise, he

disqualified himself as the sinless savior of anyone. If you intend to prove to me that we can still *trust* in a known *deceiver*, I must ask you what drug is clouding your thinking! And it simply isn't good enough nor is it true to contend that Jesus "often spoke in parables to His disciples" or "often left them in the dark" (as if there's a connection between His teaching methods and the deliberate misleading of an entire generation, believers and unbelievers alike). Not so, on either count! He spoke in parables to the unbelieving goats, but not to His own sheep (READ: Mt 13:10-17). In case anyone is still missing the point, here's my overkill punch: the Christ (Anointed One/Messiah) can only be the Savior of *anyone* if He is sinless — always and forever, not one sin on His record. If He *ever* spoke incorrectly about *anything*, He proved to be just another "he" (lower case), and ALL of us are without a savior. I really think the skeptics get this better than Christians.

4. This is sort of the “flip side” of point #3, or maybe a corollary: Show me from Scripture alone that the generation that Jesus had in mind when He used the terms, “THIS generation” and “THIS evil/wicked/adulterous/sinful/perverse/faithless generation” was *our own* generation *or one to follow*. Here are the places in God’s Word that I’ve just got dead cold wrong, according to you, the futurist: Mt 11, 12, 16, 17, 23, 24; Mark 8, 9, 13; Luke 7, 9, 11, 17, 21 (you can throw in Peter’s “Be saved from THIS perverse generation,” Acts 2:40; warning: consider to whom *he* was speaking concerning how *they* crucified Jesus (v. 36); did *we* crucify Jesus only just recently? [I mean other than in the “mass” of the Romanists, and in a literal sense]). Once again, I await your thorough refutation of our preterist interpretation of each and every one of these passages, and your thoroughly convincing alternative explanation that absolutely links all of these references to our own era.

5. [It's always 5 points with Calvinists, isn't it?] Show me from the Bible alone that....or, "Sum up *your* eschatology that trumps preterism, using only Scripture."

In this part of the challenge, he who takes up the challenge must know that if you were to add up the combined weight of opinion, trustworthiness, and integrity of Hal Lindsey, Harold Camping, Jack Van Impe, Billy Graham, John Hagee, Mike Evans, Chuck Missler, and every other "Christian" Zionist, Dispensationist, or end-of-the-world-obsessed false prophet of any stripe, on *my* scale, it wouldn't even register. I won't mince words here. Some will caution me to be more charitable towards such men, seeing as how they're my "Christian brothers," and "respected teachers" to boot! Baloney! In this, too, I will follow Jesus. He said in Mt 12:50, "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." I don't see where any of the above-named

demonstrably-false teachers and well-documented false prophets are doing the will of the Father, so I do NOT consider them to be my brothers. In fact, all of the evidence points in another direction entirely. What, after all, can be in a man's heart when he sees fit to churn out one false prophecy after another, or one supposedly biblical template to impose *on* Scripture after another? It almost makes us wish that just *one* element of the Mosaic Law could be brought back to make just *one* prominent example of one of these false prophets of our time (see Deut 13 if you're not picking up on my sarcasm).

One important disclaimer is necessary before we proceed: Anyone who trusts *solely* in Jesus Christ as BOTH Lord and Savior, is indeed my brother in Christ, *regardless* of his eschatology. That must remain clear. Correct eschatology will save nobody; only the person and work of Christ can and does save anyone.

Even brothers in the Lord who try to write us (preterists) off as heretics, usually employing the “hyper-preterist” tag in order to marginalize those of us who are *consistent* in our preterism, while they try to trademark their *partial*-preterism as the official eschatology of the Bible, must be considered to be true brothers *by us*; at least by those of us who *are* trusting in Christ alone. The preterist camp has at least its share of Christians-in-name-only and false teachers, just like futurists do (including “partial-preterists”). In particular, I want to caution against (consciously) Arminian people (who think they’ve regenerated themselves to true faith or rely on the power of their own free will to gain heaven), collective-body resurrection teachers or “heaven now” adherents (who deny that the Resurrection out of Sheol/Hades at the Parousia involved *individuals*, and/or deny that every person is ultimately headed to a literal and eternal afterlife in either Heaven or Hell.

The Challenge: Two-Page Treatment

In order to be *Biblical* and *therefore* valid, any proposed eschatology must:

1. Preserve the absolute integrity and holiness of Christ, else none of us has a savior in your scheme.
2. Demonstrate trust in the Word of God at all points, considering context, original audience relevance, original author intent, literary genre, and compatibility with the themes of all Scripture.
3. Satisfactorily explain Mt 24:34 & Luke 21:22, 32; accurately define what exactly comes under the headings, “all these things” and “all things which are written,” as well as “these be/are the days of vengeance” and “THIS generation.”
4. NOT import or impose any ideas foreign to the Word of God, or any anachronisms that muddle the Biblical picture (*i.e.*, it can't

force-feed the modern world into the ancient, the 21st C. scenario into the 1st C. scenario, or America into Judea; how does Mt 24:16 read? “Then let those who are in JUDEA flee to the mountains” or “Then let those in Flat Prairie, Kansas, USA, flee to the mountains”?) [what mountains? what housetops, v. 17, are folks supposed to use to make their way out of town, jumping from one to another, as they *could* do in ancient Jerusalem? historical context, people!].

5. Bow before the triune, ever-truthful God in unreserved acknowledgment of His omniscience, omnipotence, and worthiness of all glory and honor. For He who knows all things has declared immutable truth, and what He has revealed to us is sufficient and complete, according to His holy will (Deut 29:29; Rev 22:18). Amen!

