

ZEITGEIST

THE MOVIE

EXPOSED

**IS JESUS
AN ASTROLOGICAL MYTH?**

JOEL MCDURMON

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A Biblical and Historical Response to
Zeitgeist: the Movie

Joel McDurmon

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Is Jesus An Astrological Myth?

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This book is dedicated to

Prof. Larry Hurtado

Head of the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity,

who would have been my Ph.D. advisor

had I chosen to spend the 80 grand.

May no man enter an Ivory Tower without

first counting the cost.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
ONE: <i>Suns, Sons, and Bad Puns</i>	15
TWO: <i>Old Testament Theology</i>	21
THREE: <i>Jesus and the Mystery Religions</i>	29
FOUR: <i>Wild Astrology vs. Biblical Theology</i> (Part 1)	41
FIVE: <i>Wild Astrology vs. Biblical Theology</i> (Part 2)	47
SIX: <i>Mad Mythology vs. the Bible</i>	61
SEVEN: <i>Triumph of the Early Apologists</i>	73
EIGHT: <i>Religion as the Root of All Evil</i>	79
NINE: <i>Cliché and Conspiracy</i>	93
TEN: <i>Conclusion</i>	99
FOR FURTHER STUDY	101
INDEX.	113

INTRODUCTION

“The reality is, Jesus was the Solar Deity of the Gnostic Christian sect, and like all other Pagan gods, he was a mythical figure.... Christianity, along with all other theistic belief systems, is the fraud of the age.” —*Zeitgeist: The Movie*

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens (Ps. 96:5).

The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8).

It has grown fashionable in recent times to attack the Christian religion by arguing that Jesus Christ never existed as an historical person. Several books and videos have graced the public with the shocking claim that the Jesus Christ of the Gospels is actually a mythical character. In 2005 a popular documentary by atheist Brian Flemming entitled *The God Who Wasn't There* claimed that “Jesus Christ is likely a fictional character, a legend never based on a real human.” This video spurred the publication of my book *Manifested in the Flesh*,¹ which refutes the alleged “Jesus Myth” theories of modern propagandists and atheists, dissecting them piece by piece. Responding to this film and works

like it, one would surmise, would be enough to at least help the “mythicists” (as they call themselves) learn *something* about the subject outside of their own little mental bubble.

Alas, this is not the case. The mythicists have struck again, this time with even greater radicalism, even farther out into the ozone, even more unbelievable inept scholarship passed off as “real research,” and, despite the heightened foolishness, an even straighter face. The item of interest? A two-hour, three-part video presentation called *Zeitgeist: The Movie* (Hereafter referred to as *Z*).

Now, in case that title doesn’t reach out and grab you automatically, let me say something in translation. *Zeitgeist* is a German word for something like “spirit of the times,” or “spirit of the age” (the relevance of this will grow clearer later when we address astrological “ages”). I suspect this still doesn’t sound like an evening full of fun, or like something worth dropping even a few bucks to rent, but don’t worry: you don’t have to rent it; it is free online. Free, where every childish mind (age aside) can be swept into its deluge of modern mythmaking. The website offers the movie with subtitles in twenty languages, and somewhere I heard that it claims 15 million views worldwide (though I have not verified this).

Now, don’t get me wrong, I defend freedom to a greater extent than most people, so my point is not that this should be taken down, or anything that ludicrous. The video is there to be watched for free, or to be freely ignored, for that matter. The point is rather to say that radical and even stupidly absurd ideas can cause quite a stir when presented the right way, and we here at American Vision have gotten more than one call or email asking us to respond to the claims made in *Z*. As laborious and redundant as I often feel that such work is, I embrace the Sisyph-

ean task of once again confronting “mythicists” as a labor of love for my Christian brethren.

Some things should be said at the outset about the production of this movie in general. This book only addresses Part 1 of Z, which is the only part that deals with Christianity specifically.

The other two parts, while continuing on the theme of mass oppression and world government, focus on 9–11 as a U.S. government conspiracy, and on the world banking industry conspiracy, particularly in U.S. history. Sound like a strange concatenation of subjects? I think it is quite a jump to expect people to follow, even if all of it were true. Nevertheless, the Z boys have bitten off the entire chunk in one bite, and if what they have to say sounds like a garbled mess, it’s because they’ve got quite a mouth-full.

I should note, however, that the sole redeeming quality of this production is that it does raise unanswered questions and reminds us of forgotten blatant contradictions in the official stories given about 9–11 (whether the thought of a conspiracy here infuriates you, or even poses a tolerable question, it is certainly not unpatriotic, if not the most patriotic thing one can do, to probe the hard questions). Beyond the divisive issue of 9–11, the history of international banking and the creation of the Federal Reserve, discussed in Part 3, are stories that *every American needs to know*, and I therefore appreciate the presentation here, though the same can be found elsewhere without the stupefying mindlessness about astrology and a mythical Christ being adjoined to it.²

I elaborate these parts because one of our callers noted that even “Ron Paul’s guys” were promoting this godless movie. Well, Ron Paul is a Christian whom I’m sure would disavow Part 1 of Z. He would probably not spend much time with Part 2 (the 9–11 part), and yet I’m sure he would heartily applaud most of Part 3.

Dr. Paul, as a defender of America's original liberties, has drawn attention and affection from many disparate groups who live on the fringe (and therefore talk of "freedom" more often than most people), including atheists and many conspiracy theorists. This is not to say that he agrees with these positions, but anyone who wants to return to a constitutional level of government in this country will inevitably attract radicals of all sorts. I, for one, do not object to this phenomenon, even if I vehemently disagree with certain positions. I agree with the Thomas Jefferson: "I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it."³ While this book does not intend to defend or endorse Dr. Paul, the point is worth making.

Spotting Presuppositions: Freedom from Self-Imposed Bias

The issue of freedom versus tyranny underlies this entire effort. The writer is concerned that "We have been lied to," and that liberties have been suppressed in the name of religion, which brainwashes people, and allows no criticism of its dogmas. Yet, the producer's presenting his position as "outcast" and "censored" has a reflexive and ingrown character that tries to seal off criticism of *its own position* at the outset. We are led to believe, for example, that these few brave scholars stood up against the establishment during the nineteenth century, and their views were subsequently squelched by the heavy hand of organized censorship. Where had such brave scholars been for the prior 1,800 years? Well, of course, the evil Roman Catholic Church suppressed, persecuted and killed anyone who dared even to question official doctrine, so we are told.

Based on this keen historical analysis, all of modern scholarship is controlled by the "Establishment," and everything before,

say, 1815 was also controlled. From this we are forced to believe that only during a tiny historical window in the nineteenth century could this “real research” be done. If you think about it, this methodology is a clever way of insulating these mythicists from having to answer criticism. They can automatically reject anything besides their pet scholars, and if you object to their scholars, they can cry “Oppression!” and align you with either the allegedly murderous Catholics or tyrannical modern institutions. This is a game that many people with a fundamentalist mindset play: if you ignore them, then you’re part of the blind brainwashed masses, but if you critique them, you’re part of the oppressive machine. This self-delusion amounts to intellectual cowardice.

What we need to do in order to avoid the childish confrontation that would result, is to look at the presuppositions that underlie *Z* before we take it apart piece by piece. Consider this stage of the analysis like preparing to disassemble a piece of furniture: first figure out what kind of screwdriver you need; then you can proceed.

In this case, the thesis sentence of the presentation (which, like every school child learning to write is told *not* to do, comes at the very *end* of Part 1, nearly forty minutes into the mess) is that “Jesus was the Solar Deity of the Gnostic Christian sect, and like all other Pagan gods, he was a mythical figure.” Now, in order to get to this conclusion one must sit through the whole forty minutes, which begins with a presentation about sun-worship in ancient pagan times, and tries to build a case that all ancient religions, the mystery religions, Judaism, and even Christianity are all based on this early worship of the sun.

Now stop for just a moment. While it may seem that we are just getting started at this point, the thesis has already assumed a hugely important thing. It proceeds on the assumption that *all religions have developed from one source*, namely, ancient pagan

practices of sun-worship. As we will see below, this is the most fundamental error possible when dealing with Biblical religion. While it may well be the case that even *most* pagan religions have developed in relation to each other, or even directly from one another, there exists no warrant at all for making the claim that *all* religions stem from sun worship. This is a gratuitous assumption of the most extravagant sort. Spotting this error—and this *type* of error—at the outset will greatly help your process of discernment in evaluating *Zeitgeist: The Movie*.

Notes

1. Joel McDurmon, *Manifested in the Flesh: How the Historical Evidence of Jesus Refutes Modern Mystics and Skeptics* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2007).
2. See the video “Money, Banking and the Federal Reserve,” produce by the Ludwig von Mises Institute, available at <http://mises.org/multimedia/video/Fed.wmv> ; accessed July 9, 2008.
3. Thomas Jefferson to Archibald Stuart, 1791, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Memorial Edition, eds. Lipscomb and Bergh, 20 vols. (Washington D.C., 1903-4), 8:276.

ONE

SUNS, SONS AND BAD PUNS

With the presupposition set in place that all religions evolved from the same source—this assumption is unseen, of course, by the viewer initially—and thus forming the foundation of the message, the introduction to the sun-worship theme proceeds with perhaps the single biggest laughable element I have ever witnessed in a purported work of research. This is the subtle and almost shamefully dishonest confusion of “sun” and “son.”

First, Z presents us with the case for sun-worship in general: in ancient societies the dependence on the sun for agrarian life “made the sun the most adored object of all time” (we are not told *who* adored it, versus *who did not*, which makes a world of difference to the story). Then we are instructed that these sun-adorers also watched the stars, and named the constellations after people and animals (again, we are not told *who*); and with these names came “elaborate myths involving their movements and relationships.” This all leads us to the central claim about these pagans: “The sun, with its life-giving and -saving qualities was personified as a representative of the unseen creator god ...‘God’s Sun,’ the light of the world, the savior of human kind.”

Now keep in mind that during the movie these things are not read, as you are reading them. The phrase “God’s Sun” is only heard, not seen. The distinction between “son” and “sun” is far from obvious. Nevertheless, some vital explanation and important logical links are left out. For example, if the sun was

the object of worship, where and how did the idea of an “unseen creator god” enter the picture all of the sudden? We are not told—it just appears. Again, there is no reference to any known text of ancient civilizations or original source. *Some* ancient Egyptians did believe in an unseen creator god who belonged to a group of other gods, but this was one belief among hundreds in the vast panoply of Egyptian polytheism. There were, after all, many rival gods and myths stemming from rival cities, temples, and dynasties over a thousand years. Picking one group to represent all of ancient religion could be like selecting the Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists (an actual denomination) to represent all of Christianity in western history from A.D. 70 to the present. Arbitrary! Unless we are presented with some substantial and relevant evidence, I can only assume that this idea of a “creator god” has been planted in *Z* for the sake of drawing in and shocking listeners who do happen to believe in an unseen Creator Who had a representative Son.

Meanwhile, back to the big pun. We are introduced to “Horus” who is, truly, a well-known Egyptian god associated with sun worship. *Z* presents him as “*the* Sun God of Egypt” (though there were many sun gods in Egypt, particularly *Ra*, who was also a creator god, of which there were also many), and also as a “solar messiah” (strangely, *Z* chooses to use a distinctly Hebrew term, *messiah*, to label an Egyptian god—again, a trick to bamboozle the audience). We are then told that Horus (among many other alleged similarities to Jesus) was born of a virgin: thereby easing into the “son-ness” of the Sun. Then, finally, the script makes the jump: “Horus was known by many gestural names such as ...God’s Anointed *Son*.”

Now, of course, this swindle has already taken place to the hearer, but the script waits a while before it completes the heist. Like a shoplifter he lingers around, casually looking normal like

any interested customer, until you blink, and then the Hubba-Bubba box is empty. Well, somebody stole my theological candy, and I've caught 'em red-handed. I'm ready to press charges.

"Sun of God" equals "Son of God"? Are they serious? Is anyone buying this, for real? Do the producers of *Z* not realize the obvious here? That this sad parallel *only works in English*—a language which did not even begin to develop until at the earliest around A.D. 500? *Z* has founded its entire argument on a *bad pun* which is about 4,000 years out of place linguistically, and about that many miles geographically, too—a testimony to the producer's wildly cavalier abuse of fact in the name of scholarship. It must be embarrassing to have such utter doltishness be exposed under the light of the day—something for which we all can thank the Sun.

Unfortunately, it takes a couple of paragraphs into the script before this "bait-and-switch" move occurs (although, the listener will hear it take place well before due to the way the phrase is used in context). The writer here is careful not to play his hand too quickly, or perhaps he is trying to avoid putting into print what he knows is an obvious plate of goofiness. You can tell from how well it is woven and edited in—hidden, that is to say—that the writer is half-ashamed of himself. Well, I'm aiming for his other half now:

His source for the pun is the new-age writer known as "Acharya S," who herself reaches into the work of Jacob Bryant (1715-1804). In his now outdated and always fringe work from 1774, *A New System or Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, Bryant claims to spot cognates between ancient Indian "San, Zan, Zon, Zaan" all of which we are assured mean "Sun," and Egyptian "Sonchin, Son-cohen," allegedly meaning "priests of the sun" ("Cohen" does mean "priest" in Hebrew, however).

Neither *Z* nor Acharya produces a single quotation from an original source to give even an example, let alone a parallel, nor

do they even attempt to show the words in original languages with translations, or even the logic behind their translations. We are left with the *bare authority of Acharya S*, who states, “Thus, the English word ‘son’ is not a false cognate with ‘sun’, and it is truthfully said that the ‘son of god’ is the ‘sun of god.’”¹

Did I miss something in this “proof”? Bryant did not even mention the English language, and we are nowhere given a basis to how to get from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics or Sanskrit characters to English spellings (since in our modern language, the words “Son” and “Sun” vary only one letter in spelling but widely in meaning). So we are left following Acharya’s mental leap across the foggy abyss of nearly pre-historic languages. If you want to jump, feel free; but you have been forewarned.

Dead Languages and Dead Scholars

In further illustration of the absurdity of relying on an alleged pun bridging ancient and modern languages, consider the fact that not even *Latin* scholars today are comfortable with *pronouncing* Latin because it has not been a spoken language for centuries. It is readable, but not speak-able. Anyone basing an argument on a pun (or a homophone)²—which relies entirely on the pronounced *sound* of a word, would rightfully be laughed out of the academy. If such a gulf exists with a language that died a couple of centuries ago, and uses the same letters as English, image the black hole that is created by pictographic systems to which we have no historical connection from 4,000 years back.

Suppose, however, that this great pun did work in Egyptian and Sanskrit. Let’s remember that the stories of the Bible came to us through Hebrew and Greek. Shouldn’t we find a similar correspondence between the ideas of “Sun” and “Son” in those languages as well? Of course. But nothing of the sort exists. Z’s theory, if carried out consistently, would have us believe that the

Hebrew *ben* (son) is equal to the Hebrew *shemesh* (sun) or even to the Hebrew *or gadol* (the greater light of Gen. 1:16). There is no “Sun of God” idea in Hebrew. There is, however, a “Son” of God, for example, in Psalm 2:7: “The LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Compare also Ex. 4:22–3, and Hosea 11:1, where Israel is referred to as God’s son). In these passages the word for son is *ben*, as it always is in Hebrew, with no possible confusion with solar ideas in any way, not even by the wildest minds.

Biblical Greek is no less clear. *Huios* (son) is never confused or substituted by *helios* (sun), *haymera* (day) or *phos* (light). Therefore, Hebrew and Greek thought and language, from which Biblical religion comes, do not and *cannot* follow the alleged Egyptian “cognate” (which is highly doubtful that it ever existed in the first place). The only possible place, to my immediate knowledge, that one could find even a hint of such substitution in all of the Bible is in the last chapter of Malachi, where the prophet says, “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Mal. 4:2). But a simple reading of the context shows that this is not confusing the person (son) and the celestial object (sun), but rather standard Hebrew poetry used in prophecy: Malachi is warning of a day of burning judgment that will dawn, in which the wicked will be burned away and the righteous will receive life and nourishment. This is no different from some agrarian parables of Jesus that mention the sun (Matt. 13:3–9, 18–23). In fact, I’m not even certain (and OT students may be tempted to jump here) that personification is necessary here. “His,” which personifies “sun” in the phrase “his wings” is not necessary or even obvious in the Hebrew text, and most translations, especially the more modern ones, translate this as “its wings.” I will say more about the sun in Biblical theology

below; this should suffice for now to more than adequately put to rest Z's extravagant abuse of language.

So understand this: all this confusion derives from the unwarranted use of one lone mythologist, Jacob Bryant, whom three centuries of scholars have since found quaint at best. To me, it looks more like Acharya S needed a scholarly-looking citation to support her own astrological fancies, and so she had to cherry-pick among the few obscure writers that support her conclusion. With this method, anyone could find support for any dream in any discipline they wish to push. All they would need then is a slick narrator with a cheap web video production program, and they could have their own movement, too. Groom your pet theory, and find your own Jacob Bryant, and shoot for the stars!

As a final note we should point out that Bryant himself probably would not have used his scholarship in the exaggerated way Z has. When he died in 1804 he left £2000 (about \$55,000 today) to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, an organization devoted to Christian missionary work. Apparently, this archeologist believed more strongly in the Gospel of Jesus Christ than in any fanciful theories that could result from his own historical work. Z would do well to follow his example.

Notes

1. Acharya S, *Suns of God: Krishna, Buddha and Christ Unveiled* (Adventured Unlimited Press, 2004), 76; referenced in the interactive transcript to *Zeitgeist* at <http://www.zeitgeistmovie.com/sun1.htm> .
2. A homophone (homo = "same" + phone = "sound") is a word that is pronounced the same as another word but differs in meaning.

