



"It is human to err; it is devilish to remain willfully in error."
—Augustine

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Insinuating the Savior Into Paganism

In Dr. M. Scott Peck's disturbing book, *People of the Lie*, he tells the story of Bobby, a young man clearly suffering from depression. Bobby's bleak disposition seemed to stem from the suicide of his older brother, Stuart, some months before. His condition declined noticeably after Christmas—he even went so far as to steal a car and crash it, as he had never driven before.

In making small talk with Bobby to get him to open up, Dr. Peck asked him what he had received for [Christmas](#). The distressing response: a gun. While this was bad enough—giving a gun to a depressed adolescent is never wise, but especially not when the boy's brother had shot himself with one—the horrifying detail emerged that Bobby's parents had, in fact, given him the *same* gun that Stuart had used to commit suicide. It is no wonder Bobby was depressed: He was told, in essence, to follow his brother's suicidal example.

The lesson here is not about making thoughtful choices concerning Christmas presents - it goes far deeper. Bobby's parents had no misgivings about presenting their remaining son with their firstborn's suicide weapon, even becoming belligerent and defensive when Dr. Peck questioned them about it. And therein lies the problem: They had given no thought to whether it was right, or whether the boy would be pleased with what he was being

offered, supposedly for his own gratification and enjoyment. They had not considered if the regard bestowed on their son was fitting or well-received. Bobby's parents simply decided that they would show their [love](#) in this way, regardless of whether their definition of love was accepted or correct.

We easily recognize the evil of such thoughtless and self-centered actions in this account, yet a similar, less apparent narcissism exists within churchianity today. Little thought, if any, is given to how [God](#) views the traditions and means that men have adopted to worship Him. Few consider whether the adoration aimed at Him is fitting or well-received.

Thus, the recognized symbol of "Christianity" today is the cross—the murder weapon of the Messiah, assimilated from pre-Christian paganism and assumed to be an acceptable token. Yet, even a superficial reading of the Bible shows that God expresses great displeasure with "worship aids"—He calls them idols (see, for instance, [Isaiah 10:1-16](#))—because they essentially replace Him or at least falsely represent Him in the minds of those using them. People *assume* that He accepts such a symbol, and woe to anyone who dares to state otherwise!

Similarly, few contemplate whether the Father and the Son are pleased with the worship offered to them on the assumed birthday of [Jesus Christ](#). Professing [Christians](#) have been celebrating Christmas since the fourth century, so it *must* be pleasing to God, right? Surely since it is so pleasing to men, God is delighted with such a continuously offered gift. But is He?

In [John 4:23-24](#), Jesus Christ declares that those who would [worship God](#) must do so "in spirit and *truth*." However, Christmas contains no truth, aside from the fact that the Son of God was [born of a woman](#). It most certainly did not occur in the dead of winter, when the shepherds and their flocks would have deserted the fields (see [Luke 2:8](#)).

Nor did the wise men from the East—however many there were - drag a Christmas tree behind them across the wilderness, or give gifts to all of their family and friends in some sort of warped birthday celebration. They brought Jesus gifts sometime *after* the birth, when He was a *child*, not an infant (see

[Matthew 2:9-11](#); compare [Luke 2:17](#)). They brought them, not to celebrate His birth, but because they recognized Him as King, not deigning to appear before Him empty-handed.

There is no example of the early church celebrating the birth date of Jesus Christ, nor is there divine instruction to do so. Instead, the Bible instructs Christians to commemorate His death each year at [Passover](#), which the vast majority of professing Christians studiously avoid doing, instead accepting the destructive lies of [Easter](#). Is the Son pleased to accept such adoration?

In [I Peter 1:18](#), Peter reminds his readers that they were "redeemed"—ransomed—from the "aimless conduct received by tradition from [their] fathers." The *Amplified Bible* translates the "aimless conduct" as a "useless (fruitless) way of living inherited by tradition from [their] forefathers." Christmas would certainly qualify as aimless—fruitless, useless—conduct received by tradition over the millennia (and at the expense of God's Word). If we needed any reminder, the next verse tells us by what we were redeemed: the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Similarly, the apostle Paul was afraid for the Gentile Christians in Galatia because they were "observ[ing] days and months and seasons and years" ([Galatians 4:10](#)) that were a part of their pre-Christian lives, when they were in bondage to this world's "weak and beggarly elements" (verse 9)—a reference to demonism, not anything ordained by God.

Jesus Christ died so that mankind could be redeemed—bought back—from the practices of paganism that have little, if any, truth in them. Is it not, at the very least, thoughtless and self-centered—if not downright evil—to attempt to honor the Son with a celebration of lies that makes His death necessary for humans to continue living?

Yet, despite the pagan origins of Christmas and its trappings being well known, and despite it being common knowledge that the date of Christmas purposely coincides with the solstice celebrations, there is still belligerence and defensiveness when anyone poses questions about the appropriateness - let alone [wisdom](#) or holiness—of it all. Its defenders assertively assume that since it is done to honor God, God must feel honored. Surely, He gladly receives such demonstrations of love toward Him! But the Son is *not* well-

pleased with these gestures, for every falsehood requires His life be given as a payment.

Similar to Bobby's present, the "gift" of Christmas includes the unwritten imperative that an innocent Man die because of the self-centeredness of others. Repeating it every year only adds insult to injury.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

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[Christmas, Syncretism, and Presumption](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Many who consider themselves Christians believe celebrating Christmas honors Jesus Christ, even though the holiday has no biblical support. While it is attractive and appealing, Christmas is actually a spiritual trap because it is not true. John Ritenbaugh explains that it is highly presumptuous to believe that such a syncretized holiday, blended liberally with heathen customs, could please God.

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