Eden to Eden

“In the beginning” (Gen 1-3), there was the original Eden, *planted by God* (2:8), Paradise *on earth*. God made the first man, Adam, the head of the **ONE race** of human beings. Our common ancestral head began with a “clean slate.” He was created in a state of *original righteousness* (without sin of any kind). While in that perfect state, in a sinless paradise, our God-appointed representative had unaffected free will to choose either to obey or disobey — to choose good or evil — and God gave him a probationary-period test on that basis. Had Adam successfully passed the test for as long as it was in force, we may assume from what the Bible relates that he, Eve, and all of their posterity (that would’ve included you and me) would live without end *on earth* in perfect happiness. Act II : enter *Original Sin*, in direct opposition to original righteousness: Adam, and all humanity *through* him, were plunged into

a perpetual environment of ever-present sin. Each and every father since then (including Adam, who'd forfeited his original righteousness by his disobedience) has passed that *original sin* on to any offspring ("original" in the senses of being the *first* sin, and in *every origination/conception* of new human life; see Romans 5). ONLY Jesus, the absolutely unique *seed of the woman* (3:15), who was conceived in human form *by God* (Luke 1:35), has ever escaped the automatic curse of original sin, and *Jesus alone* has retained a *perfect, untainted free will*. [to say that man, "DEAD in trespasses and sin" (Eph 2:1, 4:18), *still* has the ability to raise himself and choose ultimate good over ultimate evil — *on his own*, without first being made alive (regenerated), is unbiblical heresy; therefore, Arminianism must be rejected without apology; equally offensive is the notion that *Mary* escaped original sin ("Immaculate Conception"), so Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy

must also be jettisoned on this basis]. So the first *physical* and historical Eden has passed out of existence, *never to be restored*. Stop looking for Paradise on earth! That's what every Utopia-pusher *promises* (almost always government-by-elite, government-as-god socialists), and what *nobody* can *ever* deliver. When God kicked Adam and Eve out of that garden, He kicked us *all* out...*forever*.

But God promised AND delivered to all of the faithful in all times, something infinitely better, entirely by His grace: the second, *eternal* Eden, the Father's own abode, **Heaven**. Since AD 70, when the place of departed spirits — Sheol (Heb.)/Hades (Gr.) — had been emptied by the Resurrection of “the dead ones” out of that two-compartment realm (Luke 16:19-31), from AD 66 to late summer, AD 70, Heaven became the *immediate destination* for all who are trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Sheol/Hades is out of business, tossed

metaphorically into the “lake of fire” (Rev 20). It’s crucial for any professing Christian today to understand that Sheol/Hades *was* where all disembodied spirits were held, on either the “pre-Hell” side where the rich man *already* experienced unrelenting torment, or the “pre-Heaven” side, also known as “Abraham’s Bosom” or “Paradise” — to which Christ Himself referred, Luke 23:43. When Jesus was “in the grave” for 3 days, His spirit was in Sheol/Hades/Abraham’s Bosom/Paradise (which leads to a possible interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19). Even *He* didn’t bypass that “holding area.” And until He fully and finally opened access to Heaven with His Parousia (AD 66-70), entailing the Resurrection of/out of the dead (the Bible *never* uses the phrase, “resurrection of the *body*”); deliverance for the living faithful (1 Thes 4:15-17, 1 Cor 15:50-56); the “Great White Throne” Judgment (Dan 12:2; Mt 25; Rev 20); and the final discarding of the Jewish, Old Testament

temple-sacrifice system as outmoded and irrelevant (now that Christ fulfilled all that pre-figured Him as *THE* Temple and *THE* High Priest), all believers went to Sheol/Hades, and NOT to Heaven (excepting *Biblically* only Enoch and Elijah). Yet, what do so many offer at the funeral or graveside of a “dear departed” professed believer? Quite dishonestly, they give the surviving loved ones one of two *false* hopes, false *if* Christ *hasn't* returned, and Sheol/Hades is still in operation: either he/she is *in Heaven* as we speak (couldn't be true if Hades was still the preliminary stop), or that on some still-future “last day,” the very same atoms of the deceased body will be *reconstituted* and raised to Heaven, reuniting body and soul. Sorry, but you can't have it both ways!

Consider well what is taught by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in that most-explicit Resurrection-themed passage, **1 Cor 15**. Are believers promised

to get *their* old physical bodies back, atom-for-atom, in the same way that Christ did? Be careful! *ONLY* the physical body of Christ did *NOT* see corruption (**Psa 16**), since *only His* body was untainted by either original or personal sin. Nothing that's corrupted or corruptible will ever pass into Heaven. What is required for admission *to* — and life *in* — Heaven is the *UN* corrupted and the *IN* corruptible; **ONLY A NEW, SPIRITUAL BODY SUITABLE FOR HEAVENLY EXISTENCE WILL DO, AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT'S PROMISED TO THE BELIEVER: 1 Cor 15:35-54.** Either tell the truth that you're saying one thing while believing the contrary, or *much, much better*, tell **THIS** Biblical truth: Christ **HAS** returned, **HAS** put Sheol/Hades out of business, **HAS** conquered Death, the "final enemy" (1 Cor 15:20-58), and **HAS** secured entrance into the Eternal Eden for all of those who are in Him, *immediately* upon leaving this sin-soaked existence for that sin-free afterlife. Tell *that* truth!

Holidays?

Next year, A.D. 2017, we get an extra, bonus holiday. How is that? Well, instead of the standard 52 holy days (***Sundays, or “Lord’s Days”***), 53 days will fall on such sanctified days, including the first and last days of the year! Do I pass this on as just a neat little factoid, or is there some real significance to this? Be advised that it’s much more than trivia, because the glory of God is at issue here. Two important introductory points; 1) our English word *holiday* is in fact a contraction/combination of “holy” and “day” (consult any dictionary), and 2) the only being *authorized* to declare a holy day is God; He alone defines what is to be *sanctified* (set apart from or above the rest in some category, including things like temple utensils, altars, and festival days, as we see in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy especially). Note that the *saints* are God’s “sanctified ones,” — that’s where

we get *that* term. By God's gracious election even before He created our world, *He* set apart — for *His* holy purposes — all those “*in Christ*” (2 Tim 1:9, Eph 1:4-6) to be recipients of eternal graces, thereby enabled to truly please Him with the very same good works they were called to do (Eph 2:8-10). They (*we* who were elected, who actively trust in Christ alone) are “the saints.” Neither any human being nor any church entity has the right to confer “sainthood” on anyone. It's God's call all the way; one can't elect himself into *God's* sanctified circle. God's universe, God's rules.