TWO

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Any “origin” or “parallel” claims about Christ that do not first deal with the Old Testament should not be taken seriously. The idea of a Messiah in Jerusalem revolves around the historical fulfillment of all that had been gradually written of Him over 1500 years. The New Testament constantly quotes from the Old for a very good reason, particularly in the Gospels where OT citations are often accompanied by the explicit “that it might be fulfilled.” While not every detail of Jesus’ life is prophesied, *major* events of it are tied to Old Testament promises—promises which were given to the people of the OT—and thus any analysis of Jesus which begins without the OT background is arbitrary and unfounded. This, in itself, is enough to debunk the mythicists’ theory, but there are vital elements which, when explained, help illustrate how strongly this is the case.

The Sun and Biblical Theology

The first of these vital elements is the place of the sun in Biblical theology. Despite what pagan societies around them did, the Old Testament people of God did not worship the sun. To them this marvelous object in the sky, however glorious and apparently worthy of adoration, was nothing but an element of *creation*—something the One True God had spoken into existence (Gen. 1:16–18). Note to our solar-mythicist researchers: This is in the *very first chapter* of the Bible. No one of the Hebrew religion

who read or heard read the books of Moses could believe that sun-worship is acceptable to God.

From Genesis 1 forward, the Bible repeats the theme that all of the things in the heavens that the pagan religions worship as gods, are nothing but creations of the One True God, and are not to be worshipped, nor used to represent the God they are to worship. For example, in Deuteronomy 4 Moses gives stern warning against idolatry, including,

And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven (Deut. 4:19).

If the covenant people did lapse into such idolatry, no matter how many generations in the future, the promise of judgment loomed: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed” (Deut. 4:26). This scenario did occur—the people did forget their God and began to worship the heavenly bodies—and judgment fell on them for it (Jer. 8:1–3; Ezek. 8:16–18).

In the great drama of the Exodus, God sent plagues upon the Egyptians which Pharaoh had his priests attempt to imitate. The ninth of these plagues, just prior to the death of Egypt’s firstborn sons, was the plague of “thick darkness” in which the sky was completely blackened for three days. This plague was God’s demonstration of vanquishing the Egyptian sun gods, an indication that the sun itself was under His control.¹ Old Testament Professor and Archaeologist John Davis confirms that this plague

“struck at the very heart of Egyptian worship and humbled one of Egypt’s greatest gods.”² The plague struck not only at the great sun-god Ra, but also at the sky goddesses Hathor and Nut, the moon god Thoth, numerous others, as well as Pharaoh himself.³

In this issue we are dealing with nothing less than the doctrine of God. Is He like the perishable elements, especially the elements that happen to shine brightly? Or does He transcend—being above, beyond and distinct from—the created world altogether? The Old Testament is clear on the matter. In fact, to deny or corrupt the knowledge of the nature of God by representing Him with elements of creation was such an egregious offense as to be punishable by death (Deut. 17:2–5). For to deny the fullness of God’s nature is to deny His existence; this is how Job, for example, viewed idolatry (Job 31:26–28). Perhaps this is why the mythicist theory almost always coincides with atheism. At any rate, the doctrine of God intimately affects how we approach and worship Him.

In the Biblical view, God is the Creator, the One who made the sun, moon and stars (Ps. 8; 19; 76:16; 104:19–24; 136:7–9; 147:4; Jer. 31:35) and controls the sun at His will (Josh. 10:12–14; Job 9:7–9; Is. 38:7–8). On top of the fact that God created the celestial bodies, when the Psalmist writes commanding all of creation to praise its Creator, the sun, moon, and stars are commanded to praise him as well (Ps. 148). When God acts in judgment, He darkens the sun (Is. 13:10; 24:23; Ezek. 32:7–8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Hab. 3:11; Matt. 24:29; Luke 23:45; Rev. 6:12); and when the New Heavens and New Earth are brought to pass, God in His Glory shall supersede the light of the sun (Is. 60:19–20; Rev. 21:23–24; 22:5).

Astrological Worship and Biblical Theology

Like sun-worship, the practice of astrology was known by the Hebrews and was condemned. To begin with, God had forbidden all forms of seeking after divine knowledge outside of His revelation. The worship of sun, moon and stars was forbidden in Deuteronomy 4, listed above, and a long list of related “abominations” comes in chapter 18 of the same book:

When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord (Deut. 18:9–12).

It is interesting that God gives this warning in the context of entering the Promised Land, which was then inhabited by pagans. Here the early pagan myths and solar/astral worship certainly flourished, but God’s people were to avoid all of the ways in which these pagans hoped to obtain divine knowledge or favor. The Israelites were to be set apart by their dependence on God Himself, and on His Word, not relying on aspects of creation to help them cope or determine how to live.

The Bible’s teaching about the stars, like that concerning the sun, is one of distinct perspective. For example, Job mentions the names of some of the constellations, but places such knowledge squarely within the Biblical understanding of God as Sovereign Creator: “Who commands the sun not to shine, And sets a seal upon the stars; / Who alone stretches out the heavens And tram-

ples down the waves of the sea; / Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south” (Job 9:7–9). Job goes so far as to equate even a hidden desire to worship the sun as a denial of “God above” (Job 31:26–28).

Isaiah records God’s judgment against Babylon. In His pronouncements of judgment, He uses the polemics of Sovereignty against the pagan beliefs. He taunted the people to call upon their star gods for help: “You are wearied with your many counsels; Let now the astrologers, Those who prophesy by the stars, Those who predict by the new moons, Stand up and save you from what will come upon you.... There is none to save you” (Is. 47:13, 15).

Later, much of Israel adopted the pagan practices, and God judged them just as He did the pagans. Jeremiah presents God’s people engaging in a very clear astrological-mystery religion, and receiving God’s indictment. The prophet relates the “abomination” in the clearest terms possible: departure from God’s word into pagan religion. He writes,

As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you! But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her (Jer. 44:17; see also Jer. 7:17–20).

The “queen of heaven” here refers to either the goddess Ashoreth or Astarte, though the title is used by more than one mystery goddess throughout history. The Israelites had adopted the pagan practice of worshipping astrological deities. Jeremiah concluded that the people had brought their own destruction upon themselves, multiplying idolatry, “So the Lord was no longer able to endure *it*, because of the evil of your deeds, because of the abominations which you have committed; thus your land has become

a ruin, an object of horror and a curse, without an inhabitant, as *it is this day*" (Jer. 44:22).

Likewise, Daniel and the three Hebrew children endured interrogation from the Babylonian king, who determined that, "in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them *ten times better* than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm" (Dan. 1:20). What is the point? Again, it is that the Word of God is superior to astrology for learning in divine matters. In their faithfulness to Him, God protected the Hebrew children in Babylon and Persia. This theme recurs throughout Daniel, and climaxes at the Handwriting on the Wall during Belshazzar's feast (Dan. 5). There a divine revelation from God *confounds* all of the astrologers and "Chaldeans" (probably Persian priests). The pagan priests cannot even decipher the message of their own destruction; but Daniel can and does.

Biblical Theology versus Pagan Worship of Creation

In the age-long confrontation between Israel and her surrounding pagan nations, particularly with reference to the clash of religions between them, Israel always had the Creator of the heavens and earth to put in the face of all the pagans' claims about gods in the sun, moon, stars, sea, mountains, rocks, whatever. To the pagan who was mesmerized at the blazing glory of the sun, the Israelite responded, "You see that glorious fiery ball in the sky? See how powerful and amazing it seems? Beyond all comprehension, right? You think that's a god? Well, *my God made* that thing."

The Word of God itself boasts of this fact. For example, one of the most important of the pagan gods was *Baal* (who is mentioned throughout the OT), who was regarded as a god of the storms and of the waters. The OT ridicules this idea that part of the creation could be considered a god, and often specifically targets the alleged

gods. Psalm 29 carries such polemic against Baal: “The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thunders: the LORD is over many waters.... / The LORD sat *as King* at the flood; Yes, the LORD sits as King forever” (Ps. 29:3, 10; see also Ps. 68:33; Ps. 83:15; 147:8). The Psalm makes clear that Yaweh controls the realm of the alleged Baal, and that Yaweh is King. The Psalmist could write this in accord with the OT doctrine of God as Creator in Genesis 1 (particularly considering Gen. 1:2).

This disparity distinguishes Biblical religion over against the surrounding pagan mystery religions. It formed the basis of God’s people being “Holy”—that is, “set apart” from all others by God’s appointment. The abundance of idolatry among the pagan nations formed the basis of judgment against them, which came in the form of Israel’s conquest of the lands they inhabited.

For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you *to do* so (Deut. 18:12-14).

Old Testament Theology: Conclusion

These points should be clear by now: the sun, moon and stars are elements of God’s creation. They are under His divine sovereignty. They are not divine in themselves, but dependent upon their Creator for their being. Nor are they a source of divine knowledge, or knowledge of divine things. They are not to be worshipped or consulted for wisdom. Any practice to the contrary of these beliefs was grounds for divine judgment.

I began this section talking about the importance of the Old Testament for understanding the Gospel of Jesus. I have spent most of the section, however, not covering prophecies of Jesus, but covering the themes relevant to mystery religions and solar religion in order to show the great extent to which Old Testament Theology disparages such nonsense from page one. The fact that Jesus comes as the fulfillment of the Old Testament means that He, too, stands starkly opposed to the idolatry, sun worship, and star-reading of the ancient pagan cults. This is true of New Testament Theology in general. Bishop N. T. Wright, for example, has made a long academic career arguing against wild New Testament theories by pointing out the simple Biblical facts that “when Paul went out into the Gentile world with his ‘gospel’, he went as a Jew to Gentiles, to tell the Gentile world what Jews had always believed: that ‘the gods of the nations are idols, but our God made the heavens’ (Psalm 96:5).”⁴ This fact alone destroys the mythicists’ theory, which is why they work so hard not to mention the Old Testament background and instead manufacture “parallels” to look convincing. The next section will have much to say about this type of scholarship.

Notes

1. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament: Vol. 2*, 2 Vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 941; entry 2417a, *shemesh*.
2. John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 133.
3. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 135–136.
4. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 75.

THREE

JESUS AND THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

This chapter does not need to cover all the alleged parallels in detail, since I have dealt with them at length in my book, *Manifested in the Flesh: How the Historical Evidence of Jesus Refutes Modern Mystics and Skeptics*. Besides sounding like a shameless plug, the refutations there are longer and more detailed than I can give here. In that book I give background information for all the major mystery religions based on original source documents (something the mythicists don't do, since it would empty their case).¹ I show the elements of stories themselves from which the alleged parallels are drawn, and in no case is there anything compelling. In brief, despite all of the lists of parallel characteristics that mythicists present us with, not a single primary source documenting these lists has ever been produced to confirm their claims.

Where's the Beef?

The mythicist thesis reminds me of the old Wendy's hamburger commercial from the 1980s, where an elderly woman lifts the huge bun of a competitor's burger to reveal a tiny beef patty barely larger than the pickle. She yells, "Where the beef?!" So it is with the mythicists' grandiose claims: you pull back the cover and there's no substance at all. The outward presentation is nothing but fluff in order to sell the story: beneath the crust there is nothing to sink your intellectual teeth into.

My argument about the absence of primary sources does not mean the mythicists are short of *footnotes*—they often abound in these. But never do you see them quote the original myths, or anything close. They always present us with what some obscure alleged “Egyptologist” (whom no one else in the industry follows or agrees with) *says* that the mysteries practiced or believed. How these scholars themselves determined these things we cannot know, because they do not (and cannot) cite original sources.

I say that these guys *cannot* cite primary sources because in most cases, the sources *don't exist*. An expert in the field, Prof. Marvin Meyer, who has spent a great deal of his life studying the subject, reveals this in a fairly recent reference article. He writes, “Ancient sources say comparatively little, however, about the private ceremonies of the mysteries, and the details of these ceremonies *remain largely unknown*.”² This means that we have *no idea* what really went on or was believed by most of the ancient mystery religions. I should note that Dr. Meyer is never shy about pointing out the alleged influence of the mysteries on Christianity, despite his admission of the absence of sources. In other words, he has no desire to be an apologist for the Church. The absence of source material, however, which he honestly relates forces us to conclude that the kinds of parallels made by Z and other radicals have *no basis at all* in established documented fact, nor *can* they. All such alleged parallels are efforts of imagination, not products of historical scholarship.

The Z gang has been hammered with this critique: “Where are the citations?” They have felt the weight of their emptiness, and have been moved to respond. In a Q&A section of the website they respond to “All Part 1 ‘debunkers’” who, and they actually say this, “*blindly* ask ‘Where are the “Primary Sources”?’” Note: these guys have produced two hours of video pushing some of the most unpalatable conspiracy theories out there, demanding

that people begin to *ask tough questions* of religion, society and government. Don't settle for establishment controlled news! Quit following the *status quo* blindly. You've got to dig deeper and find the truth for yourself. That is, apparently, until you start questioning *their* pet theory. Then, when asking for the most basic thing in all of scholarship—a *primary source document*—we are accused of asking *blindly*. And they will go to sleep tonight thinking that we are the blind ones.

They argue, "Well, even though we do have many of the original texts from the Egyptian religion, many other religions have no available primary sources." Well, then, they should at least quote something from what they claim to have; but they don't even do this. So what are we left with? Z continues, "[T]he information comes down through analysis of traditions that each religion practiced, as recorded by historians." Historians? Working from what? Primary sources that you admit are not available? I can portray any religion in any light I want with those criteria, and I could probably find some obscure academic to back up my points, too. But, as any trained "historian" knows, if you don't have a primary source—an actual artifact or document—to stake your claim on, you take a *huge* risk in publishing your opinion. These kinds of moves get a professor's office moved to the basement; then by the janitors' closet; then to the street.

The Z gang tries to counter that we don't have "original documents" for the Bible, either, and thus most Christian critics don't hold themselves to the same standard. We should therefore, it is implied, back off. But this comeback commits an equivocation—confusing the word "original" in the historian's standard sense of "primary" with "original" in the sense of "very first paper written on." This is not what we critics mean, as anyone involved in this type of scholarship should already know. A primary source needn't be the very first papyrus that

some Egyptian priest wrote the myths on; it can be a later copy. The point is to have something at least *close* historically that transmits the written stories themselves. This is not only standard practice, but *vital* when the claims are staked on alleged events that happened in the myths. What happened? Virgin Birth? *Show Me*. If you can't do so, don't pretend that anyone is obligated to take you seriously. And when you insist over and over again despite your lack of evidence, don't pretend that you are unduly persecuted when you are laughed off the stage.

Who Defines “Real Research”?

Kin to the problem of faulty sources is the producer's complaint that we “debunkers” “do no real research.” Allegedly, “95% of all ‘debunkers’ have never opened anything other than the Bible and an Encyclopedia.... The other 5% have blindly read Establishment Apologist literature and nothing more.” Remember what I said above about how these guys cleverly insulate themselves from criticism. Look at the game *Z* plays: 95% percent of their critics are brainwashed and uncritical, and the other 5% are loyal “Establishment” conspirators. None of us has done “real” research. Tell me why anyone should take these guys seriously.

I am currently researching a book on logical fallacies that will hopefully be made available this winter. There are many entertaining permutations of logical fallacies out there. I love the fun ones like the “fallacy of the beard,” Greg Bahnsen's famous “crackers in the pantry fallacy,” as well as this one that is relevant here: the “no true Scotsman fallacy,” popularized by the philosopher Antony Flew. It goes something like this:

DUNCAN: No Scotsman eats his haggis without a glass of Scotch ale.

DERMOTT: Well, my uncle Angus from Aberdeen loves his haggis, but never drinks Scotch ale.

DUNCAN: Ah, yes! But no *true* Scotsman eats his haggis without Scotch ale!

This is a rather overt change of definition which is not allowed in fair debate. Duncan asserts a characteristic of all Scotsmen. When Dermott produces evidence to demonstrate the contrary, Duncan conveniently changes his definition from “Scotsman” to “*true* Scotsman,” narrowing the field of acceptable evidence, and thereby evading the force of his error. Such thinking allows the abuser of logic immunity from criticism, while yet free to criticize the rest of the world. Such a person would generally rather insult the rest of the world than acknowledge his own clear error.

The obvious fallacy aside, just what exactly would constitute “real research” for these guys? If we do not have primary sources, and we cannot allow in any of the “Establishment apologists,” then what exactly *does* qualify as “real”? The only alternative, according to the options they have left us, are to read the fringe radicals that *they* have based their story on. In short, we are not doing “real research” unless we read only their story and only agree with them. While it would be nice to get away with pinning your critics in a corner in this way, very few people who deal with these issues will spend more than a few minutes arguing against such childishness. Only a fool, after all, plays against a stacked deck.

To this end, the *Z* writer complains that not one critic has contacted him who has read the total works of Gerald Massey or E. A. Wallis Budge and can argue any single point. Beside the fact that you need not read a scholar’s entire corpus in order to argue a single point, the complaint overlooks the fact that there was a time when scholars all over *did* read their works, and have cast them aside as marginal. These books have been lost in the

dustbin of history for a reason: they don't contribute meaningful and lasting knowledge, they push an anti-Biblical agenda. Even modern secular scholars know this, and frown on the methodology of these outdated books. Besides, I *have* read the works of E. A. Wallis Budge, and I found them, first of all, void of any genuine parallel to Christianity, and secondly, written in turgid, unsystematic, and nearly incoherent prose. As for Gerald Massey, he was a conscious enemy of the Church, and made it his life's work to attack the Biblical message. Even at this he did poorly. He was self-taught in the field of Egyptology, relied on his own untrained, unchecked ciphering of hieroglyphics, and made parallels based on his own whim. "Establishment" scholars frown on these things because they evade formal, reviewable methods. What such loose-cannon scholars end up doing is saying, "Believe me or you are the enemy!"