Only God can declare who is among His saints, and only God can declare a *holy* day, a day set apart *by* God *to* God. Yes, we humans can declare *national* days of celebrating and memorials (*e.g.*, *Purim*, in the book of Esther), but such observances are not mandated by God, nor are they required by Him. The *only* holy day commanded by God is the Sabbath.

Between the covers of the Bible, we find only that singular holy day enduring, having been observed on the *seventh* day throughout the Old Testament (the *creation ordinance* was codified in **Ex 20:8-11**), and observed on the *first* day of the week from the time of the Resurrection of the *Lord of the Sabbath* (**Mt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5**). It's evident that God's declared holy days continue, with only the day of the week undergoing any transition; the *fourth* commandment (*third* for Lutherans) is still in place, and remains in force. And if you took the time to read those passages just cited above, you'd realize that this commandment — along with all of the others — is for our own good; we benefit by obeying. Let God refresh you and energize you for the week ahead. It works!

Now here's the part where you might think I'm stepping on your toes: there's *no Biblical warrant* for "Christmas" or "Easter." Sorry, but that's the truth. Let's

calmly consider some readily-apparent facts:

1) *Every* Sunday/Lord's Day is a commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, an historic event that occurred in A.D. 30; neither Christ nor His Spirit-directed, NT Church-founding apostles (see **1 Cor 3:11** and **Eph 2:20**) ever set up an *annual* observance, and they had about *40 years* to do so, had it been God's will;

2) As was the case with the "first Easter," the first Christmas (literally, the "*mass of Christ*") was not "officially" observed — by the *Roman Catholic* papacy — until the *fourth century, A.D.!* A human-hewn "holiday," to be sure, and *not* God's idea. It rankles me to no end when professing Christians refer to the day of our Lord's resurrection as "that *first* Easter." It was no such thing, since "Easter" (*eastre* or *oestre*) had been a *pagan* festival for centuries,

and any trustworthy source, whether “sacred” or secular, can confirm that. The Romanist church simply took two pagan festivals that had been around for a long time (the other was *Saturnalia*, the winter solstice), tweaked the names a bit, kept and perpetuated the age-old customs, and spun out “Christian” versions. Again, sorry, but this process does not yield a *God*-ordained holy day.

3) With specific regard to the day on which Jesus was born into our world, do you suppose that maybe God the *Father* had a fairly good idea of when that was? Year? Month? Day? Hour? *Nanosecond*? Of course! And could there be a father more proud? His beloved Son, in Whom He was well pleased, had been born into the world as The Savior. It’s ludicrous to suggest that God would leave it up to sinful humans to invent “Christmas” to mark the occasion. And with a *lag time* of 400 years?!? I think not!

Idol of Convenience

Speaking of “holidays” as convenient, handy tools implemented to *supposedly* honor the triune God, we now turn our attention to other *uncommanded means* to worthy ends. Here we are chiefly concerned with some aspects related to the breaking of the second of God’s holy Ten Commandments, that moral Law of *eternal* duration. This is the commandment against *images of God*, most often numbered as the second of the ten, but sometimes lumped in with the first, with the commandment against coveting being split into two in that ordering (*e.g.*, Lutherans, following the Catholics).

This essay’s title has been carefully chosen as the best way to lead us into two areas of brief discussion, namely; 1) the concept of convenience/expedience/path of ease has become a sort of false god in itself — an *idol* — and 2) many

professing Christians seem to have missed the facts that the commandment against making images of God has never been rescinded (if so, *when?*), and that the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Paul, condemned the use of evil *means* to achieve good and holy ends. As I've pointed out elsewhere, Paul puts it this way to his *slandorous* critics, "And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come?'" (**Rom 3:8**; read the whole verse). In other words, God can't be expected to honor those means which He has *not* commanded to accompany and lead to even the holiest of goals. No matter how convenient it is for His well-meaning servants to use movies depicting Christ (*i.e.*, *The Jesus Film* and others); *uninspired* hymns; and all the trappings and lures of "contemporary worship" and "seeker-sensitive services," He has *not commanded* any of it. He will not honor sinner-appointed means to obtain God-appointed ends. Faith comes by hearing/reading the Word (**Rom 10**).

It was true in Paul's day, and it will forever be true: faith comes — along with true repentance (**2 Tim 2:25**) — only *from God*, and those *twin gifts* are not bestowed on any person who does not *hear* (reading is included in hearing) God's Word. We walk by faith, *NOT* by sight (**2 Cor 5:7**). Seeing an actor portray the true God in human flesh will not get anyone to heaven! What He looked like has nothing to do with it, and that's according to God Himself. That's made clear by the commandment against *all* images of God, whether in an attempt to conjure up a likeness of the Father, the Holy Spirit, *OR* Jesus Christ. We must hear — and *receive* as the pure truth of God — what Christ has *said*; *that's* the key. Each of us must know The Way, The Truth, The Life (**Jn 14:6**). None of us can truly know Him through water baptism, an uninspired (non-God-breathed) song, or a favorite picture of "Jesus," whether still-shot or moving. Let's stop trusting in means that dishonor God's design.

Now we'll very briefly look at the idea of convenience as an idol in itself. It's actually pretty obvious, when you think about it: if we call it "the easy way" or the "path of ease" or "no-strings attached instant gratification," it can all come into focus in a hurry. [ironic?] Now think about the "service" industry. How much of it is geared to making things *ultra-convenient* for every potential — and hopefully, every ongoing and *loyal* — customer (moving from "guest" to revered/valued "patron" to inseparable partner in the enterprise). Buyer *loyalty* cards, anyone? A dozen ways to pay, including more and more taxpayer-funded programs? So the exchange amounts to super-convenience for super-loyalty; the wide-open free market narrowed to those offering the most convenience and/or chosen by the government as suppliers to the buyers. I don't want to exaggerate a relatively small point here, but the 21st-Century American reader should at least be aware that there are

thousands of people *in* government who are ideologically committed to government as god. They see themselves as the dispensers of all blessings, and thus the true God is displaced. This is a fact, and the more honest God-opposers can be coaxed to admit it. But then too, there are the business people who see *themselves* in the same light. They not only claim to care so much about *you* that they give you the lowest prices *with* the most bend-over-backwards customer-tailored service (ultra-convenience), but they also claim *moral* authority over the populace, so all must be taught their ways, for the betterment of all society. This is how we have come to *understand* (I speak as a fool) that sodomite sex is actually Jesus-blessed, and can even be the foundation of legitimate marriage; that organizations that murder human life in the womb are doing the world a great favor, and they are to be thanked with taxpayer money *besides* the millions forked over by those “served.”