Besides, it is the writers of *Z* who are guilty of third-rate scholarship. Not only do they rehash the garbage literature of their favorite fringe scholars, but they plagiarize other modern attempts to debunk Christ as well. Parts of the movie are filled with footage from early films about the life of Jesus, and these clips are taken directly from the former movie by atheist Brian Flemming, *The God Who Wasn't There*. Even worse, *Z* plagiarizes the scrolling list of pagan gods which Flemming created for his film—a list taken from a known work of forgery which includes at least one absolutely false name, "Beddru of Japan." Despite being listed among Mithras and Perseus, and others, *no record of the god has ever been found*. The laughter gets even louder when you realize that Flemming was castigated for uncritically copying this nonsense from a known quack of a scholar, and said he regretted not catching the copy-and-paste error. I have to laugh out loud at the fact that, in the face all of this, *Z* does the exact same thing.

Did they not know? Did they not check? Did they just not care? Or do they think their viewers are just that gullible?

“Parallels” and Crooked Presuppositions

So what about these alleged numerous parallels themselves? They just don't exist. When the mythicists talk about death and resurrection in the ancient myths, they use words and ideas which refer to something entirely different from what we find in the Gospel of Christ. Almost all scholars will acknowledge that such language in the myths refers to the cycle of the seasons. It may very well be true that many if not all the mystery religions through the ancient ages were allegories relating to the progress of the sun in the heavens, and to the death and life cycle of vegetation during the year. The ancient cults may have even personified the elements of nature into myths that narrated the cycle of nature. But what does this necessarily have to do with Biblical religion? Nothing. It is a gratuitous assumption on their part to pretend that “death” and “resurrection” always mean the same thing in all cases. These terms do not even always mean the same thing within the Bible itself, let alone between pagan religions across thousands of years.³

Who decided, after all, that Biblical religion *must necessarily* be exactly like all other religions? Since this is the assumption lying behind works like *Z*, where did such a notion come from? It was a group of German scholars who were influenced by the evolutionary “synthesis” philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel. This group worked throughout the nineteenth century, picking up Darwin's evolutionism along the way, and culminating in the “History of Religions School.” In the way that Darwin claimed that all species had a common ancestor, this school believed that all religions grew from one ancient source. This presupposition is nothing

more than historical Darwinism: denying the supernatural and forcing all religion into one naturalistic lineage.

With their dogmatic belief held up front, the group began to find every possible parallel, and then claim that Christianity developed from the other religion. New Testament scholar Donald Guthrie, a well-known authority on the matter, tells the story: “It was the ‘history of religions’ school which popularized comparisons between Christianity and the mystery religions with a view to finding in the latter a source for the ideas of the former.”⁴ Guthrie then explains how the method led to such extravagances that it caused its own downfall:

Whatever justification the advocates of this school thought they had, their method was at fault in several particulars.... Once such a point of view was adopted it became *imperative* for the investigator to discover many features in NT theology which were based on the mysteries.... So alien were some of these interpretations to an unbiased understanding of NT thought that the ‘history of religions’ school did not gain widespread support.⁵

The movement failed, therefore, due to its inability to weather the test of academic scrutiny. It failed to produce any works of lasting soundness, instead attempting to peddle what struck everyone as obvious straining and propaganda. Z would do well to contemplate this downfall.

Biblical Theology vs. “History of Religions”

The Bible has no need of such outside support for interpretation, because it is self-consistent within and throughout itself. The Bible has its own self-consistent theme of death and resurrection which is tied to obedience and faith through a covenant with

God, which progresses through history toward a final culmination point. It has nothing at all to do with the cycle of the sun, stars or plants, which, as we have mentioned, are aspects of creation and have no element of divinity in them. Rather than conscious cyclical myths like the mystery cults, Biblical religion is consciously *historical* and *linear*. It manifests in history toward an ultimate goal. Dr. James B. Jordan has noted this well in his recent commentary on Daniel: “[E]ach new covenant in the Bible is more glorious than the one before it. This fact stands in opposition to all the ‘dying and rising’ myths of paganism, which only assert the return of an endless cycle, and bring about no change in history.”⁶

The cyclical pointlessness of the mysteries was not lost on the Church Fathers. One writer, Minucius Felix, ridiculed the Egyptian cult of Isis on this account. In that mystery religion, the drama was played out around the death of the goddess Isis’ son, Horus, who was murdered by his brother Set, hacked to pieces, and scattered all over the land. Isis wails as she treks around hunting her son’s body parts like Easter eggs, until they all are found—all of this to symbolize the death of the sun at winter and the rise of longer days toward the spring until the equinox, every year. Looking at the futility of such a religion represented by Isis’ yearly hunt, Minucius laughs, “[T]hey do not cease year by year either to lose what they find, or to find what they lose. Is it not ridiculous either to grieve for what you worship, or to worship that over which you grieve?” (*Octavius*, Chapter 21).

Metzger on the Mysteries

Anyone wishing to study the lack of parallels in more detail should consult my book, or see the paper by the late Princeton New Testament textual scholar Bruce Metzger, “Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity,”⁷ which

is free online.⁸ The Metzger article, while being thorough, and the product of a top-notch, world-renowned scholar, does suffer from being written in turgid academic prose. For this reason I have put all the information and main points of Metzger's work into plain language in Chapter 7 of *Manifested in the Flesh*.

One of the most important conclusions Metzger reaches is the distinction between what he calls a *genetic* (source) parallel, and an *analogous* (apparent) parallel. A genetic parallel is one which has arisen through direct influence in history, whereas an analogous parallel is only a mere resemblance manufactured by the human mind. All of the alleged parallels made by the mythicists fall into the analogous category. Since no attempt is even made to document primary sources, no truly historical parallel has yet been shown. Further, since, as I argue in *Manifested*, none of the written myths or references to them that we actually have even exhibit such dependence, therefore it is currently *impossible* to show such a genetic parallel. This impossibility is compounded when we consider the Biblical (both OT and NT) antagonism toward idolatry and the deification of creation.

Christian Evangelism and Spiritual Conquest

Why, then, does the parallel of December 25 ring true? This date is, after all, the very "winter solstice" which the mythicists claim it to be. Why is Jesus tied up with it? Since we are quite sure that Jesus was not born on December 25, and the date is never mentioned in the Bible, let alone the Gospels, we know that it had to have entered Christian *tradition* at a later date. When, exactly, we don't know, but we do have a solid understanding of *why*: it was a method of evangelism in the early church to use the outward form of local pagan religions, empty their pagan meaning, and reinterpret them according to Christian doctrines.

Thus the culture was largely left intact, but the content of the Gospel took over.

There exists ample documentation of this phenomenon in the early church. Entire books have been written about it. It is a shame that the producer of *Z* (like other mythicists) did not research the history before making his extravagant claims. The most common of the Christian historians tell this story. Late Yale historian Roland Bainton explains that converts from pagan religions would tend to see parallels in parts of the Christian faith as well, because they would bring the baggage of the pagan mysteries with them and interpret Christian doctrine by their experience. He writes that they would “tend to think of the resurrection as the rebirth of a nature god, and Easter would become a fertility rite centering on eggs and rabbits.”⁹ He continues,

Against such misreadings the Church was required to be on guard. Her general principle was one of intransigence at the core and flexibility at the periphery. The cardinal doctrines could not be recast, but there was no objection to setting the celebration of the birth of Jesus on December 25, the winter solstice on Julian calendar, the birthday of the sun god Mithras. By setting the Christian festival on the same day, converts from Mithraism were preserved from relapsing on that occasion.¹⁰

Thus the practice was one of pastoral concern for new converts. It was also the mark of the triumph of Christianity over the pagan religions. In remaining immovable in her core doctrines, yet flexible in the outward forms of worship and symbolism, the Church through Christ conquered the surrounding pagan establishments.¹¹

Notes

1. A handy and accessible sourcebook is Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries, A Sourcebook: Sacred Texts of the Mystery Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean World* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).
2. Marvin W. Meyer, "Mysteries," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 721; emphasis is mine.
3. For example, Ezekiel 37 portrays the exiled nation of Jews as "dry bones" which God resurrects "up out of your graves" in order to lead them back into the land of Israel. This prophecy may somehow foreshadow the future death and resurrection of all men, and it certainly shows that Israel had a concept of literal fleshly resurrection, but the immediate context is a metaphor: that of returning from exile being a resurrection. Would our mythicists say this was some solar allegory? The thought is ludicrous.
4. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 69.
5. Guthrie, 69; emphasis is mine.
6. James B. Jordan, *The Handwriting On the Wall: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2007), 81.
7. Bruce Metzger, "Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity," in *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Jewish, and Christian* (Leiden, 1968), 1–24.
8. http://www.frontline-apologetics.com/religions_christianity.html
9. Roland H. Bainton, *Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1960), 33.
10. Roland H. Bainton, *Early Christianity*, 33.
11. For those who wish to pursue a deeper study of evangelism in the early church, consult the fabulous study by Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970).

FOUR

WILD ASTROLOGY VERSUS BIBLICAL THEOLOGY (PART 1)

Early in the movie, after describing sun worship, the zodiac and the alleged mystery religion “saviors,” Z turns to inform us about Jesus. It argues, “First of all, the birth sequence is completely astrological.” Let us explore their supporting claims.

The Wise Men vs. “We Three Kings”

Z informs us that the “three kings” are the three brightest stars in the constellation Orion’s belt, which align with Sirius (the Star in the East) to point to the place of the sun rise (Birth of the Sun). The movie assures us that, “These 3 bright stars are called today what they were called in ancient times: The Three Kings.” Same old problem, however: no sources except for their pet nineteenth-century authors; nothing before 1822. This failure is especially important in this case, because Z, relying on the aforementioned Gerald Massey, claims that the label “the three kings” for the three stars existed “in ancient times.” But Massey gives no “ancient” source for his claim. Z leaves us again with nothing but the bare authority of their unsupported scholars.

One astronomer in South Africa wrote up the issue in his column in a national newspaper, *Die Burger*, asking any of his readers if they knew the origins of the phrase “three kings” as applied to Orion’s belt.¹ The only reply came from a professor who spotted it in the 1933 Afrikaans translation of the Bible,

where it translates what is “Orion” in English translations in Job and Amos. This obviously postdates even the scholars *Z* relies on, so the tradition is still untraced beyond Charles Dupuis in 1822.

After consulting with Dr. Danny Faulkner, Professor of Astronomy/Physics at the University of South Carolina, Lancaster, I checked a comprehensive source for star names: R. H. Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*.² This text reveals the relativism inherent in star names, showing that different times and cultures apply their own names based on aspects of their culture, not the other way around. For example, the alleged “three kings” stars have been known by many names: to the Arabs as “the golden nuts,” “grains” or “spangles,” a “scale-beam,” or even as “vertebrae” in the constellation’s back; to the Chinese a “weighing beam”; to the Romans “*jugula*” (meaning collarbone, throat, or even a slit throat); to the writer Germanicus “*balteus*” (meaning a belt for a sword or weapon); to the early Indians a “three-jointed arrow,” later Indians “rectitude” due to the straightness of the three stars in a line; in one English and German tradition “Jacob’s staff”; to the Norse, Scandinavians, and West Gothlanders simply a “staff”; to Laplanders “Kavela’s sword” or a “tavern”; to the Greenlanders as “the seal hunters.” To seamen it was, “the golden yard-arm”; tradesmen, the “L” or “yard-stick”; some Catholics, “Our Lady’s Wand”; along the Rhine river, “the rake”; and in upper Germany, the “three mowers.”

Finally, after all of this tradition of arbitrary naming, Allen states of the belt, “it is often the Magi, the Three Kings, the Three Marys, or simply the Three Stars.” There is nothing “ancient” about this at all. Due to the nature of all these names, it is safe to assume that the already existent tradition of “Three Kings” became the inspiration, in a Christianized Europe, for naming the three stars after the three kings. There is no evidence anywhere that the phenomenon even worked the other way around. In fact,

Allen tells us that some early moderns went so far as to name the belt after their national heroes: “The University of Leipsic, in 1807, gave to the Belt and the stars in the Sword the new title Napoleon, which a retaliating Englishman offset by Nelson.”³

Perhaps the mythicists will have us deny the existence of Napoleon and Lord Nelson, and say that these famous military men who fill the pages of our history books were nothing more than solar allegories! After all, Orion’s belt *does* hold a *sword* like Napoleon did. This must be a clear military reference on which all of these myths about Waterloo and Trafalgar are based! Quick Acharya, write me a study guide to this one!

Oblivious to their glaring deficiencies, *Z* says that their theory explains why “the Three Kings ‘follow’ the star in the east....” This claim sounds nice, but *Z* is basing it on the familiar hymn “We Three Kings” and not the Scriptures. In the account in Matthew 2:1–12, the wise men travel *from the east*, because they had seen a *star in the east*. They were coming *to Jerusalem* from the east, which means they had to travel *west*. Tell me, please, how does one “follow” a star that is in the east while traveling west? The wise men did in a sense “follow” the star, but only after they arrived at Jerusalem and consulted with Herod. Herod summoned the Old Testament professors of his day, and inquired as to prophecies about the birthplace of the Messiah. He was read Micah 5:2 which some 700 years earlier had revealed Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah. Herod sent the wise men there. It was after they started there with the knowledge of what city they were going to that the star they previously saw in the east *moved* (this is a miracle) and “went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was” (Matt. 2:9). Bethlehem is due south of Jerusalem. Since the point about Orion and Sirius takes place in the eastern sky, this moving star in the south fits nowhere into *Z*’s theory.

Besides this, the whole idea hinges on the notion that there were “Three Kings” in the Gospel narrative, which, there are not. They were not “Three,” and they were not “Kings.” Matthew writes about “*wise men* from the east.” No number is given. Now, the Z crowd has heard this debunk before, so Acharya S herself has produced a video trying to answer those who point out her obvious errors. What is her defense? She argues that even though the Bible doesn’t mention *three* kings, it does mention *three gifts*, and Christian *tradition* follows suit by claiming there were three wise men, and hey!—we’ve got this song called “We Three Kings of Orient Are”!

Thanks to all those new-age yoga techniques, Acharya can make this huge stretch while holding a straight face. The fact is that a reading of something as basic, accessible, and clear as the Catholic Encyclopedia could have cleared this up. It informs us, firstly, that, “No Father of the Church holds the Magi to have been kings.” Secondly, and more to the point of interest, we learn that while some Early Church Fathers did speak of *three* magi (possibly because of the number of gifts), tradition in the Eastern Churches favors twelve (Orion must wear a bigger belt from their view). Early Christian art depicts many different numbers of wise men including 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8, and thus is “no consistent witness.”⁴ You do not have to be a Biblical or historical scholar to learn this simple fact. Common books of Christian art tell us the same info. One such book comments, “The tradition relating to these wise men has altered but consolidated over the centuries: for example, their number varied from two to twelve depending on the era, but fixed on three in the 6th century.”⁵ Another art book elaborates:

Popular Christian tradition has designated them kings, but Matthew—writing in Greek—uses the word ‘magoi’ (Latin ‘magi’). Strictly speaking, this

means that they were Persian priest-astrologers, but the word was also used to designate astrologers who could interpret dreams and omens, who possessed secret knowledge and understood the mysteries of religion. *Matthew does not say that there were three of them.*⁶

Besides all this, if Acharya and Z want to derive the number of wise men from the number of gifts, then by their own admission the number came from something other than the number of stars in Orion's belt. Or should we call the three stars "three gifts" in order for this new explanation to fit better? These mythicists refute their own claims. Let them choose their alleged source for the number of the "kings"—the belt or the gifts—either way they undermine their already flimsy case.

The song "We Three Kings" was not written until 1857, and has captivated many people ever since. I love its haunting melody, but it gets some of its information wrong, which I have just made clear. It does get the direction of travel right, "West-ward leading," but attributes this to the leading of the star, "Following yonder star." If Acharya wants to stake her scholarship on a faulty Victorian paraphrase, let her go ahead. Just don't demand anyone else to respect it.

Getting Serious About Sirius

Z also claims that Sirius was the Star in the East. While Sirius is the brightest star in the night sky, and it is in the eastern part of the sky, it is misleading to claim that "on December 24th," it "aligns with the three brightest stars in Orion's belt." Sirius and Orion's belt are *always* aligned. They are all *fixed* stars, which means that they do not move in relation to each other. They only appear to move *together as a whole* across the sky because of the earth's rotation. If there ever was a time when these already

aligned stars pointed precisely to the sunrise on December 24, it only happened once in about 4400 BC, *and never happened again* (I will discuss the import of this in a moment). To claim that this phenomenon happens every year on December 24 is deceptive and not factual. This may sound like a picky point, but it shows that these propagandists are not more than even beginner-level astronomers. Admittedly, I am, too, but at least I check my facts with academic professionals. Rather than authorities on the subject matter who have handled these issues with expertise, the mythicists are untrained enthusiasts who have uncritically (and in some cases incorrectly) copied what their cultish scholars have told them, and the many assumptions they make to fill in the gaps are standing out.

Notes

1. <http://www.psychohistorian.org/astronomy/3konings.html>
2. Dover edition, 1963. Also available at: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Topics/astronomy/_Texts/secondary/ALLSTA/home.html, accessed July 9, 2008.
3. Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*, 315–316. Available at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Topics/astronomy/_Texts/secondary/ALLSTA/Orion*.html; accessed July 9, 2008.
4. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09527a.htm>
5. Gianni Guadalupi, *The Holy Bible: Places and Stories from the Old and New Testament*, ed. Valerio Manfredi De Fabianis (Vercelli, Italy: White Star Publishers, 2003), 218.
6. Joseph Rhymer, *The Illustrated Life of Jesus Christ* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 24. Compare the scholarly opinions of Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1979), 165–201.

FIVE

WILD ASTROLOGY VERSUS BIBLICAL THEOLOGY (PART 2)

Z constantly embraces false parallels, finding alleged important features of astrology in the Bible as well. Let us examine more of their shocking claims.

Ages: Astrological vs. Biblical

Z claims that “of the many astrological-astronomical metaphors in the Bible, one of the most important has to do with ages,” by which they mean eras of history. Here they try to impose their astrological new-age idea of “ages” onto the Biblical use of the word. They first explain the “precession of the equinoxes,” in which, due to the earth’s wobbling movement around its tilted axis, and against the background of the fixed constellations, the sun rises in an adjacent constellation every 2,150 years. The cycle through the entire twelve signs takes approximately 25,800 years and is called a “Great Year.”¹ They claim that ancient societies called these 2,150-year epochs “ages,” which is true enough, but then the argument gets fuzzy. They then pretend that anywhere the Bible speaks of an “age” that it refers to the same concept as the pagans. This is more “history of religions”-type forcing of parallels. There are literally hundreds of Greek words used in common among all kinds of groups, cults, businesses, governments, etc., throughout history. Are we supposed to link all of them and interpret all of them in the same way? This is an el-

ementary failure of logic. I expect this level of school-work to come home in crayon, and not necessarily inside the lines.

As usual, however, the mythicists' claim actually backfires on them. The use of the word "age" (*aion*) in the classical Greek world reveals that it was employed in about as many ways as we use it today, plus several specialized meanings given by the philosophers in their competing systems.² A study of the use of the word "age" in the New Testament reveals an even more stark contrast between Biblical religion and Z's fun-in-the-sun stuff. For example, the sole verse Z uses as an example is Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Here they point out that the King James translation "world" is bad, and proceed to explain that since the Greek word *aion* there really means "age," Jesus was talking about the Age of Pisces which He initiated. There you go! Their theory is self-confirmed because King Jimmy's boys translated a word wrong. At least until you look up a few more passages.

First, consider the issue of the King James' "mistranslations." If the Z producer was so aware of this, then why did he not choose to use one of the dozens of modern English translations that correctly translates *aion* as "age"? Most modern English translations get the word right in most cases. If Z has such expertise on Bible translation, why hold up one of the few bad instances and pretend to correct it? Guess what? *A thousand New Testament scholars have been ahead of you for decades.* So why not use the good stuff? I suppose it is because a straw man is easier to knock down than a real opponent.

Nevertheless, from a fair study of either the Greek or a more modern New Testament a different picture emerges. In Matthew 12:32, the exact same word *aion* is employed, but the meaning is pinned to a tighter context: "whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the *age*

to come.” Whatever your theory on the meaning of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, it is interesting here that Jesus speaks only of *two* ages: the one that is, and the one that is to come. This will make greater sense in the light of one the more eschatological (end-times) passages. For example, in Matthew 24:3, Jesus’ disciples ask for *signs* of the “end of the *age*.” According to the mythicist theory, Jesus had already ended the Age of Aries, and begun the Age of Pisces with his birth. The previous age had *already ended*, and the current one would not end for another 2,150 years. If Jesus was some astrological sage, he surely would have taught his disciples about this precession. Why would they need *signs* for an “end” that far away when they knew they would not live to see them? On this theory, the Bible makes no sense.

If, however, the disciples were asking about the *end of the Old Covenant age*, then the question and the answer make perfect sense. They were concerned with the ushering in of the Kingdom of God, and the end of the old order, because Jesus had just predicted that the Jewish Temple would be razed to the ground, not one stone left upon another (Matt. 24:2). Then in the same discourse, Jesus introduces another important time-reference word, “generation”: “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34). Taking the uses of “age” in Matthew together, we see a very clear understanding given of an Old age being replaced by a New age based on the *finished* work of Christ, with the judgment of God on the unbelieving old order. The turning point between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the life and work of Jesus. When asked how to expect the “end of the age” or “end of the old covenant age,” Jesus responded that the most Holy site of the Old Covenant order—the Temple—would be destroyed, making it *impossible* for that old system to continue, and that they themselves would see it happen. This is exactly what happened in A.D.

70, when the Roman army invaded Jerusalem, leveled every block of the Temple, and slaughtered a million Jews.

Further NT use of *aion* includes Ephesians 2:7, where God intends to show His people the riches of grace in Christ “in the *ages* to come.” If this were the Age of Pisces, we would expect the grace of Christ in this age only, but here it is for future ages (plural). Clearly, the meaning is not astrological, but very close to the way we use the word today: simply to refer to a general period of long time. In this sense, the Biblical usage is very general and interchangeable with other time-reference words when used generally. Paul engages in this very phenomenon. In the same book, Ephesians, he speaks of the “mystery of Christ” which was not made known “in other generations” (Eph. 3:5). Here the Greek root word is *genea* which usually refers to the reproductive period of a human life or a generation of people living at the same time.

The same author ties the two words together in Colossians 1:26, referring to “the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages [*aion*] and generations [*genea*], but has now been manifested to His saints.” Further, Paul again refers to the mystery which had been “kept secret for long ages past” in Romans 16:25, but here pairs *aion* with *chronos* (time or period). It is almost as if Paul is purposefully using the words in various ways so as to make any charge of relying on mystery religions or Greek astrological thought (which he was aware of) impossible. By placing *aion* in many contexts and paired with many other words, he shows a use of various synonyms typical of a writer, and makes it clear that *aion* is not among the technical vocabulary necessary to his beliefs. He avoids the possibility that his language can be confused with astrological technical terms.

It is clear, then, that when talking specifically, the Bible sees *two* ages, Old and New, not many; otherwise the Bible uses the word “age” in a very general way like we would today. There is no

idea in the Bible that anyone ushered in new ages based on the procession of the equinoxes. Rather, the Bible once again separates itself in principle from the pagan practices.

A Fishy Age

Jesus, Z says, ushered in the Age of Pisces, which is symbolized by two fish, and this can be confirmed because the Gospels so frequently talk about fish: Jesus fed the 5,000 with fish, He befriended fishermen, He made them fishers of men, etc. And don't forget the "Jesus fish" on the backs of some peoples' cars! Z taunts, "Little do they know what it actually means. It is a Pagan astrological symbol for the Sun's Kingdom in the Age of Pisces."

Little do they know who really knows what. The reason fish appear in the Gospels so often is that fish was a staple of everyday life, just like bread and olive oil and wine. In stories about conducting business, agrarian life and feeding people, we would grow suspicious if they did *not* mention fish often. Not only was fish a staple, but Galilee, where Jesus and disciples lived, served as a main center of the fishing industry at the time. New Testament scholar D. A. Carson notes this: "Galilee supplied the fish for all of the country except for the coast, and it was brought into Jerusalem through the Fish Gate (*cf.* Ne. 3:3; Zp. 1:10)."³ That Jerusalem had a designated gate for the fishing trade dating all the way back to the time of Nehemiah (around 450 B.C.) shows that the astrological interpretation of the Bible is artificial, imposed and out of place. Fish were vital to life long before the Age of Pisces, and if the Gospels had been written 500 years prior, they would still have mentioned fish just as often.

So of course some of the disciples were fishermen! It was a very common and necessary trade which the Gospels portray in a very plain and historical (not astrological) manner. These disciples were *businessmen*: Peter owned his own boat (Luke

5:3), and Zebedee, the father of James and John, was successful enough to hire servants (Mark 1:20). True to this fact, the Gospel of John—the only Gospel written by one of the fishermen—uses a special Greek word for “fish” (*osparion*) designating “cooked fish... the form in which much of the trade would be conducted” (John 6:9–11; 21:9, 10, 13).⁴

The fact that Jesus would make these guys “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17) has nothing to do with the Age of Pisces, and much to do with Jesus’ wonderful ability to translate his message into the language of those who heard Him. In this case, the disciples who were fishermen would become apostles and evangelists—recruiters—for the Kingdom, casting the net of the Gospel to draw in spiritual fish which are produced and nourished by the sea of living water. Furthermore, this aspect of Jesus’ ministry was *prophesied* using the same “fishing” metaphor some 500 years prior (Ezek. 47:1, 9–10). So, once again, the Bible explains itself, and the astrological nonsense is Z’s imagination.

As for the “Jesus fish,” we must be sure to relate the whole story. The symbol is not important because of what it *looks like* but because of the Greek *word* it stands for: *ICHTHUS*, meaning “fish.” The word was used as an acrostic (each letter representing a word). The code was this: *Iesus Christos Theou Uiou Sater*, which means, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. It is not uncommon to find the word written with each letter imposed on top of each other, resulting in a symbol that looks like a wheel with eight spokes.⁵ While we are not sure when the symbol was first used, it is referenced at least by the Church Fathers Clement of Alexandria (*The Instructor*, 3:11) and Tertullian (*On Baptism*, 1), which puts it as early as the later Second Century A.D. As the reader can see, the acrostic deals with the person of Jesus Christ and has no reference to an astrological age, or to anything about the equinoxes.


A Big Astrological Blunder

Besides, all the talk about “ages” and the precession of the equinoxes does not necessarily help our mythicists, but rather presents quite a problem for them. Their own favorite source, Gerald Massey, informs us that the alleged “three kings” of Orion’s belt and Sirius aligned with sunrise at the vernal equinox *during the age of Taurus*. In the very source they give, Massey claims, “Orion was the star of the Three Kings which arose to show the time and place of birth in heaven some 6,000 years ago, when the vernal equinox was in the sign of the bull” (which sign is Taurus).⁶ This means that this phenomenon of the three stars of Orion with Sirius aligning and pointing perfectly to the sunrise *only occurred once* and that *in the age of Taurus*—6,000 years ago! Do the math. Due to the precession of the equinoxes the sun had passed through and left Taurus, passed through Aries, and had entered Pisces by the time of Christ. Therefore, Orion’s three stars would have been basically irrelevant, if even visible before sunrise, to the dominant solar “age” for the Gospel writers and to the advent of Jesus Christ.

This causes quite a conundrum for Z’s theory. If the Gospel writers were so keen about astrology as to weave into their narrative these alleged allegories about stars, then why were they 4,000 years behind the times? If they had so much astrological knowledge, how did they not realize this huge disparity? If Jesus was supposedly ushering in the Age of Pisces, why did they write the narrative for the Age of Taurus—*two Ages or 4,000 years behind them?* Either Matthew was a highly astrologically educated buffoon, or his Gospel has nothing whatsoever to do with this astrological nonsense.

The Virgin and the House of Bread

Z also tries to convince us that the constellation Virgo is the Virgin Mary, that the name “Mary” comes from the ancient symbol for Virgo, which was an altered-looking “m” (and a few other star saviors have mothers with “M” names), and that the constellation is also known as “the House of Bread,” which literally translates to *Bethlehem* in Hebrew. What about these parallels?

First, the symbol, while looking somewhat like an “M” in script, probably has no connection to the letter M, since, like the sun-son pun, it doesn’t work in necessary ancient languages or hieroglyphics—only English (though Greek is an exception). Besides, the mothers’ names in several of the myths don’t follow the pattern—Horus’ mother was Isis, Dionysus’ mother was Semele, Attis’ mother was Cybele—which indicates that the few who do happen to start with the same letter are merely coincidental. R. H. Allen explains that the symbol  most likely derives from Παρ, an abbreviation of the Greek word *Parthenos* meaning “virgin.”⁷ This is what the constellation is named, after all; and that it is in Greek makes even more sense if the claim is right that the symbols are early modern simplifications of ancient Greek pictures.⁸

While the Hebrew name “Bethlehem” does mean “house of bead,” it has nothing to do with astrology, and everything to do, once again, with Biblical theology. Firstly, Bethlehem was the prophesied place for the Messiah’s birth (Mic. 5:2) as we’ve seen already, and this was written 700 years before the Gospels. So, the Gospels didn’t just grab some trendy astrological idea and write a Gospel around it, they relied on the Old Testament as usual. Secondly, Bethlehem in Judea just happens to be the place where Rachel, the wife of Jacob (later renamed “Israel”), was buried after she died (Gen. 35:19). It is worth noting that one of the mothers of old covenant Israel is laid to rest where the

mother of New Israel (who is Jesus) gives birth. Moreover, it is fitting that the city where Jesus—the bread of life (John 6:48), and thus the new Mana-Word of God (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3)—was born should be called the House of Bread.

Furthermore, I have not been able to find any ancient source that calls the constellation Virgo “the House of Bread.” This is another typical unverified claim by the Z guys. They do give two sources—as usual, Gerald Massey, and Freke and Gandy—but even these sources don’t say anything near what Z claims. Freke and Gandy simply talk about the name Bethlehem, and don’t even mention Virgo. Gerald Massey mentions that Virgo is normally depicted with a sheaf of wheat in her hand (which she is) and uses this grain of evidence to link the astral virgin to Bethlehem. This is a far cry from saying that Virgo is herself “known” as “the house of bread”; and since Massey shrinks the claim back down from an alleged “house” to a single sheaf, we can start to unravel this great mystery.

Why a virgin in the sky with a sheaf of wheat? Because the constellation Virgo becomes dominant in late summer to early fall, and she therefore ushers in the time of harvest. The ancient star watchers tied her, logically, to the harvest season. But why a virgin? It was not uncommon at all, perhaps even routine, for young maidens to be involved in agricultural work. The Bible portrays this (Ruth 2:2–3; Song 1:5–6). I have no idea why this could not be a very common image used to mark one of the constellations. It later grew from this, however, to the worship of a “goddess of grain” or “mother of the harvest” who was also classed as a fertility goddess. These later developments are obviously pagan and have no link to the Gospel story at all. The Biblical theology explains it too well.

A Tale of Two “Twelves”

Z goes on to claim that “probably the most obvious of all the astrological symbolism around Jesus regards the 12 disciples,” which, the movie states, are “the 12 constellations of the Zodiac, which Jesus, being the Sun, travels about with.” Why anyone would consider this “the most obvious” of such evidence I don’t know—I’ve never heard it until now. Were it so obvious you would expect it to be widely claimed. Further, what makes it so “obvious”? The only similarity between the two is the number twelve, for which examples can be found anywhere. The most “obvious” of these, to any “real” researcher is the twelve tribes of Israel. Since Jesus was fulfilling the Old Covenant, and was instituting the New Covenant, He was choosing the “New” twelve tribes. Jesus himself said that the disciples would sit as judges over the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28). This is a genuine historical parallel which is reinforced in the book of Revelation, when these two twelves are joined together in New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12–14). Why stretch for such wild parallels in the stars when the Bible is self-consistent in its symbolism?

Biblical theology needs no help from the astrologers that it despises anyway. The movie even notices that “the number 12 is replete throughout the bible,” but then misses the impact of that fact and concludes arbitrarily, “This text has more to do with astrology than anything else.” If the Bible contains the number twelve throughout, why go *outside the Bible* to interpret what significance “12 disciples” may have? To do so betrays a desire to impose a non-Biblical meaning onto the Biblical text.

Joseph, Jesus and “Prototypes”

The writers of Z display just how deeply their ignorance goes when they try to leverage the parallel of Joseph and Jesus. There

are uncanny parallels between the lives of Joseph (the patriarch, not the husband of Mary) and Jesus, in fact, *many* more than *Z* relates. *Z* claims that this has to do with what they call “transference, of one character’s attributes to a new character.” But in stating this fact the movie says nothing at all about dependence on astrological sources and actually begins to scratch the surface of *Biblical theology*. The writers believe they are deconstructing Biblical religion when in reality they are pointing to the basis of it. These guys are so clueless that they are actually reaching into the Bible to interpret the Bible—thus exemplifying the point I am making—and don’t even realize that doing so refutes their own message.

This is how it works: throughout the Bible God reveals, gradually in shadow form, different aspects of the coming Savior and His work. Theologians have known this for millennia, beginning with the apostle Paul who calls such shadowy bits of revelation “types” (from the Greek word *tupoi*, which is translated “examples” in most English versions; 1 Cor. 10:6). There is an entire field of theology called “Typology” which is dedicated to this feature of Scripture.⁹ All of the shadows point in some way to Christ, who is their final and complete fulfillment. A “type” literally refers to something which bears the image of a stamp, in the way a *typewriter* uses ink to express “type” onto a page. Scripture then refers to Christ as the “express image” (from the Greek word *character* only used in Heb. 1:3) of God. Christ Himself is the stamp which impresses His image on aspects of revelation, and this is why we couldn’t finally understand prophecy until He came in His fullness. Ultimately, this feature of Biblical theology derives from the fact that we are created in God’s image and we understand Him through images, Jesus Christ being the master image of all.

Even a casual look throughout Scripture reveals this feature everywhere. Joseph was the son betrayed by Judah, rejected and given over to gentile slave-masters by his brethren, who was “resurrected” from a pit, grew famous among the gentiles, and in whom his brethren must trust in order to be saved. This is just one case. Boaz (from the book of Ruth) is the wealthy “Kinsman Redeemer” who purchases the chance to redeem his chosen gentile bride, just as Jesus gave up the riches of heaven (Phil. 2:5–8) to redeem His chosen bride, the church. Solomon was the wisest and richest king in the world, to whom other rulers gave their wealth and traveled to get wisdom from—a glimpse of the even wealthier and wiser King of Kings to come, to whom other kings will submit their kingdoms and crowns. Examples are endless: there is Samson the mighty judge, Joshua the captain of the Lord’s host who leads his people into the Promised Land, Abel the shepherd who was murdered by his brother, Melchizedek the eternal priest, David who mortally wounded the head of the scaly giant (recalling Gen. 3:15), and Daniel who was cast into a pit with the lion (devil) that could not touch him, and he was “resurrected.”