And upon which altar are the pre-born millions sacrificed? Usually, on the *altar of Convenience*. Carrying to term the child produced by a sexual union can prove to be somewhat inconvenient, I readily admit, but each life is a life sent by the Author of Life, and His will for that life supercedes all others. *Inconvenience* is part of the curse (**Gen 3:16**), I hate to tell ya, so deal with it. Your right to murder does not come with your inconvenience, and because of sins (like adultery, for example), there is pain. But to those who worship Convenience/Ease of Life/Instant Gratification and/or The Almighty Dollar, sin is what *they* make it, and they simply can't find it in their own actions. In *yours* and *mine*? Oh, yeah! Because we fail to bow down to one in their pantheon, or because we expose their false gods, we are ridiculed and pushed to the outer margins of society, the sinners of all sinners. And all because we didn't *go along to get along*. We honor *not* the idol of convenience.

Jesus is Jehovah

“Jehovah” and “Yahweh” are English transliterations of the Hebrew sacred *tetragrammaton*, rendered as JHVH or YHVH/YHWH, the name of God thought by some of the ancient Hebrews to be too holy to ever be uttered. Whether this grew out of true piety or if it was just another man-made superstition is not at issue here. Neither is the issue at hand that secondary controversy over *which* of the two, *Jehovah* or *Yahweh* — if either one — is closest to the actual pronunciation of “**The Name**” that was eventually “banned” (it wasn’t always so). Many scholars contend that *Jehovah* is a *mistaken* Latinized-English transliteration that *misread* vowels and additional consonants *into* the four-letter Hebrew form; that *Yahweh* is closer to the mark, than *Jehovah*. Other scholars defend the opposite side, and, as usual, there is a third camp, where proponents hold out for the *tri-syllabic* *Yahuwah*.

We're going to avoid those deep woods so that we can get right to the central point: the Bible teaches that Jesus *is* Jehovah-Yahweh.

[note on attribution: more than any other individual, I am indebted to Dr. James R. White for this particular line of thought and direct Biblical proof; we definitely disagree on eschatology and some worship practices, but we're Reformed brothers *in Christ* just the same]

Exhibit A: Compare **Phil 2:9-11** and **Isa 45:23**. On the NT side (Phil 2), we read that God (the Father) has highly exalted His son Jesus, and has given Him the *name [title] above every name*, so that *at the name of Jesus* (the title, *Lord*), *every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ IS Lord...*In essence: Jesus, the Anointed One/The Messiah *IS* Jehovah God. All the knees and all the tongues are acknowledging Jesus as *THE LORD, THE KING, Jehovah/Yahweh. God.*

Now look at the OT roots of this passage by turning to **Isa 45:18-23**, with emphasis on verse 23. The speaker (through the prophet Isaiah) is “the **LORD**” — that is, **YHWH**, Jehovah/Yahweh — v. 18 and in the following context. In v. 23, Who is speaking? It still is the LORD/YHWH/Jehovah/Yahweh, and He says, “To **ME** every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear [confess].” So what do we have here? Are the Father and Jesus in competition for glory? Is that what this passage teaches? No way! We know better from the same two books, in **Phil 2:6 & 11** and **Isa 42:8**, that Christ Jesus is *equal* with God the Father; that He glorifies the Father when *He* is glorified Himself by all those knees and tongues; and there is no God besides The LORD, Who does not share His glory with another. Even if we had nothing else as proof, a comparison of these two representative texts of both the Old and the New Testaments click the connections together seamlessly: Jesus=The LORD=Jehovah.

Exhibit B: Compare **Heb 1:6-11** (NT) and **Psa 102:25-27** (OT). In the 6th verse of Hebrews, the writer (I'm convinced it's Paul) quotes from **Psa 97:7**, in singling out God — in context, the very person of Jesus — as the One Whom the *angels* must worship: ...*let all the angels of God worship Him*. Only God can be lawfully worshiped, and God *alone* can receive worship. That's the first thing involved here, that Jesus Christ is above all the angels, and indeed established as true God. Verses 8 (from **Psa 45:6-7**) and 10-11 (**Psa 102: 25-27**) link Jesus — *unquestionably* — to a) the *eternal, exclusive, holy throne/kingdom of God* and b) His status as *THE Creator*. So, knowing that there is only One Creator-King, only One Who is eternal and unchangeable, all knees should again be bowing before Jesus as Jehovah God; as Yahweh.

Exhibit C: Compare **John 12:37-41** (key verse is 41) and **Isa 6:1-5**. When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne, the

holy-holy-holy LORD of hosts, Whose glory fills the earth, Who exactly did he see? He would say that he saw Jehovah/Yahweh, and he did. The apostle John, too, saw the glory of Jehovah-Yahweh in His human form as Jesus, from lowly servanthood to humiliating death (**Phil 2:6-8**), to the preview at the Transfiguration (**Mt 17; Mark 9; Luke 9; Jn 1:14**), to His glorious Resurrection and Ascension (**Acts 1**). When the apostle John connected Jesus, whom he knew in the flesh and had seen glorified when *en route* to His Heavenly throne, with Jehovah God *in* Heaven, *on* His throne, in the prophet Isaiah's vision, all connections were made, and the circle was closed. In the unique God-man Jesus, all the fullness of the Godhead — triune Jehovah — dwells bodily/in human form (**Col 2:9**). If anyone has seen God, they've seen Jesus. No one at any time has seen the Father (**Jn 1:18; 4:24; 6:46**). Yet, Christ Himself has shown us the Father (**Jn 14:8-11**). Jesus *is* Jehovah/Yahweh; *God!*

King James ONLY?

Professing Christian, I have some simple questions to ask you. I'd like to examine some assertions being made by King James Only advocates in a Court of Common Christian Sense, if you please. But first, *FYI* (For Your Information), a "King James Only" advocate is — for our present purposes — one who insists that *ONLY* the King James Version (KJV), also known as the "Authorized Version" (AV), is the actual, inerrant and infallible Word of God in written form. These KJV-only advocates insist that God spoke the *true* inspired words of the Holy Bible in *17th-Century English*, having given only Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek "pre-Bible" hints for all of those centuries from Creation to AD 1611 (or, more technically correct, 1629/1638/1653/1762/1769?). In other words, did God *directly inspire* the *TRANSLATORS* on King James' committee to give His people His true words 1581 years (or more?) *after* the end of

the personal earthly ministry of Jesus Christ? Does that make sense to you? What “Word of God” was Jesus preaching in AD 26-30, 11 or 12 centuries before “English” started to come together as a recognizable language? If it is true that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (**Rom 10:17**), then no generation before at least AD 1611 had an opportunity to even hear the true word of God, according to those who claim *inspiration* for the *KJV translators*. I continue to emphasize that word, “translators” because the difference between “inspired [God-breathed] word of God” and *translated* “word of God” is critical. I know of no Christian Confession worth its salt that holds for the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of *ANY translation* FROM the original manuscripts; that’s the key: only the original manuscripts (hand-written scrolls/parchments/papyri) carry such a Divine stamp of approval. *NO translation* meets that holy standard, and just

what were those scholars up to in 1604-1611? I ask you: were they *translating* from the original Hebrew, Greek, *and earlier English* into contemporary (for them) English, in hopes of improving understanding of the long-before-given Word of God, or were they putting onto paper the actual God-breathed Bible as it was *FIRST* given to them in that 17th-Century committee session? Were *they* the true writers of the Bible? Was there no real written word of God until the first copy of the KJV was produced? Does *that* make sense to you? It would mean that even Jesus was a false teacher, inasmuch as He went through Judea for three years, speaking and teaching in BC/early-AD Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek, quoting what was presented as the Old Testament Word of God (most often in Septuagint Greek), and never once uttering King James-era English! So nobody, from Adam to Noah to Abraham to David to the Apostles to Luther and Calvin to Tyndale had heard

the pure word of God? Does that make *any* sense at all?!? But hairsplitting between different shades of KJV-Onlyists aside, the common gist is that illogical assertion: that a *translation* in a *certain* language of all languages, and idioms used in a *particular period* of time *ONLY*....can be considered to be the pure word of God that is necessary for the salvation of the sinner. No KJV=no God's truth=no salvation; that's the equation, when you get right down to the core idea. Does that make sense to you, *modern* English-speaking Christian? *NON*-English-speaking Christian, one of those from EVERY *TONGUE* AND PEOPLE AND NATION pictured in the throng around the throne (**Rev 5:9+**)? Sad to say, what's happened — again — is that well-meaning Christians let the desire for piety (reverence for God and His Word) lead them by the nose into a legalistic posture, imposing man-made traditions where *God's* commandments alone must reign (**Mark 7:6-9**). Don't be fooled!

Mindless Man-made “Morality”

Within the last week, we’ve heard and read about two murderous rampages (Orlando, Florida and France) conducted by *militant Muslims*, or *radical Islamists*. Same thing (either name or still others will do), same old story, horrific and tragic as always. We’ve heard of these incidents *ad nauseam*, but holding candlelight vigils for the victims and taking away every single firearm from every private citizen won’t do *anything* to stop the steady onslaught of these terror attacks in the name of Allah. You know something else that won’t help one bit? Blaming *Christians* for these atrocities! Yet that was the knee-jerk reaction of LGBT activists [see *The Washington Times* article of June 13, 2016 for starters]. Again, same old story from the morally clueless Left. Even the very liberal Bill Maher has enough sense to have admitted that the LGBT “community” has nothing to fear from *Christian* mass-

murderers. The *real* persecution — not something overblown in fevered imaginations, like where one has “liberty” to urinate or defecate — is going to come from those who hold to the *Koran’s commands to kill homosexuals*; that would be *Muslims*, folks. Face that truth, speak that truth, deal with it, and shut up about Christians coming after you! Even your much-dreaded, much-castigated so-called “anti-LGBT bills” (really just reinforcement of common-sense, practical norms) can’t possibly *put you to death*. Get a grip on reality and recognize your *real* enemy, the one who’s convinced that persecuting, kidnapping, raping, torturing, and killing *all* “infidels” and *all* LGBT people is imam-pleasing, Islamic State-pleasing, Mohammed-pleasing, and Allah-pleasing. *There’s* your hater; someone who knows who, what, and why to hate and how to act upon it! Have enough integrity to at least admit that you don’t fear a Christian coming to behead you, but a hell-

bent militant Muslim/radical Islamist. It's rather obvious that Leftists — of all camps, with various pet issues — can still find common ground, when you tear things down to their roots. All control-freak Leftists (I've just used a *redundancy*) are *anti-God*, through and through. That most certainly includes the political-religious system of Islam, which sets up Allah in the place of the true, triune God Who gave us the Holy Bible (and not the Koran), and the Chief Prophet-Priest-King, Jesus Christ, *THE last prophet* sent by God. As I've written elsewhere and have often emphasized, Islam ("submission") is really about conquering and dominating the entire world. The worldwide *caliphate* is the all-consuming goal, and anything that can be made out to have been the command of Allah *OR* Mohammed is seen and used as a means of obtaining it. In other words, since Mohammed supposedly was enlightened directly by Allah, whatever Mohammed said to do, that

should and *must* be done. *Or else!* Some people are so lacking in decision-making powers that this totally graceless system appeals to them, especially when they have no knowledge of the freeing grace that issues from God The Father to sinners through the Savior, Jesus Christ. The sad, tragic irony for many Muslims is that they think that they *are* embracing and following *God's* morality, and not *man-made* "morality" (Mohammed's). But they're *not* Holy Spirit-guided.