When it comes to foreshadowing Jesus—and this is what I have argued all along—the Old Testament is the place to look! When Z says that Joseph was a “prototype” for Jesus, they are not far from the truth, but they unfortunately fail to see the true import of the fact. Biblical theology needs no help from the astrologers; it is self-consistent in its interpretation and history.

Notes

1. For an in-depth study of world mythology in the light of this astronomical phenomenon, see Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet’s Mill* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1969). The authors of this book even anticipate the *Zeitgeist* argument (59-60), but make little of it, later showing some understanding (unlike *Zeitgeist*) of the “normal

transforming influence of the Church” (114). They discerningly see the phenomenon as having an effect on pagan religion and world literature instead of Biblical religion which is self-consistent.

2. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New testament, Volume 1* (10vol), trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 197–198.
3. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 74.
4. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 75.
5. Wikipedia has a good picture: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Ephesus_IchthysCrop.jpg ; and a good article on the matter: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ichthys#cite_note-0
6. Gerald Massey, *The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ* (San Diego, CA: The Book Tree, 2000 [1887]), 13. Posted at <http://www.zeitgeistmovie.com/starmore.htm> , accessed July 8, 2008. As a side note, this sentence does not even make sense: Orion is not a “star” but a constellation.
7. Allen, *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*, 463.
8. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac> ; accessed July 9, 2008.
9. A classic work on the subject is Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* (2 vols.) (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900). Also see the helpful and compact Kevin J. Conner, *Interpreting the Symbols and Types* (Portland, OR: Bible Temple Publishing), and the exhaustive methodology R. M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1981) which should be studied, among others.

SIX

MAD MYTHOLOGY VERSUS THE BIBLE

While the refutations in the previous chapter have taken quite some space to elaborate, Z was really just laying out the most striking part of their case, which then they intend to snowball with a flood of parallels and background sources from which they think Biblical religion has been stolen. They begin to touch on several well-known topics of the Christian faith, and present alleged “plagiarism” that they claim the Biblical writers committed. All of this pushing toward their thesis that, “Jesus was the Solar Deity of the Gnostic Christian sect, and like all other Pagan gods, he was a mythical figure.... Christianity, along with all other theistic belief systems, is the fraud of the age.” The following is a critique of their very near-sighted claims and inept scholarship. Let the reader determine who the real fraud is.

A Deluge of Flood Stories

Z tells us that the story of Noah’s Ark and the Flood is not unique: “The concept of a Great Flood is ubiquitous throughout the ancient world, with over 200 different cited claims in different periods and times.” It is nice to see the Z gang finally catching up to Christian scholars on an issue. We have been pointing out the world-wide phenomenon of flood stories for decades now, trying to make people realize that the flood actually happened! Now Z comes along and tries to use this fact *against* us? These guys are so eager to find parallels that they haven’t stopped to think:

sometimes parallels may actually work in *support* of the Bible, not against it. After all, if there really was a world-wide flood thousands of years ago, finding multiple traditions of the *same story* all over the world is *exactly what we should expect*.¹

This is what we do find. Almost all these flood traditions record a universal flood in which only a tiny remnant of the population is saved. Some add the building of an ark and saving of the animals. Some recall the ark landing on a mountain; some the sending out of birds, etc. It only stands to reason that a few older legends, especially ones that remained geographically close to and close in language, might just have a similar tradition to that of the Bible.

This phenomenon is exactly what we find with the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Yes, there is some evidence that it predates the writing of the Old Testament, but the facts of this claim are not as well known as the mythicists pretend. *Z* states bluntly that the *Epic* “was written in 2600 b.c.,” but this is very misleading. The only full account of the *Epic* was found on *Assyrian* clay tablets dating to around 650 B.C., much later than the time of Moses.² The great confusion comes from the Sumerian Kings List, an ancient document which lists an historical king named Gilgamesh around 2150 B.C., but there is no certainty of an historical connection between the two. There are earlier versions of flood accounts which scholars suppose the Assyrian author used as sources: these include the Akkadian Atrahasis Epic (1600 B.C., which predates Moses), and the Sumerian story of Ziusudra (1750 B.C.). Both of these flood sources are fragmentary: the relevant portion of the older Sumerian text is small and unclear, and the Akkadian story is in pieces but enough to show similarities with the Gilgamesh Epic.³

Later poets and editors compiled and expanded information to create the Gilgamesh epic in its later form. One of the

fullest of these editions comes from Sin-leqe-unninni, who lived around 1200 B.C. (after Moses). It is in this post-Moses account where the flood account appears more fully, near the end of the story (Tablet 11 of 12). Late Harvard Professor of Assyriology William Moran wrote, "It is generally conceded that the Flood was not part of the original epic, which may have referred to it, but only briefly."⁴ Therefore, it is not clear, it is even doubtful that any Sumerian account existed which Moses could have borrowed from. It looks more like there was a general knowledge of the flood as an historical event common to all ancient traditions, and then after the inspired Biblical account appeared, editors used it as a source for their literary additions to the developing *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

So, it not surprising that the *Epic* contains many details that the Biblical account has; but this does not necessitate that Gilgamesh be a *source* for the Bible. Keep in mind that *both* accounts relate something that happened centuries before them, and thus *both* could be based on separate oral traditions of the same event. In the case of the Biblical account, we believe that God preserved the *true* story of the flood through Moses, whereas pieces of the same story were preserved and corrupted into a mythological adventure tale by the nearby Akkadians.⁵

Sargon of Akkad vs. Moses

Z wants to persuade us that the birth story of Moses was plagiarized from that of Sargon of Akkad. Sargon conquered and ruled Mesopotamia in the 2200s B.C., around 800 years before Moses. We are told by Z that Sargon's birth story includes being placed by his mother in a reed basket and sent adrift in a river later to be picked up and raised by a royal mid-wife, and he grew to become King. This earlier story, we are expected to believe, was later stolen for the Moses account.

But the movie leaves out some key facts. First, it should be noted that there are multiple ancient accounts of women leaving their babies to fate in this manner, not just these two.⁶ It was not necessarily an exceptional type of event. In fact, as Dr. R. Alan Cole comments, “The shallows of a river near any Asian village would be the ideal place today to expose a baby and ensure its being found by the women who came to wash clothes or prepare food.”⁷ This rings especially true in a civilization without orphanages or “child protective service.”

The movie also leaves out perhaps the most important fact of all about Sargon’s alleged infancy adventure: his “birth story” comes from an Assyrian artifact inscribed in the 700’s B.C. which *pretends* to be his autobiography.⁸ How Sargon wrote his own biography 1500 years after his death, Z does not attempt to say. The text is an obvious work of fiction of a much later date, and since it shows up *after* the life of Moses by some 700 years or so, it is not very likely to be a source for the story of Moses’ birth. Contrary to Z’s claim that the Moses story was “lifted directly” from that of Sargon, the date difference makes it more likely that the Assyrian author lifted it from the Hebrew story, or from another more ancient source.

Why none of the mythicists, including Z, who allude to the story of Sargon think to look up the date of their source is itself a mystery. Perhaps they have conveniently left that part out, knowing that it would end their charade. Nevertheless, such big names as Joseph Campbell (whose work in mythology inspired *Star Wars*) have told the tale as a parallel to Moses without bothering to show any historical scholarship at all.⁹ The only writer I’ve seen so far who at least does not pretend that the *source* predates Moses is the old great-grandmother of metaphysical numbskullery herself, Madame Blavatsky. I was so delighted when I saw that the Z script

footnoted her. I just knew they couldn't produce the whole thing without referencing the old queen of frauds at least once!

Madame Helene Petrov Blavatsky was a first rate con-artist and dabbler in every subject of arcanery or occultism ever imagined. She wrote incessantly, most of which was plagiarized. In later editions, a sympathetic editor added footnotes to her plagiarisms to make them look like intended scholarship. She was exposed as a fraud several times perpetrating classic Victorian-era spiritualistic "ghost" appearances and the like. The atheist journalist H. L. Mencken blasted her as "a fraud pure and simple—a fraud deliberate, unconscionable and unmitigated," and of her patrons he said, "they were insatiable gluttons for punishment. The more she was exposed, the more firmly they believed her." That her quack doctrine continues to attract followers turns men of reason into cynics, as Mencken illustrates: "One Blavatsky tells far more about the human race than a whole herd of psychologists. Her works offer massive proof that, even in the midst of what seems to be civilization, Neanderthal Man is still with us."¹⁰

Blavatsky's two major works are *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*, which, much like *Z*, purports to unlock all of religion with the "mastery key" of the Egyptian goddess Isis, and is the most thick, turgid, wandering intellectual labyrinth a mind could ever venture. This was her assessment, too, as she had the humility to admit four years later when she reviewed her own work. She said that *Isis* "had no system to it; and that it looks in truth, as remarked by a friend, as if a mass of independent paragraphs having no connection with each other, had been well shaken up in a waste-basket, and then taken out at random and—published."¹¹

Both works (about 1300 pages each) relate her argument concerning Sargon. Despite having used her as a source, *Z* fails to grasp what she is actually saying. She is not arguing (as does *Z*) that the

Sargon story predates Moses himself, as no one who knows the facts would. She realizes that the fragment which the Sargon story comes from dates to the Assyrian empire around 700 B.C. Her argument is that Ezra, the scribe of the Old Testament (around 440 B.C.), knew the Sargon story and stole it, editing it *into* the Moses account. With such an argument she was following the naturalistic “Higher Criticism” of the Bible that was popular at the time. The argument from those critics always has been that the Old Testament was edited by multiple authors down through the ages, the most recent and most drastic of these “redactions” being carried out by Ezra the scribe after the Jews returned from exile (Ezra 7:6, 25; Neh. 8:1). Despite this being a fad in unbelieving scholarship for a time, not a single shred of evidence has ever been produced to support such creative unbelief. Not to mention the fact that *Z* and the other mythicists do not even notice the “higher criticism” aspect of the Sargon claim. They march ahead with their faulty theory thinking they have a pre-Moses story. They have nothing of the sort, but they don’t let facts get in the way of their movie.

Moses the Lawgiver

They take the effort to remind us that Moses was not the only lawgiver in history, as if any Bible scholar claims this. This is quite well known. *Z*, however, wants to convince us that these lawgivers somehow form a single mythology from which all the alleged lawgivers are taken, including Moses. The movie points to the names of these legendary lawmen: Minos of Crete, Manu of India, and Mises in Egypt. See the evidence piling up: **Manu, Minos, Mises, ...Moses**. They’re all “M” names, so they must have a common source!

Perhaps, however, the most famous of all the ancient lawgivers is Hammurabi, whose name does not start with “M,” and who was not a mythological character, and thus *Z* conveniently leaves

him out of their brief list. Yet, the Code of Hammurabi has been the most prominent artifact of the last century when looking for parallels to the Mosaic Code. While no actual dependence upon Hammurabi has been shown for Moses, and Moses far exceeds the Babylonian king in valuing human life, the similarities between the two argue for the historicity of Mosaic account over against the mythology of Manu and the like.

Beside, some of these mythological accounts come well after Moses. Manu of India, supposedly the most ancient of the law-givers, did not even provide a divine law code, but a collection of oral traditions. These were not codified until at the earliest, 300 B.C., over a thousand years after Moses. True, the oral traditions may have existed long before, but we have no record of them. The traditions of men handed down in the *Manusmriti* (Laws of Manu) are considered inferior to the divine laws allegedly recorded in the Hindu *Vedas*.

Menes of Egypt allegedly founded the First Dynasty of Egypt around 3000 B.C., though no archaeological evidence exists of him. The Greek historian Herodotus, writing much later in the 400s B.C., mentions “Min” whom he credits with diverting the Nile in order to build the city of Memphis. Later writers credit Menes as the first conqueror and unifier of the Egyptian lands, and as a “law-giver,” though his name is not mentioned in the artifacts of the era which rather lists Narmer as the first ruler; nor does anything of Menes’ alleged law exist in written form.

There is a vast difference in the character of the laws of Moses versus anything mentioned of these alleged rivals. Renowned Old Testament scholar R. K. Harrison notes that the Mosaic law “has a distinct character that attests to its superiority over the legal codes of neighboring peoples.”¹² In so many pagan systems, the alleged divine source of the law was meant as a way to get the people’s respect for the *king* who was supposedly divine, and who

pronounced the law, but ancient Israel originally *had no king*. The divine source of the law glorified God only, and was a way to bring divine wisdom to all human affairs. This is why Mosaic law excelled everything else: “Its resolute monotheism could demand devotion towards God *and man* in a way that does not occur in other contemporary legislation.”¹³ In other words, the Mosaic law directs us how to view Sovereignty—the fact that God alone rules, that all people should *be holy* like He is (not just the king), and that all people are to be held equally accountable before the same law, *even the rulers* who pronounce the law.

Setting the terms of Who’s in charge, and calling for all people to rise to a higher morality, sets the foundation for just and equitable laws between individuals. In other words, the Mosaic system of law lays the groundwork for a free society, something neither godless systems nor divine-ruler dictatorships can guarantee. This is why the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America includes these famous words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their *Creator* with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” This tradition began with the nature of the Mosaic law, which “assigned a greater value to human life, demanded higher respect for the honor of womanhood, and allotted more dignity to the position of the slave than is to be found in any of the legal codes of the other nations in the Near East.”¹⁴

Just look what kind of revolting nonsense these alleged divine lawgivers legislated. The Laws of Manu supported the oppressive caste system infamous in Indian history. This system laid the foundations of prejudice and mistreatment of hundreds of millions of people over centuries, especially of the so-called “untouchables”—the lowest and most abjectly subordinated of the five castes. Unlike the attention to the poor that Moses and

Christ give, Manu classed his pagan priests and scholars in the highest exclusive caste possible.

As if this weren't enough, Manu's laws state that Manu was the father of all mankind, the first ruler of the earth and head of all current races. From his laws, the aforementioned Madame Blavatsky derived her theory of the races of mankind, alleging that the Aryan race represents the pure race of Manu, and that the Semitic race and religion a corrupted offshoot of later history. Hundreds of pages of racist pejorative against Judeo-Christian religion fill her *The Secret Doctrine*, claiming the inferiority of Hebrew teaching as "marking its national features and the idiosyncratic defects that characterize many of the Jews to this day—gross realism, selfishness, and sensuality."¹⁵ This Manu-inspired, racist Aryan theory was picked up by the early proto-Nazi Guido von List, and then seethed throughout underground German culture in the early 1900s. It formed the basis of Nazism and Hitler's racist atrocities.¹⁶

Menes of Egypt allegedly founded the First Dynasty of Egypt around 3000 B.C., though nothing of his law exists today. Yet artifacts show evidence of human sacrifice during the reign of Djer, within a few years of Menes' supposed rule. In some kind of odd irony, the Egyptian historian Manethos (writing in the 200s B.C.) tells us that Menes was killed in the mouth of a Hippo and carried off—a fitting end when you learn that the Egyptians worshipped the Hippo as the goddess of pregnancy, part of a system of nature-worship which Menes is credited with siring. I think it was nature's revenge of the housewives.

Minos of Crete allegedly received his laws from Zeus. What kind of society did he promote? Aristotle tells us that Minos' Cretan constitution called for *communism*—all food was held in common and rationed according to the ruler's decision. Furthermore, women lived in segregation so they couldn't produce "too

many” children; and to fulfill the unmet sexual desires that this law obviously would produce, Minos encouraged homosexual companionship among the segregated men.¹⁷

In none of these alleged examples do we find anything like the law of Moses. No similarity exists except for the letter “M” in their names. Yet, closer in content to Moses than all of these alleged lawgivers we discover the Code of Hammurabi, who has no similar story, and whose name does *not* start with “M,” all showing the pointlessness of claiming historical influence based on the first letter of a name. Of course, basing an argument on a similarity in name is a spurious practice at best; in this case almost laughable. If anyone, just to make a random example, discredited the existence of baseball legend “Yogi” Berra on the argument that his name resembles the cartoon character “Yogi Bear,” we would certainly not classify that person as “smarter than the average bear.”

The Ten Commandments vs. The Book of the Dead

After these bogus parallels, Z informs us that the Ten Commandments come directly from the Egyptian “Book of the Dead,” an ancient popular work of fiction giving to the deceased directions for the afterlife. This originally confused and jumbled collection of stories and sayings was not systematized and codified until much later than Moses, at which time it was also significantly added to. No copy of the original intact version exists, only variously dated fragments which scholars have placed together. Since no solid dates have been arrived at for the piece of the text in question, the claim of Z that the Ten Commandments “are taken outright from Spell 125” displays nothing but unscholarly haste towards a dogmatic conclusion.

The “Spell” in question does, at it is currently published, contain such moral ideas as found in the Ten Commandments,

but one must wonder why, if Moses thought so highly of the book of the dead, didn't he take *all* of its laws, such as "I have not caught fish with bait made of the bodies of the same kind of fish," "I have not acted with undue haste," "I have never raised my voice," or "I have not carried away the khenfu cakes from the Spirits of the dead." Perhaps Moses liked to use khenfu cakes for fishing bait.

Nevertheless, the dating of the fragments and the absurdity aside, it should be obvious that the commands which are similar in the two texts are extremely general and almost universally held as moral statutes. The idea that Moses needed to copy the Egyptians for these sayings hardly makes even an item of interest, let alone a stout case. Rather, Moses provided the divine account of laws that should be engraved upon every person's heart already, and some of which naturally had been written in other places and times.

Supposedly, ancient Egyptian funeral workers placed texts of the Book of the Dead into coffins, or painted the text on the outside, so that when the deceased got to the afterlife, he would know the right things to say to the gods of the dead. Why this dead person didn't study spiritual things while alive is beyond me, but now imagine him or her standing before their god on judgment day, knees trembling, the time come to say this long litany of sins they allegedly have never committed: "Um ...excuse me Osiris, while I consult the notes my mortician sent with me." This is why the list does not include the line, "Hail Osiris, I have never cheated on my homework!"