There's the rub, the unmistakable connection between two factions of the All-Controlling (*Totalitarian*) Elitist-Government Left: Man-made "morality" in the place of God-defined, unchanging, *true* morality for *all* humanity. Every time — every single stinkin' time! — that selfish, sinful, sin-*loving* sinners try to substitute an alternative system of ethics and morality, hell breaks loose in our world. And the anti-God crowd is dazed again. "Why? How could such a thing

happen to such good, innocent people?” they whine. Well, those clueless leftists siding with the *victims* say that. At the same time, *other* Leftists — the “radical” imams — are saying that they had it coming, that Allah and Mohammed are *pleased* with their murder — because they were either “infidels” or “gay” or *both*. [this is where their theological ignorance *really* comes out, because any true Christian is *not* someone who continues to embrace the soul-killing abomination of the homosexual “lifestyle”].

Let’s quickly sum up. First: LGBT Leftists and Totalitarian (Islamic State/Militant Muslim/Radical Islamist) Leftists inhabit the ***same anti-God ideological bed***. Second: both factions ***reject God’s true morality*** and substitute their own man-made mess. In both cases, their main ***disagreement*** is ***with God***. Third: both factions see Christians as enemies that *can* be attacked with success, so they do just that. Doomed *and* dumb. Mindless.

Queen of Heaven

I'm writing this at a time when my website, www.trutholio.com, has been inaccessible to the public for a full three weeks (and counting). While *I* can get into it through a host-provided control panel, the site's host has been the victim of malicious malware attacks — apparently *system-wide* — so all hosted sites are rendered off-limits for the duration. So when my next essay came “due,” I thought there was little point in publishing it at the time, since no one could see it and/or download it. In essence, my free speech outlet to the world, along with those avenues for thousands of others, has been temporarily squelched by some “tolerant” folks who just could brook *no* interference with their chosen agenda(s). But this is life in the techno-age among the anti-God forces, where neither common propriety nor Constitutional law, nor even the will of God Himself hold any sway.

Nonetheless, website or no, I press on, but in the direction of *slightly* more theologically-oriented themes. At the moment, I'm just about "politicked" out. One comment will I yet make in *this* essay that will help to make the transition: I see that the "Queen of *Corruption*" is at long last being exposed for what she is, and I fervently hope that The Judge has it in mind to complete the picture for the voting public before we tragically err *again!* [and don't forget that King Barry still holds the "martial law" card, if the elections don't go his way!]

Now to this "Queen of Heaven" business.

We start with a question: from whom and about whom do we hear this term today? Answer: Roman Catholics who prefer the dogma of their ecclesiastical "leaders" to what *God* has said through His prophet, Jeremiah, and it's in reference to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Here

then, we will come to clearly see, as just one example of so *very many*, that the Roman Catholic church is *not* about glorifying God by taking Him at His word, but about constructing a man-made counter-narrative to correlate with a man-centered mechanism for conquest and control. I mean every word of that, and it's precisely *here* that Islam and Catholicism have something in common: both are systems founded on extra-biblical (outside of the Holy Bible), non-Holy Spirit-inspired teachings of sinful men. And both have *world-domination* as the goal. Papal Rome has certainly worked towards that goal, right from the start (4th C. AD, from Constantine on), and Mohammedism followed three centuries later, with the *world-wide caliphate* representing the ultimate goal. In both cases, too, when they are *not* in power — politically, in civic rule — *and in the minority*, they often *seem* to be content to assimilate and “endure” peaceful rule by outsiders. But give ‘em

an inch, and they'll take a mile. When either Rome or Mecca is *in* the seat of political power (or even in ascendancy to power, as their influence grows),...*look out!* While our current global focus is on Radical Islamic terrorism (increasingly, and rightly so), let's not forget that Catholicism has enthroned Mary as a co-god, the non-biblical "Queen of Heaven" *at the side of* God The Father, the King of Heaven. What could possibly lend more sanction to Rome's plans to conquer the world, not for *Christ*, but for His earthly mother? After all, Catholics *pray to* this (non-biblical) co-high priestess as if she has "practically unlimited power, in the distribution of the graces which flow from the Redemption," and with the expectation of receiving power from her to do what pleases *her*. [quoted from 1946 radio message by Pius XII; see Wikipedia articles, "Queen of Heaven" and "Queen of heaven (antiquity)" for background in support of this essay]. And yes, in 1964, the Second

Vatican Council “referred to Mary as *Queen of the Universe*”, no less!

[Wikipedia, QOH article; bold emphasis mine]. Well, that settles it then, doesn't it? If you want to rule the world, it only makes perfect sense to go right to the very top with your request: ask the Queen of All to empower you to do that, and in *her* name; how could she refuse?

DISCLAIMERS that seem necessary at this point: 1) *My* disagreement is with the Roman Catholic church's founding, teachings, and designs; I do *not* hate the poor souls who have been so grossly misled by the papal system, nor am I calling them stupid (unless they choose to remain ignorant of available truth in their obstinancy; *i.e.*, ignore *God's* Word); 2) I realize that individuals who self-identify as Roman Catholics vary in the degree to which they agree/disagree with specific church teachings; not all are sold on this Mary-as-Queen-of-Heaven thing, or on Mary as “co-God.”

Having said that, we move on to the real battlefield, where the issue must be settled. We will examine the Holy Scriptures. We will listen to what *God* says, in bullet-point style.

- + The **ONLY** references to a/the queen of heaven are found in **Jer 7:17-18** and **44:15-18**.
- + In both contexts, the 6th/7th C. *BC* Israelites are getting virtually *scalded* by God — through His inspired prophet, Jeremiah, for their ***rank idolatry*** in preparing and offering cakes (in worship) to a “queen of heaven.” Beyond doubt, God *opposes* this **IDOL**, and He would *never* share His throne and His glory with this idol (**Isa 42:8, 48:11; 44:6, 8**). *One God!*
- + Bible scholars are *nearly* unanimous (I’m qualifying this to be safe) in linking this “queen of heaven” to Astarte/Ishtar/Asherah (same deity known also as Aphrodite/Venus).