Besides, if Moses really had copied the most well-known portion of the Old Covenant from one of the most popular texts in all of Egypt, don't you think someone would have noticed *long ago*? Wouldn't we have heard about this sometime before the nineteenth century?

Notes

1. This is the argument of the pioneering work on the Flood, John C. Whitcomb and Henry C. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1961), 48–54.
2. Jonathan Sarfati, “Noah’s Flood and the Gilgamesh Epic,” in *Answers in Genesis*, March 29, 2004; available at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2004/0329gilgamesh.asp> ; accessed July 11, 2008.
3. Nozomi Osanai, “A Comparative Study of the Flood Accounts in the Gilgamesh Epic and Genesis” (Master’s Thesis, Wesley Biblical Seminary, no date), Chapter 1; available at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/flood/ch1.asp> ; accessed July 11, 2008.
4. Quoted in Osanai, “Noah’s Flood and the Gilgamesh Epic,” Chapter 1.
5. For further criticism of alleged flood parallels, see K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 423–426; and K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1966), 90, where he provides excellent critique and ample sources for more advanced study.
6. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 78.
6. R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 57–58.
8. George Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874* (New York: Scribner Armstrong and Co., 1875), 224–225. See also the more recent and thorough discussion by James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 137.
9. Joseph Campbell, *The hero with a Thousand Faces*, The Bollingen Series XVII (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973 [1949]), 321. Another source-less reference to Sargon is found in C. W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology*, trans. E. B. Garside (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1952), 303–304.
10. H. L. Mencken, “Hooey from the Orient,” in *A Mencken Chrestomathy*, ed. H. L. Mencken (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 355–357.

11. H. P. Blavatsky, "Appendix: My Books," in *Isis Unveiled: A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, 2 vols. (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1988 [1877]), 2:45.
12. R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times: A Social, Political, and Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 149.
13. R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times: A Social, Political, and Cultural Context*, 149.
14. R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times: A Social, Political, and Cultural Context*, 149.
15. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1977 [1888]), 2:470.
16. See Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).
17. Aristotle, *Politics*, 10, 3.

SEVEN

TRIUMPH OF THE EARLY APOLOGISTS

In one of its most tiring and pitiful arguments *Z* brings up the alleged admission by Justin Martyr of the similarity of the Christian religion to its pagan counterparts. In a quotation that looks as if it also were lifted directly from the Flemming's earlier anti-Christian film, we, for the hundredth time, hear Justin stripped of his context. The quotation is this: "When we say that Jesus Christ, our teacher, was produced without sexual union, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into Heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem Sons of Jupiter" (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Chapter 21).¹ I have previously responded at length to this charge against the Early Church Fathers.² By repeating this quotation from Justin Martyr yet once more, these mythicists prove nothing except that they haven't actually studied Justin Martyr.

Is Justin really giving up the game here by admitting that the Greek mythological religions already had the elements of Christianity? Hardly. If so, why would he bother to write a defense of the faith? Rather, Justin, merely *two paragraphs later* in the same work, declares the rest of his intent:

And that this may now become evident to you—
(firstly) that whatever we assert in conformity with
what has been taught us by Christ, and *by the prophets*
who preceded Him, are alone true, and are *older*
than all the writers who have existed; that we claim to

be acknowledged, *not because we say the same things as these writers said, but because we say true things*: and (secondly) that *Jesus Christ is the only proper Son* who has been begotten by God, being His Word and first-begotten, and power; and, becoming man according to His will, He taught us these things for the conversion and restoration of the human race: and (thirdly) that before He became a man among men, some, influenced by the demons before mentioned, related beforehand, through the instrumentality of the poets, those circumstances as having really happened, which, having fictitiously devised, they narrated, in the same manner as they have caused to be fabricated the scandalous reports against us of infamous and impious actions, of which there is neither witness nor proof—we shall bring forward the following proof (*First Apology*, Chapter 23).

Notice that Justin made three claims: *First*, that the doctrine of Christ derives purely from the Old Testament prophecies about Him, which are older than all the Greek myths; *Secondly*, Christ is the only person who has fulfilled all of these prophecies and can thus truly be called the Son of God; and *Thirdly*, that any similarities in the Greek myths are the work of deceiving spirits, to which Justin everywhere in his works attributes *all false religion*.

This is important, because the mythicists pretend that the Church Fathers were so taken off-guard by the mysteries that they simply responded in knee-jerk fashion, “The Devil did it!” As with their ignorance about sun-worship, these guys don’t realize the enormous importance of the Old Testament record, and yet it is just this ancient record which Justin argues predates the Greco-Roman religions, and provides ample material for the devil to imitate and distort.

In the quotation I provide above, Justin refers to “the following proof.” Lost on the mythicists is the fact that Justin spends the next forty-five chapters fulfilling this promise. He lists prophecies of Christ, beginning with Moses, whom he says “was the first prophet, and of greater antiquity than the Greek writers” (*First Apology*, Chapter 59).³ The list includes the virgin birth, the place of birth (Bethlehem), various details of the advent and life of Christ, the crucifixion, the ascension and session in heaven, the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ’s rejection by the Jews, Christ’s suffering and death, and more. All of this from the Old Testament, and all before the Greek mythologists even thought of writing.

Justin then criticizes the heathen religions for their failure to *prove* the stories they tell of Jupiter, as he has proven his point about Christ in Old Testament prophecy, and then prosecutes his charge concerning spiritual deception: “those who hand down the myths which the poets have made, adduce no proof to the youths who learn them; and we proceed to demonstrate that they have been uttered by the influence of the wicked demons, to deceive and lead astray the human race” (*First Apology*, Chapter 54). He then enumerates the alleged instances of parallels, and shows the possible Old Testament origin for each, again making it impossible that the Greek myths provide a source for New Testament Christianity.

The mythicists who have ignored—or have not even read—the full context of Justin Martyr, also miss the context of the *very same chapter* from which they quote. The rest of that chapter Justin uses to ridicule the gross immorality of the heathen gods—something the Church Fathers do at every chance. Jupiter, Justin railed, “was both a parricide and the son of a parricide, and that being overcome by the love of base and shameful pleasures, he came into Ganymede and those many women whom he had violated and that his sons did like actions” (*First Apology*, Chapter 21). He later

criticizes those who actually are “imitating Jupiter and the other gods in sodomy and shameless intercourse with woman” (*Second Apology*, Chapter 12). Elsewhere he enumerates the dozens of such instances among the Greek pantheon of gods, including the warrior goddess Diana, and the effeminate Bacchus: “What seemliness is there in a woman’s girding herself with armor, or in a man’s decorating himself with cymbals, and garlands, and female attire?” (*Discourse to the Greeks*, Chapter 2). Justin argues that no god of such character is worthy of respect: “far be such a thought concerning the gods from every well-conditioned soul.”

With all of their immorality in full view, Justin is well justified to conclude, “But, as we said above, wicked devils perpetrated these things” (*First Apology*, Chapter 21). This, again, in the very chapter Z quotes: they don’t even recognize the point Justin is making. This should not surprise us: in the interactive transcript for the movie, the few footnotes for Justin are jumbled, and one is entirely erroneous. They refer to chapter 69 of Justin’s *Discourse to the Greeks*, a short work comprised of only 5 chapters. The reference they intend is actually in chapter 69 of Justin’s much larger work, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, in which Trypho tries to trip up Justin by referring to the mysteries. But even here (after I have done their scholarly work for them) Justin uses the same defense of being “established in the knowledge of and faith in the Scriptures,” which foretell Christ and predate the Greeks, and are perverted by deceiving spirits.

Having dispensed with the immoral Greek gods, Justin turns fully on their worshippers. He asks, “Why are you, being a Greek, indignant at your son when he imitates Jupiter, and rises against you and defrauds you of your own wife? Why do you count him your enemy, and yet worship one that is like him?” (*Discourse to the Greeks*, Chapter 4).

This type of argument is typical of the Early Church Fathers: relying on the Old Testament, pointing to its fulfillment in Jesus, and condemning the woeful moral example of the Greek gods. Against the irrational examples of religion found throughout the Greco-Roman world, Justin follows this three-point defense and argues, “Our teacher of these things is Jesus Christ,” and “we *reasonably* worship Him, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself” (*First Apology*, Chapter 13). I could multiply examples—Aristides, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Origen, Clement of Alexandria—each of which follows the same pattern.

In fact, in order to round out the evidence that these mythicists have not even read Justin in context, in the previous chapter from which they quote, Justin clearly states *why* he mentions similarities between Christ and the Greek myths. Christians faced the charge of “atheism” because they denied the truth of all the State gods. This was a civil charge which could bring civil punishment. Justin goes to lengths to show that, not only are Christians not atheists, but that our God is superior to those of the State. He explains,

If, therefore, on *some points* we teach the same things as the poets and philosophers whom you honor, and on *other points* are fuller and more divine in our teaching, and *if we alone afford proof of what we assert*, why are we unjustly hated more than all others? (*First Apology*, Chapter 20).

He then lists examples where Christians “seem” to teach the same things as the myths or philosophers, but the rest of the work, as I have shown, demonstrates that Christians get their info from the Old Testament, and that only Christ proves worthy of the title “Son of God” because He fulfills those prophecies and by far exceeds every other god in moral example.

This is the defense which, Justin says, every “sober-minded man” must acknowledge, even if some refuse to. In the face of his obstinate opponents, Justin stands with resolve: “Since, therefore, we have urged you both by reason and by an evident form, and to the utmost of our ability, we know that we are blameless even though you disbelieve; for our part is done and finished” (*First Apology*, Chapter 55).

Notes

1. For Justin Martyr I am using Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson and A. Cleveland Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A. D. 325: Volume I, The Apostolic Fathers—Justin Martyr—Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985).
2. *Manifested in the Flesh*, 42–56.
3. Compare Justin’s *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*, Chapter 9, and *First Apology*, Chapter 54.

EIGHT

RELIGION AS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

The movie's title *Zeitgeist* or "spirit of the age" intrigues me for a couple of reasons. I cannot figure out exactly why they chose it. If it is because they believe Christianity is a current expression of solar religion based on the solar "ages" then I can understand a bit, but these "ages" take up only a small part of the movie. If the theme of conspiracy, held throughout the full three-part movie, is what is meant—that the perpetrators of this grand con have manufactured what we take to be the "spirit of the age"—then the import of the German word seems out of place. I can't help, therefore, thinking that the atheists who have produced this film have picked up on the use of the word by another recent, and more famous, atheistic writer: Richard Dawkins.

Atheism and the Shifting Moral *Zeitgeist*

In his best-selling book, *The God Delusion*, Dawkins blasts the idea that morality requires religion as its basis and refers to something he calls the shifting "moral *zeitgeist*." Dawkins, who specializes in evolutionary theory, argues for ten pages that in societies the consensus of morals necessarily improves over time, but it does so naturally and without the aid of religion. To prove his point he quotes from century-old sources that use racist or sexist slurs which were accepted at the time but which we find appalling today. See? The morals have gradually changed over time.

What drives this invisible force, and why does it always seem to move in direction of improvement? Dawkins has no answer. For him, “it is enough that, as a matter of observed fact, it *does* move, and it is not driven by religion—and certainly not by scripture.”¹ He tinkers with an answer: leaders who are “ahead of their time,” as well as “improved education” both aid the advance of the *zeitgeist*. Of course, these points are irrelevant because neither can *determine* the advance of morals, for how does one judge if a leader is “ahead” or rather “behind” his time? The “Joker,” the great villain of the most recent Batman movie *The Dark Knight*, claimed that his terrorism and murder were justified because he was “ahead” of the social curve. How could Dawkins argue against this? By what standard do we judge an “advance” versus a “decline”? Is it if everyone applauds, versus if everyone boos? If so, then morals are a democratic decision, and whatever the majority says, goes. Likewise, exactly how do we determine if education is “improved”? If the kiddies all smile and get As when they’re taught about their ape-like ancestors? And what of this when the theory is proven false? Again, by what standard, and who says?

Dawkins can’t answer these questions and says that for his purposes of bashing God, he doesn’t have to. But he can’t help take a stab at religion whenever he sees an opportunity. So he says, by “improved education,” he particularly means “the increased understanding that each of us shares a common humanity with members of other races and with the other sex—both deeply unbiblical ideas....”² I had to laugh when reading this. “Deeply unbiblical ideas”?!

Now put this in perspective. Dawkins has master’s and doctorate degrees from Oxford. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society, no small accolade. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of *Literature*, again, quite an honor. He has written nine or so major books, the most recent explicitly attacking God. He has lectured

around the world and held a Professorate at Oxford for years. All of this, and yet, apparently, he has not read *the first page of the Bible*; for on that page we are informed that “God created *man in His own image*, in the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created them” (Gen. 1:27). After telling us that both *sexes* bear the image of God and are thus part of a “common humanity,” the next verse reveals God’s command to multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). The accounts following make it clear that all of humanity, including its races and every other genetic distinction, come from one common ancestral family, and thus share a “common humanity.” The New Testament develops this theme as well (Acts 17:24–27).

I have covered this point for no other reason than to exhibit Dawkins’ educated ignorance about the religion he pretends to abolish. Like the atheists behind *Zeitgeist*, he pretends that the main features of Biblical religion either don’t exist or are accounted for naturally. This is true for his concept of the shifting “moral *zeitgeist*” as well. He pretends that “advances” in morals take place naturally—he has no idea what compels this invisible force, but he’s certain it must be natural. Whatever it is, it isn’t God—that *can’t be true*, because God doesn’t exist, so Dawkins must reason.

What neither Dawkins nor the *Z* movie mentions is that the idea of a moral “spirit of the age” entered philosophy long ago. The idea dominated the philosophical world due to the massive influence of Hegel (writing around 1800), who believed in something like the spiritual evolution of mankind worked out gradually in history.³ He derived this theory from reading Jakob Böhme, a Christian mystic who wrote 200 years before him.⁴ Whether either Dawkins or *Z* knows it or would admit it, Hegel worked out his philosophy as what he thought was a conscious justification of Christianity in history. Many Christians rightfully object to much of Hegel’s thinking, but what Hegel got right is the idea

that *history and morals don't change on their own*. Behind this great movement in history is some kind of *reason*, a divine personality. As always, the atheists have to steal Christian ideas in order to support their atheism.

A more sane view of the moral *zeitgeist* comes from the noted Church historian Philip Schaff. In discussing the Roman Emperor Constantine (of whom I shall have more to say below), Schaff lays down what he calls “the great historical principle,” placing the *zeitgeist* in its rightful perspective:

[A]ll representative characters act, consciously or unconsciously, as the free and responsible organs of the *spirit of their age*, which moulds them first before they can mold it in turn, and that *the spirit of the age itself*, whether good or bad or mixed, is but an instrument in the hands of divine Providence, which rules and overrules all the actions and motives of men.⁵

What Else Is There?

The blindness against self-contradiction becomes all the more clear when I read Z's online defense of their nonsense. In response to the idea that without God life is meaningless, they respond, “How life got here is an understanding that is irrelevant, for odds are, life is energy and has always existed, and does not end.” Then they really let the philosophical guns blaze. They claim that “‘heaven’ will dawn on the planet earth” when “people stop looking to some invisible power that doesn't exist.” Let us chase the flashes of these shots and see what target they have hit, if any.

Notice how the atheist claims that “life is energy” while at the same time charging Christians to “stop looking to some invisible power.” Could you please define and explain, dear unbeliever, what exactly is “energy”? If you overcome the temptation

to respond with an equation (like Einstein's energy= mc^2), which is not a definition or an explanation, nor equivocate and give the physicist's practical definition, "the ability to do work," you will be forced to confess something like this piece of information: "Energy is an invisible force that pervades the universe." I think this is obvious to any reader, most of whom have already gotten the point: all our atheist has done is oust the "invisible" God whom he doesn't like, only to place a different invisible force in the hole that is left. Belief in an "invisible power" is inevitable, the difference coming in what follows from that power's attributes.

Please notice also how atheists want to hold on to the idea of "heaven." In other words, they have a system of values in which some things are good and others evil. There is an imaginable future which is ideal—this we call heaven—and that which impedes progress towards this goal we rightfully would call evil. Now, to determine these values *always* requires a judge—a Final Arbiter of good and evil. Here the atheist has a big problem, namely, he has denied the existence of God at the outset. Thus he must deny all *ultimate* attributes, including moral ones. Z works out this logic beautifully: "We are God. Period. There is no Evil and no Good—these are false notions based on biased ideals from a very primitive time in our evolution." Thus the great contradiction: Z wants to have a Good "heaven" of a future as opposed to an Evil one, while at the same time denying the existence of Good and Evil altogether.

This cannot be done logically, and yet they proceed. In line with their denial of Good and Evil, they deny the concept of "Sin," and in light of this denial actually claim that "We are perfect." This is the apex of arrogance, and yet it is the logical conclusion one must reach following the presuppositions of atheism. If there is no ultimate Judge, then I am my own judge; if there is no Sin, then we are all perfect. Yet there *must be* and *will be* a Final Judge in

any and every system of morals; and this is why, having denied God, they are forced to claim things so absurd as “We are God,” and “We are perfect.” No one truly believes this. Besides, if we are perfect, pray tell, why does Z work so hard to change the world?

To the question “If you don’t believe in God, what else is there?,” Z has attempted a response; but has provided a pitifully inadequate answer. Mustering all of their hubris, they have proven nothing except that they cannot establish an atheistic worldview without stealing Christian ideas and therefore the force of the question stands. There *is* nothing else. Only God makes the universe and life in it meaningful and good.

The Mythstorians at Work

Working from all of the faulty claims they have so far made, Z draws the conclusion I quoted at the beginning of this book: “The reality is, Jesus was the Solar Deity of the Gnostic Christian sect, and like all other Pagan gods, he was a mythical figure.” Aside from the fact that since I have dismantled all of their supporting claims and ideas, and that therefore this conclusion cannot stand, Z proceeds to give a twisted explanation of Christian history:

It was the political establishment that sought to historize the Jesus figure for social control. By 325 a.d. in Rome, emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicea. It was during this meeting that the politically motivated Christian Doctrines were established and thus began a long history of Christian bloodshed and spiritual fraud.

I find it hard to believe that anyone with any academic initiative at all could make the claim that it was the political establishment who sought to historize Jesus. Long before Constantine, the earliest writers of the faith clearly believed that Jesus was an his-

torical figure. The apostle Paul obviously believed so,⁶ and he had nothing to do with the Establishment; rather, he left the Jewish establishment to become a Christian, and he was killed by the Roman establishment under Nero. The same goes for the Early Church Fathers. There are ten volumes just in one English version of their works, beginning with the apostolic Fathers, some who wrote before A.D. 100, including the Apologists who wrote from A.D. 120 to 220, and others, all written *before* Constantine and A.D. 325. These works, especially including Aristides, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Origen, but others also, *all* argue that Jesus is an historical figure, and *none* was aligned with the establishment. In fact, the Apologists wrote in defense of those Christians who were being persecuted and killed by the Roman establishment. That Z could claim anything to the contrary displays a radical willingness to believe an unchecked lie.

It was a breath of fresh air to the Christian world that Constantine, for all of his faults, ascended the throne and declared the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313. This decree secured religious toleration for all religions in the Roman Empire, and secured the restitution of property that former governors had confiscated from Christians. Is this the evil “social control” that Z is so afraid of? Religious toleration? Is this the long history of “Christian bloodshed” (a clumsy phrase, by the way, which could be understood to mean that it was the Christians whose blood was shed, and before Constantine it was)?

Granted, Constantine did summon the Council of Nicea, but only on the advice of clerics. The “meeting” was called to settle controversy in the church, based on the model of the apostolic Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15. Constantine’s concern was not the historicity of Jesus, which was well accepted long before, nor social control, but rather Church harmony, as he himself stated at the Council: “Discord in the church I consider more fearful and

painful than any other war.”⁷ The clerics did not look on him as an oppressor. Some attended who had lived through the era of persecution—standing in the assembly with eyes put out, bodies branded, hands maimed—and now accepted the new emperor as a fellow in their cause. Church Historian Philip Schaff chronicles the event, referring to Nicea not as an episode of tyranny, but as a “bloodless intellectual victory over a dangerous error.” Schaff, being a protestant, had no biased desire to whitewash the Roman emperor’s actions, rather (unlike the writers of *Z*) he simply reports what the original sources document.⁸

Z proceeds to criticize the Vatican’s “stranglehold on all of Europe” as well as “joyous periods as the Dark Ages.” You can always tell that a critic has no idea what he is talking about when he begins to besmirch Christianity based on the “Dark Ages”—a phrase Enlightenment radicals stole from self-congratulating humanists of the Renaissance in order to insult the Church of the Middle Ages.⁹ It was pure propaganda fueled by Voltaire’s skillfully spun hatred of revealed religion, and the stigma of the term still provides convenient mud for atheists to throw. The liberal public school “establishment” that perpetuates such stories—and whose “establishment” legacy *Z* here relies on—has done its job of brainwashing well.

Little do they know that the term originated with early Christians, who preached that any part of history without the light of Christ was a Dark Age. Further, if the Dark Ages are defined by “bloodshed,” then, as statisticians have well noted, the twentieth century has been by far the bloodiest, both in terms of numbers killed and percentage of population wiped out—largely the result of atheist or mythicist fueled wars, forced famines and slave labor camps.¹⁰ By that standard, the century most ruled by atheism has been the Darkest Age in all of history.

It remains dark not just in terms of bloodshed, but in terms of ignorance. There are good reasons for the decline of civilization beginning in the 400s and lasting until the 700s, and they have nothing to do with Christian rule, but rather with the *absence* of it. It was the barbarian invasions and subsequent wars that led to the fall of Rome. With the church defenseless, learning retreated to the remaining safe-havens in rural or fortified monasteries. It was the rule of the non-Christians that brought this about, and not until the *Christian* Carolingian dynasty arose in the 700s did Europe begin to recover. Once the barbarian armies were pushed back, Christian missionaries began to revivify European culture with the Gospel.¹¹ Three centuries of non-Christian rule resulted in the so-called Dark Ages; it had nothing to do with the non-existent “stranglehold” by the Vatican.

Summary of Charges

Z sums up its case with five charges against religion, especially Christianity, in order to condemn it as “the fraud of the age.” First, they complain that, “It serves to detach the species from the natural world.” Hardly. It is Christian theology above all other systems of thought that exalts the natural world to its rightful place. Instead of the meaningless matter of the atheist world, or the corrupt material of the mythological world, Christianity presents the world as specially created by God and divinely pronounced “very good” (Gen. 1:31). When God came to overthrow sin and save the world, He did it by becoming *incarnate*, that is, in the flesh. In other words, unlike mythical gods, He *stepped into the natural world*: He lived, breathed, suffered, and died its consequences. Then, He rose again, *physically* from the dead, declaring his intent and power to *redeem* the natural world. Since God has created and redeemed the world as both physical and rational, we can examine it using our senses and reason; since He

rules faithfully and does not change, we can trust our observations and predictions. Thus, it is the Christian worldview that makes the endeavor of science possible.

Secondly, they claim that Christianity “supports blind submission to authority.” Again, hardly. Christianity supports submission to Christ, and this submission is neither “blind,” nor to mere “authority.” In Christ we are elevated to a new height of humanity and made judges and kings together with Him (1 Cor. 6:1–4; Eph. 2:6–7; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5–6); and this “kingship” which we exercise begins with authority over our own selves first. Ancient Judeo-Christian wisdom teaches that self-government is the best government (Prov. 16:32); an idea implicit in the best theories of liberty written since then (I think of John Locke, who influenced the American Founders, as well as J. S. Mill). If “submission” results in these consequences, then who would object? It is only by misrepresenting Christian ideas that *Z* can perpetuate a negative image of Christian life, and this is only done through a desire to continue misrepresenting.

Thirdly, *Z* states that Christianity “reduces human responsibility to the effect that ‘God’ controls everything.” If this contained even an element of truth, even a third-grader would notice that since God controls everything, He also writes the Commandments and controls Judgment Day, and this brings human responsibility to the *forefront* of the Christian religion. It is ironic that *Z* one minute condemns religion as a tool of “social control,” which means that people are made to believe that if they don’t *behave* a certain way then they will be *held responsible for their actions*, and yet the next minute *Z* tells us that religion removes human responsibility. Can they have it both ways? Or are their contradictions tiring you as much as me?

Fourthly, the movie warns that “awful crimes can be justified in the name of Divine Pursuit.” Yes, they *can*, but possibility is

not the same as probability, let alone necessity. On the contrary, when atheistic philosophy ascended to the throne in Bolshevik Russia, for example, everyone *expected* atrocities, and they got them. The secularists and humanists tried to deny it and white-wash the truth, but the Christian Alexandr Solzhenitzyn, who survived the Soviet labor camps, finally blew the whistle with his history, *The Gulag Archipelago*. As mentioned earlier, it was the atheistic rulers that perpetrated the bloodiest century in history, and this was done consciously *not* in the name of Divine Pursuit but by atheists hammering out an atheist world by atheistic means based on atheistic philosophy. When a Christian ruler commits a crime in the name of God, this is a tragedy, and everyone cries "Hypocrisy!" When an atheistic government commits atrocities, everyone expected it all along, and says, "I told you so."

Honest atheists admit this. It was the atheist Friedrich Nietzsche, famous for proclaiming the "death of God," who predicted the bloody fate of the twentieth century. He knew that when atheism clashes with Christianity, and God is removed as the basis of morality, then "all power structures of the old society will have been exploded ...there will be wars the like of which have never been seen on earth."¹² He was "*glad*," he wrote in 1884, "about the military development of Europe," because it signaled that, "The barbarian in each of us is affirmed, and also the wild beast."¹³ His love of war taught him that "one must learn to sacrifice *many* and to take one's cause seriously enough not to spare men."¹⁴

Where did Nietzsche develop his hatred for Christianity and his love of war? It was from his study of Greek mystery religion. He wrote, "I am actually the very opposite of the type of man who so far has been revered as virtuous. Between ourselves, it seems to me that precisely this is part of my pride. *I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus*; I should prefer to be even a satyr to being a saint."¹⁵ Dionysus, of course, was not a philosopher as Nietzsche

called him, but rather the mythical god who was worshiped through drunken orgies. It was the purposeful abandonment of Christian morality for the indulging of personal desire that formed the basis of Nietzsche's message; and he believed that when the rest of the world caught up to him, catastrophe would result. For this point he is rightfully called a secular prophet.¹⁶ Atheists, when they are honestly consistent with their logic, sometimes turn out right. This is why modern atheists rarely talk about Nietzsche.

Fifthly, *Z* wants us to believe that Christianity "empowers those who know the truth but use the myth to manipulate and control societies." If this is true, I wonder why the producers of this movie, along with their pet scholars—all of whom presumably "know the truth"—have not enjoyed such power. Why have no world rulers arisen based on such knowledge from among the likes of these astrologers and would-be Egyptologists? Instead, they have mostly all died in obscurity, their books buried deeply in the libraries of wrinkled, white-haired enthusiasts in the East and West Coast cities, rotting—and rightfully so.

Why no empowered manipulators from these lots? Is it because these people did not desire to be world-rulers? I find that odd, since many of the people aligned with similar movements in the past are responsible for behemoth organizations such as the Fabian Socialist party, Nazism, the eugenics movement, and the United Nations. These include such astrology lovers and metaphysicians as Annie Besant, Alice A. Bailey, and even liberals like Eleanor Roosevelt (some may even toss in Hilary Clinton). Nevertheless, if it is argued that the *Z* crowd has historically not desired power, then we have discovered the *true* source of tyranny in this world, which is neither religion nor knowledge about religion, but what one of our most important religious writers called the *dominandi libido*—the lust for ruling.¹⁷ With

this lust simmering in the hearts of men, religion or no religion, myth or no myth, there will always be attempts at tyranny.

What Christianity does, as opposed to the type of revolutionary emotionalism fomented by works like *Zeitgeist*, is to provide the Word of Life for the conversion of that twisted heart, knowing that nothing will change until that does.

Notes

1. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006), 272.
2. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 271.
3. Good introductions are R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 113–126; and Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949). For a Biblical view, see Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1997).
4. Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
5. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Volume 3: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity From Constantine to Gregory the Great, A.D. 311-590*, 8 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996 [1867]), 13. Emphasis mine.
6. See McDurmon, *Manifested in the Flesh*, Chapters 4–5.
7. Quoted in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Volume 3*, 626.
8. In fact, Schaff present a very “warts and all” view of Constantine earlier in the book (pp. 10–37). Anyone wishing for a fuller account should read Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Volume 3*, 10–37, 622–632.
9. See the brief notes in Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 20, 28–30.
- 10 See Stéphane Courtois, et al., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); also Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The “Atheism” of the Early Church* (Blackheath, Australia: Logos Foundation, 1983), 35–37.

11. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 15–19, 26–43.
12. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am a Destiny,” 1, in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1908]), 327.
13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kauffman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), (section 127) 78.
14. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, (Section 982) 513.
15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Preface,” Section 2, in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1908]), 217.
16. For more on Nietzsche and modern atheism, see Tom Wolfe, *Hooking Up* (New York: Picador, 2000) 89–109, especially 98–99.
17. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 1, Preface.

NINE

CLICHÉ AND CONSPIRACY

Near the end of Part 1, the movie displays a quotation from the famous pamphleteer of the American Revolution, Thomas Paine. Coming from Paine's hardly known article *Origin of Freemasonry* from 200 years ago, it reads, "The Christian religion is a parody of the worship of the sun, in which they put a man called Christ in the place of the sun, and pay him the adoration originally payed to the sun." It looks like they pulled this quotation uncritically from Wikipedia or some other internet source, for the wording does not quite match the published version, and it uses the obsolete spelling "payed" instead of "paid." Nevertheless, the irony here comes in being able to quote Paine while at the same time trying to maintain their image as suppressed by a conspiracy. We are all told that these guys and the scholars they quote suffer undue ostracism by the "Establishment"; and yet Thomas Paine, who shared their belief, was one of the most widely read and congratulated writers during the American Revolution! His *Common Sense* sold half a million copies in the early American colonies, and almost single handedly turned the public attitude toward secession from Britain and war if need be. He then spent the rest of his career writing in disgusting hatred of Christianity and subsequently lost popularity until he died in relative obscurity. Nevertheless, Paine was rewarded by the government of New York with an estate, and with monetary rewards from the U. S. Congress.

I include this anecdote to illustrate a couple of things contrary to the movie's claims and implications. Firstly, the dissenting belief that Jesus is just one more solar deity has been around *forever*. The pagan writer Celsus argued it against Christianity in the second century, so did others. Mythicism existed in the Middle Ages, during the Renaissance and Reformation, during the early Modern era, during the Enlightenment (as Paine exemplifies), during the Romantic period, the Modern period, the Victorian era, the hippie decades (remember the song? "This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius..."), and now, in our own time. The so-called "Jesus Conspiracy," with all of its numerous permutations, is well beyond cliché. Even now, after I have answered it point-by-point, some fearful and unbelieving fanatic will probably take it to the street corner once again, crying "We've been lied to!"

This brings up the second point: conspiracy. Yes, there is conspiracy in the world. I believe, for example, the third part of *Zietgeist* concerning the banking industry, though *Z* doesn't go back far enough. The banking conspiracy can be traced to the medieval treasuries guarded by the Knights Templars: they learned quickly that they could loan out "credit" for more money than they actually held in reserve and thus collect interest on huge amounts that *didn't exist*. This fraud is called "fractional reserve banking," and it is the *basis* of modern banking which we for some reason accept as normal. It is a damnably dishonest practice.¹

Other conspiracy theories, however, derive from a belief something like, "I wouldn't put it past them." People, like me, who are of a libertarian bent, tend to buy into government conspiracies too quickly, because we understand the corrupting influence of power. We must resist the temptation often, but sometimes our suspicions are *well* justified. No one, for example, can honestly read the declassified documents of "Operation Northwoods" and not hear bone-chilling echoes of 9–11, from *forty years* earlier.

Researcher James Bamford reports on the covert plan to justify a war on communism:

Codenamed Operation Northwoods, the plan, which had the written approval of the Chairman and every member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for innocent people to be shot on American streets; for boats carrying refugees fleeing Cuba to be sunk on the high seas; for a wave of violent terrorism to be launched in Washington, D.C., Miami, and elsewhere. People would be framed for bombings they did not commit; planes would be hijacked. Using phony evidence, all of it would be blamed on Castro.²

Bamford quotes extensively from the documents, revealing ideas even more gruesome than what he summarizes. The documents themselves add that “casualty lists in U. S. newspapers would cause a helpful wave of national indignation.” This was covertly planned for discussion in 1962—this is not conspiracy *theory*, it is actual documented fact that our “beloved leaders” did consider the unconscionable.

Then, 9–11 happens. People who have read Bamford’s revelations have no choice *but* to think the obvious. To those who read him after the fact, questions begin to arise. For many Americans, that other Americans would “blame America” ignites fury and disgust. This is understandable, but is an emotional and not a thoughtful reaction. We who know the histories of the *U.S.S. Maine* and the Spanish-American War, the *Lusitania* and WWI, the now emerging truth that Roosevelt knew the Japanese plan to attack Pearl Harbor and allowed it,³ and now the revelation of the Northwoods document—to us 9–11 immediately evokes, “We wouldn’t put it past them.”

The fact that conspiracies exist, however, in no way means that every possible conspiracy that people can dream up actually

coincides with reality, nor does it say anything about how to best handle conspiracies that may exist. Unfortunately, people who get tied up by these theories begin to use them to interpret their lives, and this leads to a reactionary spirit. They invent and attack conspiracies that don't exist and become would-be revolutionaries, or they live out a self-fulfilling prophecy of defeatism. I don't believe like my word-faith brothers and sisters that your words become your reality, but I know for sure that if you continuously say you can't win, you probably won't even try. You will sit cowering in the manufactured fear that shackles your mind.

One of my seminary professors who has a one-liner for just about everything, once joked about conspiracy, "Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean they're not out to get you!" He's right, and I laughed. There are plenty of conspiracies out there, from the least handshake, to marital affairs, to plans for world-government. But for Christians to get too worried about these things overlooks the two *biggest* conspiracies in history: the devil's attempt to steal, kill, and destroy God's creation, and the Holy Spirit's subtle, gradual work in hearts to redeem and renew that creation one person at a time. It is this work of the Spirit which gradually moves the moral *zeitgeist*, which slowly forces the devil into the corners of society, and which will one day liberate planet earth from sin, sorrow, and tyranny at the return of Christ.⁴

When discussing conspiracy it is always helpful to understand the meaning of the word in its fullest sense. Literally, the word "conspiracy" mean "to breath together" or "with the same spirit" (from the Latin *cons* "with" + *spiritus* "breath" or "spirit"). We generally use the term in a negative sense, referring to people who secretly plan some kind of criminal or nefarious activity. But in the broader sense it also includes what Jesus spoke of: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matt. 18:20). We who agree together by

creed (word/faith) and oath (sacrament) that Christ is the King of Kings who rules the world are all “guilty” of conspiracy. That we live, plan, and prepare for His Kingdom makes us conspirators against evil and for the true “Spirit of the age,” which Spirit is God’s Holy Spirit. This is a conspiracy not to shun, but to join.