- + This “deity” was supposedly reigning, we point out again, in the *6th C. BC*, and it was a product of the Babylonian mystery-religion cult well before that, where the story concocted was that a widow gave *re-birth* to her late husband *as her infant son*. Even way back then, the real point of this weird narrative was to establish the *continuing authority and reign* of the *queen* that survived the departed king. [for an extremely *detailed* account of all of this, consult Alexander Hislop’s *The Two Babylons*]
- + Roman Catholic teachers will *abuse* a text that’s *totally unrelated* to the issue (**1 Kings 2:20**), by claiming that since Solomon honored his mother (Bathsheba) by seating her on a throne beside his, and at least gave the appearance of heeding her advice, God has done the same with the mother of Jesus Christ, the *God-man*. This *obviously* is a stretch.

Why does this not follow? Well, for starters, since when can God, source of *all* wisdom, learn from (and follow) the example of sinful men? Secondly, Solomon didn't do what he *had* to do (in honoring *his* mother), but what he *chose* to do; it was a matter of grace. Thirdly, GOD HAS NO MOTHER TO HONOR. Clear enough? Yes, Mary was the mother of Jesus, God *as man*, but Mary herself was created, and *not* the eternal Creator. The Christ preceded Mary in eternity past, as He was always with God and God Himself (**John 1**). Mary entered into existence and was chosen for her role in giving birth to the Savior-in-human-flesh *by God's grace. Alone.*

When we consider *all* of Scripture, we see that any "queen of heaven" is an *idolatrous fiction*. And nowhere in God's Word is there even a hint that the created being named Mary rules *with* God.

Theological Hash

Roast beef hash is a *good* thing, in my book. I'd like to enjoy it often, but in *my* world, 3 or 4 dollars for a can of the stuff is a bit pricey. Compare with 3 or 4 *pounds* of healthful, cancer-fighting broccoli, for example, at the same price. Still, roast beef hash can be a treat. But *theological* hash is to be avoided like the plague. *Any* amount of poisonous falsehoods on your theological plate will turn even the truths into deadly abettors.

In previous essays and in my books, I've often expressed my revulsion for any thought or teaching that "butts heads" with God's Holy Word. When "the world" does it — those who don't claim to be spiritually awake in Christ — I certainly don't like it, but I certainly *do* understand it. A wall must be torn down by the Holy Spirit before the human being in a natural state can make out anything on the spiritual side (**1 Cor 2:11-14**). But

when “the vicar of Christ on earth” does it, you’d better believe that it riles me! *Big-time!* I’ll next relate what set me off.

The better part of most of my Lord’s Days (Sundays to most of you, Game Day to too many) is spent reading and studying the Bible and related Christian literature. In this particular case, I was reading through a supposed “Christian” magazine that operates on this equation: *Christendom* = *true* Christians in sum. In other words, Christians as defined by the culture; as opposed to Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc., but very often *including* the adherents of papal Rome, the Eastern Orthodox, and even Mormons, *and* ... NT *Christians* are carelessly lumped together with *Christ-denying* Jews. This is an *unbiblical* mix, to say the least. It makes a *hash* of the pure truths that Christ preached, taught, and *lived* out. I’m talking, remember, about THE Head of His own Church; we who are *Christians* are of *His* flock only.

More specifics now: It seems the current “pope” wrote an “encyclical” addressed to “*every person living on this planet.*” I’ll let the reader pause and consider that for a moment, let it sink in. *My take in two words? **Astonishing arrogance!*** It made me wonder aloud — for the umpteenth time — just who do these propped-up sinners (“popes”) think they are?!? And what is the place of GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT in Rome’s Babylon-based scheme? Is *He* out of a job? I mean, if the “vicar of Christ on earth” controls spiritual life on earth on behalf of Christ, what’s left for *Christ’s Biblically-appointed Helper (The Paraclete, John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13)* to do? *Anyone* who sincerely wants to follow the religion of *Christ*, where *all* is centered in *Him*, must take these questions *completely* seriously; there’s no hemming-and-hawing here, no wiggle room. Either the sinless Messiah is Head of His Church, or a deluded sinner attempting to speak *as* God, and *for* God rules in

the place of God, in which case “God” is not holy after all, and therefore, not the true God. It makes my blood boil.

So this *particular* throne-usurping deceiver shoehorned in a *third* table of The Law to add to *God’s* Ten Commandments. Almost 20 *centuries* after Christ ascended to THE Father in Heaven, “our” [strike 1] “Holy” [strike 2] “Father” [strike 3, see **Matthew 23:9!**] told “every person living on this planet” that not only do we have “fundamental and closely intertwined relationships with God [yes, *first* table of the Law, Commandments 1-4], with our neighbor [yes, *second* table, nos. 5-10] and with *the earth* itself” [yesss...wait! Huh? Thou shalt not fail to recycle properly? Or think globally and buy locally? Just where is this in Exodus 20?]. *This* is a prime example of theological hash, and it’s just one of *many* instances tied to this sold-out Socialist *squatter* in the rightful throne of the holy *triune* God.

Thinking Things Through (Part 2: Theology)

I'm used to proceeding from the theological to the political, so today we're going against the usual flow. It's just that I suspect more people want to deal with the political stuff these days (I'm told it's an election year of some sort), so that came first for the sake of *both* of my readers. [I *hope* I'm joking!]

So now, in *this* essay, we'll take another look at the importance of thinking things through — *beyond* the initial unproved assertion of the liberal — to the determination that the claim is either true or false, but from a *theological* perspective. In the previous *political* approach, it was noted in passing that only *God's* statements can be taken as true in each and every case. All *human* claims, however, are subject to verification via a process of honest inquiry, since many

humans have been known to lie from time to time (from midnight to 11:59 PM, in the case of BHO or HRC, or “I rather like being a god” Soros, or maybe “Nosferatu” Schumer, to name a few). But I digress, and I must remind myself that *theology* is the subject at hand. So now we look at the way *religious* liberals *among the masses* (not the “scholars” who are prone to *over*-think themselves into untenable corners) put their *un*-exercised brains into full-sleep/trance mode at the hearing of the latest pronouncement by an end-times “prophet,” a Billy Graham, an archbishop, patriarch, or pope; *all* of ‘em finite in knowledge and oh-so-capable of telling falsehoods. And they *frequently* demonstrate, to any who would notice, these serious limitations. Compare these *sinner*s to the God who can’t lie (**Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18, etc.**).

The reader may have noticed that I often “pick on the Pope” and those under his spiritual “care.” Let me explain why. It

has nothing to do with “bigotry” by a “Protestant” towards those of the Roman Catholic persuasion. Mock my sincerity in this, if you will, but the only woman I ever intended to marry (and proposed to) was a Catholic, as was (and is?) my best friend since high school. Most of the people with whom I have any face-to-face interaction these days are at least nominally Catholic. I *like* all of these people very much, and the thought that *any* of them is actually being “shepherded” into the afterlife by such a charlatan as the “pope” is a constant source of consternation and grief to me. Because I *firmly* believe that they are being led into a *hopeless* eternity by a deceiver who sets himself up in a throne that belongs *exclusively* to the Holy, holy, holy (Isa 6:3) Creator-God described in the Bible. In the pages of God’s very Word of Truth, *NO* place is given to a man as “father” of *CHRIST*’s flock, to Peter, or Mary, or any being *period* other than the one true God. It’s

utter and obvious *blasphemy* to construct and spin out a counter-narrative that attempts to rob God of the glory that's due to Him *alone* (Ex 20:3-6; Isa 42:5, 8-9; & 48:11; Matt 23:9-10; Rev 15:3-4; 19:1; 21:7 (“*I will be his God and he shall be My son*”) and 21:22-23, where *God's* glory illuminates the New Jerusalem; neither Mary nor any “pope” is *ever* in view when proper (idolatry-free) worship is the subject in Scripture. Please take the time to read and absorb the texts cited above. THESE are the Words of God; no *sinner* speaks for God!

So what about this idea of “thinking things through?” Okay, it's just this simple: God knows all, can't lie, IS the eternal Creator-Sustainer-Redeemer, THE Holy One who *alone* can convict morally culpable humans of their sinfulness and bring them from spiritual death into *eternal* spiritual life, and gently but firmly and securely guides *all* who are to be saved by *His* grace; **THE** Shepherd!

Contrast all of that (and much, much more that could also be said) with a far-from-omniscient, *finite* and mortal sinner in need of salvation himself “dispensing” grace and salvation as if they were commodities that belonged to him, and taking the place of *God*, The Holy Spirit (!!!) as Christ’s “holy” representative on earth *AND...the place of God, THE Shepherd (John 10)*! And for how many souls has any pope suffered and died? Or *Mary*? Or any Orthodox or *Protestant* “saint” for that matter?

People, I *beg* you! Think these things through! It’s not enough to recognize that the atheists are wrong, the JW’s are wrong, or the Mormons are wrong, or the Muslims are wrong, but stop and think about who *else* has been telling you lies and “shepherding” you right into hell! This isn’t some wild conspiracy theory; this is *Biblical* wisdom, true knowledge supplied and applied. Only *Christ* is the Way, Truth, and Life!

X-ray of the Heart

On my original “schedule” — such as it was — this essay would’ve landed around Thanksgiving. Even though I’m writing and releasing these last five essays on an accelerated schedule, I see no reason to alter the subject matter. So let’s be thankful ahead of time. [I *kid*, you see.]

Our only *national* “holidays” which have a Biblical pedigree, as far as I can tell, are the Purim-like *Independence Day* (4th of July) and *Thanksgiving* (4th Thursday in November). We Americans can observe and celebrate a day of *deliverance* from oppression and widespread death on our Independence Day in much the same way that the Jews since Esther’s time observe and celebrate Purim, when the wicked, murderous, and treasonous Haman had the tables turned on him by God’s providence. Proclaimed

festivals of thanksgiving, whereby grateful peoples have openly and publicly given thanks to the Source of all blessing are also found in Scripture, as well as in world history. For the individual Christian, and for *all* individuals who can still be informed by any remnant of conscience, *every* day should be a day of thanksgiving to God, The Creator and Giver of all good things. That should be the natural, universal response, but of course, that isn't the case. And in *this* time and place — 21st-Century America — *ingratitude* is epidemic. Too many of us will thank *each other* out of *social reflex*, or will thank our “lucky stars” for favors big and small, but *sincerely* thank *God, THE Giver, THE Ultimate Source* of all good that circulates throughout the universe? Nope, not gonna happen; out of the question, and “unconstitutional.”

What the Holy Spirit prescribes is an X-ray of the heart. *He* knows what's going on in each heart, but we need to see it

for ourselves in stark black and white.

In this country, and in much of the world today, *self-esteem* is yet another obstacle placed in the way of getting to the truth. I'm OK, you're OK; it's all about YOU; YOU deserve special treatment, because YOU are such a *good* apple, yes you are, so you're worth it! The world's your oyster, and don't let anyone tell you differently! You can be and do anything you want, and there will be no bad consequences! No "God" could tell YOU what's right or wrong, and He's dead anyway, so let your urges run wild and free! *etcetera, ad infinitum*. That's what the *world* tells you, and the idea of a soul-searching X-ray is positively *abhorrent* and *verboten*.

God, the Holy Spirit, insists on it, however, and unless YOU repent, YOU are not headed into a blissful afterlife. Self-esteem may be a coin of the realm on this sin-saturated planet, but it will get

you not *one* step closer to God's holy Heaven. Instead, you *must* take the X-ray, see the damning evidence of your heart's true condition, and turn to the Great Physician for the cure. You should know that the Apostle Paul, writing *God-breathed words*, pointed to *ingratitude* ("neither were [they] thankful" — **Rom 1:21**) as a basic symptom of a society that can only *decline* into ruin (**Rom 1:18-32**). When people shove God to the sidelines of their thought or blaspheme Him, they cut themselves off from His help and protection. That only stands to reason, doesn't it? He doesn't exist to serve *you*, now does He? But if we fail to acknowledge *OR* thank Him, we incur His wrath just as surely. *All* good proceeds from the Father (**James 1:17**), and He most certainly *deserves* to be sincerely thanked for it; when you say, "Well, thank *God* for (whatever)...," *mean* it! Yes, *do* thank humans for the *derivative* good that they do, but be sure to thank The Ultimate Source above all!