Notes

1. See Gary North, *Honest Money: The Biblical Blueprint for Money and Banking* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1986).
2. James Bamford, *Body of Secrets: Anatomy of the Ultra-Secret National Security Agency From the Cold War Through the Dawn of a New Century* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 82–91.
3. See Robert B. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Touchstone, 2001).
4. For those wishing to pursue this issue further, I highly recommend Gary North, *Conspiracy: A Biblical View, 2nd Ed.* (Tyler, TX: Dominion Press, 1996).

TEN

CONCLUSION

We have seen throughout this book that almost nothing of what *Z* has to say is trustworthy, verifiable or true. Of all their claims about Jesus, astrology, the mystery religions, Biblical history, Christian history or theology, almost every point relies on undocumented claims, non-existent sources, misleading interpretations, careless quotations, clever but deceitful presentations, and a deep abiding faith in the viewer's gullibility. Above all, we've seen that behind this presentation is a mind terrorized by paranoia and infested with militant atheism—a soul searching for something to fill the void that its mind has created by denying God. The film is an effort of self-deception: the work of an unbeliever who must manufacture some mythical world of his own in which he can comfortably believe God does not exist.

In order to accomplish this the mythicist aims for the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lord and Savior of Humanity. Atheists know if they can discredit Christ, they have erased the human face of God, the person through which God has revealed Himself to the world. This, above all, atheists wish to mar, and to block out of their mental world.

The irony of this is that the very Person they attack, and try to throw into the catalogued irrelevance of mythology, is the only Person who can relieve their ills. Only He can supply wisdom to searching minds; only He can give "Good" in an evil world; only He gives strength and power to the weak and humble. In submit-

ting to him, we do not bow blindly before authority. Rather, we step into the presence of grace, and are *raised* by Him to a type of power and authority which we could have never known before. If you are an unbelieving mythicist, or a Christian who has been shaken by the mythicist presentation, I ask you to heed the words of John Calvin:

Being admitted to participation in him, though we are still foolish, he is our wisdom; though we are still sinners, he is our righteousness; though we are unclean, he is our purity; though we are weak, unarmed, and exposed to Satan, yet ours is the power which has been given him in heaven and in earth, to bruise Satan under our feet, and burst the gates of hell (Matth. xxviii. 18); though we still bear about with us a body of death, he is our life; in short, all things of his are ours, we have all things in him, he nothing in us.¹

Christ possesses a uniqueness that always emerges Victorious, and that no slander can impinge. Even the gates of death itself were smashed as Christ emerged Victorious from the tomb. Through all of the claims—many blasphemous—which writers and scholars have leveled at Him for centuries, Christ still stands, He still rules, and He still saves. If the mythicists want to deny this, they will have to do better than *Zeitgeist: The Movie*. Far from being one more astral figure, Christ is the Maker of the heavens, and the Ruler of them. He is their cure, and ours, too.

Notes

1. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 3, Chapter 15, Section 5, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989 [1559]).

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Historical Background for Jesus

There are so many books dealing with the historical Jesus that to list them all would create a pleonastic plethora. Here are some of the most helpful ones:

Paul L. Maier. *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991. This is one of the best popular works on the historical background of Jesus, authored by a highly respected Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University. Dr. Maier has also put his work into several videos created for differing age levels, all available on DVD from Tobias Communications. Their website is www.tobiascom.com.

Everett Ferguson. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 3rd Edition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003. This is a first-rate work by a great New Testament historian: a thorough background on every aspect of the New Testament era culture, including astrology, mystery religions, philosophy, and tons more. Ferguson is more academic than popular, but his work is very readable and among the best scholarship.

Joel McDurmon. *Manifested in the Flesh: How the Historical Evidence for Jesus Refutes Modern Mystics and Skeptics*. Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2007. My previous book on this subject, aimed at mythicist presentations prior to *Zeitgeist: The Movie*. I actually review the mystery religions based on source

data, I cover the Early Church Fathers, I cover Paul's understanding of Jesus, and I discuss the importance of the historical Incarnation. I include four appendices dealing with related subjects, including a critical review of Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries*.

James Gresham Machen. *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947 [1921]. Despite its age in a rapidly moving (read, faddish) field, it is an enduring classic. Machen's treatment of the mystery religions still has no parallel (having graduated first in his class from Johns Hopkins University with a degree in classics, he certainly had read the original myths in their original language). The only dated aspect is his treatment of Gnosticism, which was written long before the discovery of the texts at Nag Hammadi, but this detracts little from the overall work. Continuously in print, not hard to find, and actually, due to its age, can be found free online.

Aside from these works look for anything by N. T. Wright (a good popular work is *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*, which is a popular level series of debate essays engaging a leading liberal scholar, Marcus Borg); Larry Hurtado's introductory *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (2000), also his more advanced *Lord Jesus Christ* (2003), and *How On Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* (2006); and Richard Bauckham's scholarly work, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2007).

The standard New Testament Introductions are written by Donald Guthrie (1973) and Carson, Moo and Morris (1992); these are full of refutations of liberal historical-critical matters and will present a challenge to the average reader, but an ambitious student may find them useful in many areas.

Historical Jesus Studies

Focusing particularly on the historical Jesus Himself there are literally hundreds of books in addition to those listed above. Some good ones are listed below:

Classics in the field include Shirley Jackson Case, *The Historicity of Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1912); F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974); R. T. France, *The Evidence for Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986); and Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd Ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, [1987] 2007). These are all solid works which have the added merit of having been written anywhere from twenty to a hundred years ago. That so many of the mythicists' arguments have been refuted for that long already shows the incorrigible nature of the movement and of its "true-believers."

The unprecedented popularity of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* in 2003 created a large market for the small industry of debunking and responses against anti-historical Jesus writing. Some are fresh works, many are reprints. Among the more helpful I have found Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002) simply for the order it brings to an enormous and confusing field. Anyone wishing to pursue historical Jesus studies at length will help themselves by consulting Bock early on. A very helpful and popular level approach is the tag-team effort of J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: What the Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don't Tell You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006), which uses good sources, good writing and good logic.

Following these there are many other commendable works: Paul Copan, ed., *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?: A Debate Be-*

tween William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998) which includes additional responses from Craig L. Blomberg, Ben Witherington, III, and others; Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: INterVarsity Press, 2006); Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); Ralph O. Muncaster, *Evidence for Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004); Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: New Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, [1996] 2008). Finally, Gregory A. Boyd and Paul Rhodes Eddy have teamed up on two very probing and thoughtful works, *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 2007), and *Lord or Legend?: Wrestling with the Jesus Dilemma* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), the latter of which is recommended for the more popular audience. The former work, *The Jesus Legend*, is a detailed academic effort which demands attention and respect.

This brief list barely scratches the surface of the available field, touching mostly a few popular works. From the local bookstore to the University there is enough reading on the subject to occupy a lifetime, so much so that most scholars must settle for expertise only in a narrow subset of the field while reaching only a general level of competence across the field. (For an example of narrow specialization, a recent dissertation-made-book was entitled *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel* (2004) and provides only a contribution to the discussion of the possible audience of Matthew's Gospel based on one interpretation of that Gospel's possible social setting, view of law, and attitude toward gentiles. The vast amount of work done in Biblical Literature seems to require each new dissertation to be highly specialized or else in some way radical.) Thus, any interested soul can

follow just about any line of inquiry as far into obscurity as they would like. Wherever the evidences and details stop, scholarly conjecture will undoubtedly continue for a good while.

Early Church Fathers

As for the Early Church Fathers, there is no better introduction than just to read them in their own words. Their works are readily available, and cheap, in their current edition by Hendrickson (the adventurous reader can obtain the entire 38 volume set for about \$300, a steal by any standard; in truth, however, the first few volumes of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* are sufficient for our purposes here, and go for about ten bucks each). The edition edited by Philip Schaaf and Alexander Roberts, places all of the major writers of the early Church in reach of every Christian. These are also available for free online at <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>. Those who neglect them do so at their own loss.

I have not found many secondary sources helpful in treating the Fathers. Exceptions are *Patrology* (4 vols.) by Johannes Quastens, but this work is large, academic, and not necessarily affordable; J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines* is a concise and classic treatment, but does not deal much with the mystery religion or astrology issues; and Roland Bainton, *Early Christianity*, has the merit of including edited readings, but is becoming hard to find.

As for Early Church *history*, one of the best efforts of recent times, the large work by W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (1984), surpasses most others in both readability and sound scholarship. Some classic works are also good: the early volumes of Philip Shaaf, *History of the Christian Church* (8 vols.); Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Volume 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)*; as well as Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (2 vols.).

For the conflict of the Early Church with pagan society the two best works I've seen are both classics: Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (1970); and the quite academic *Christianity and Classical Culture* (1957) by Charles Norris Cochrane. Roland Bainton, *Early Christianity*, is excellent on this issue also.

Ancient and Old Testament History

A helpful work on Old Testament historical background is R. K. Harrison's *Old Testament Times* (2005) which is illustrated and addresses many of the relevant ancient figures in this book. Harrison's much more detailed *An Introduction Old Testament* (1969) is gargantuan, filled with interaction with critical theories, and recommended only for the advanced student who has lots of time. I have also found the works of K. A. Kitchen helpful, particularly his *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (2003) and *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (1966).

Since original sources are so crucial to the issues involved here, as I have stressed in the text, I have found very helpful the compilation by Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, eds., *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002).

The master's thesis by Nozomi Osanai, "A Comparative Study of the Flood Accounts in the Gilgamesh Epic and Genesis," which she has permitted to be posted online by Answers in Genesis, is a very impressive, thorough, and helpful critique of the ancient flood accounts. I highly recommend it. Find it at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/flood/introduction.asp>

Astrological and New Age Matters

I have been aware of the procession of the equinoxes now for a few years, having read *Hamlet's Mill* (1969) by Giorgio de Santilana and Hertha von Dechend, which traces astrological beliefs through countless appearances in mythology throughout history. It is a fascinating romp through history and myth which reveals a unity in pagan thought, and yet does not try to force Christianity into the pagan mold.

I was greatly relieved by Dr. Danny Faulkner, Professor of Astronomy at the University of South Carolina, Lancaster, who helped inform my critiques relating to astronomical matters, and who introduced me to R. H. Allen's *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning* (first published in 1899), which provides priceless historical and legendary data. The work is still in print by Dover, and also accessible free online.

The work by the theologian E. W. Bullinger, *The Gospel in the Stars*, contains much interesting matter, but should be read with extreme caution. Faulkner's critique of the work aims at Bullinger's uncritical transliteration of Arabic to Hebrew, which is a red flag concerning star names and their meanings.

I am hoping someday to find a solid and comprehensive work on astrological history from a Christian point of view (Danny?).

One of the best books on new age spirituality (and many related issues) in recent history is Gary North, *Unholy Spirits: Occultism and New Age Humanism* (Ft. Worth, Dominion Press, 1986). Dr. North's work is a 400-page highly readable and engaging critique of new age ideas from a Biblical apologetical point of view. Gary's wide reading of history and impressive analytical skills make this work superior to most others. Beside this, however, I do recommend the works by Douglas Groothuis on the subject. My favorite popular work on the topic of Madame

Blavatsky and the new age fallout from her cloud is Peter Washington, *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995). Washington's work is highly readable and entertaining.

Medieval Issues

Two very relevant authors for issues pertaining to the medieval Church are Jeffrey Burton Russell and Christopher Dawson. Dawson's *The Making of Europe* (1932) and *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (1950) both tell the whole story about the cause of the so-called "Dark Ages" from roughly A.D. 400 to 700, and how it was Christian missionary work that redeemed Europe from that spell (part of this story is well told by Thomas Cahill in his popular *How the Irish Saved Civilization*). Russell's *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* further explodes myths which modern historians have created concerning the Dark Ages.

For the Crusades, a truly tragic episode, but not nearly so as the atheists tell it, see the now classic works by Sir Steven Runciman, including his unrivaled *A History of the Crusades* (3 vols.). The Inquisitions (in my opinion, another mark of historical *ignorami* is speaking of "the Inquisition"—singular rather than plural—for there was neither a single institution bearing the title nor a single event) of the Middle Ages are a dark matter—dark because they are tragic, and dark because not much unbiased work has been accessible to a popular audience. This area falls outside of my scholarly comfort zone at the moment, and the only work I currently recommend is *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain* by Benzion Netanyahu (no relation that I'm aware of) which is a ghastly, cumbersome 1400-page work debunking old theories of the causes of *one* Inquisition. It is a masterful accomplishment,

but slow and way too large for so little a reward (to learn that it was the King, not so much the Church, who instigated the Spanish Inquisitors, for anti-semitic reasons).

INDEX

A

Abel 58
Acharya S 17, 18, 20, 44
Ages 47, 48
aion 48
Akkadian 62
Allen, R. H. 42
American Revolution 95
American Vision 3, 4, 10, 14, 40,
103
Aquarius 96
Arabic 109
Aries 49
Aristides 79, 87
Arnold, Bill T. 108
Aryan race 69
ascension 77
Ashoreth 25
Assyrian 62
Astarte 25
astrologers 25, 26, 45, 56, 58, 92
atheism 23, 79, 81, 84, 85, 88, 91,
94, 101
Atrahasis 62
Attis 54

B

Baal 26
Babylon 25
Bacchus 78
Bahnsen, Greg 32
Bailey, Alice A. 92
Bainton, Roland 39

“bait-and-switch” 17
Bamford, James 97
banking 11, 96
Baptists 16
Batman 82
Bauckham, Richard 104
Beddru of Japan 34
Belshazzar 26
Besant, Annie 92
Bethlehem 43, 54, 55, 77
Beyer, Bryan E. 108
Biblical theology 19, 21, 54–58
birth story 64
Blavatsky 64–65, 69, 73, 110
Blomberg, Craig L. 105
Boaz 58
Bock, Darrell L. 105
Böhme, Jakob 83
Bolshevik Russia 91
Book of the Dead 70, 71
Borg, Marcus 104
Boyd, Gregory A. 106
Brown, Dan 105
Bruce, F. F. 105
Bryant, Jacob 17, 20
Budge, E. A. Wallis 33
Bullinger, E. W. 109

C

Cahill, Thomas 110
Calvin, John 102
Campbell, Joseph 64
Carolingian dynasty 89

Carson, D. A. 51
 Case, Shirley Jackson 105
 caste system 68
Catholic Encyclopedia 44
 Christianity 13
 Church Fathers 37, 44, 52, 75–79,
 87, 104, 107
 Clement of Alexandria 52, 79
 Clinton, Hilary 92
 Cochrane, Charles Norris 108
 Cole, R. Alan 64
 Columbus 110
Common Sense 95
 communism 69
 conspiracy 11, 12, 30, 81, 95, 96,
 97, 98, 99
 Constantine 84, 86, 87, 93
 constellations 15, 24, 47, 55, 56
 Copan, Paul 105
 Creator 23
 crucifixion 77
 Crusades 110
 Cybele 54
 cyclical history 37

D

Daniel 26, 37, 40, 58, 105
 Dark Ages 88, 89, 110
 Dark Knight 82
 darkness 22
 Darwin 35
 David 58
Da Vinci Code, The 105
 Davis, John 22
 Dawkins, Richard 81–83, 93
 Dawson, Christopher 110
 “death of God” 91
 December 25 38, 39
 Dechend, Hertha von 109
 Declaration of Independence 68

Diana 78
Die Burger 41
 Dionysus 54, 91
 Djer 69
 Donald Guthrie 36, 40, 104
 Dupuis, Charles 42

E

E. A. Wallis Budge 33, 34
 Easter 39
 Eddy, Paul Rhodes 106
 Edict of Milan 87
 education 82
 Egyptologist 30
 Einstein 85
 end of the age 49
 Energy 85
 Enlightenment 88, 96
 equivocation 31
 Establishment 12, 32, 33, 34, 87, 95
 Evangelism 38
 Evans, Craig A. 106
 evil 85
 evolutionary theory 81
 Ezra 66

F

Fabian Socialist 92
 fallacy 32–33
 Faulkner, Danny 42, 109
 Ferguson, Everett 103
 fish 51, 52, 71
 fishermen 51, 52
 Fish Gate 51
 Flemming, Brian 9, 34
 flood 27, 61–63, 72, 108
 fractional reserve banking 96
 France, R. T. 105
 Freke, Timothy 55
 Frennd, W. H. C. 107

G

Galilee 51
 Gandy, Peter 55
 Ganymede 77
 generation 49, 50
 Gerald Massey 33, 34, 41, 53, 55,
 59
 gifts 45
 Gilgamesh 62, 63, 72, 108
 Gnostic 9, 13, 61, 86
God Delusion, The 81
God Who Wasn't There, The 9, 34
 good 85
 Gospel 20, 28, 35, 39, 44, 52–55,
 59, 89, 106, 109
 Great Year 47
 Greek 18, 19, 44, 47, 48, 50, 52, 54,
 57, 67, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 91
 Green, Michael 108
 Groothuis, Douglas 109
Gulag Archipelago, The 91
 Guthrie, Donald 36

H

Habermas, Gary R. 106
 Hammurabi 66
 Harrison, R. K. 67
 Hathor 23
 Hebrew 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 26, 54,
 64, 69, 109
 Hegel, G. W. F. 35, 83, 93
 Herod 43
 Herodotus 67
 hieroglyphics 34
 Higher Criticism 66
 Hindu 67
 historical Jesus 103
 history (linear vs. cyclical) 37
 History of Religions School 35
 Hitler 69

homosexual 70
 Horus 16, 37, 54
 House of Bread 54
 Hurtado, Larry 104

I

ICHTHUS 52
 image 57
 Isaiah 25
 Isis 37, 54, 65, 73
Isis Unveiled 65
 Israel 19, 25, 26, 27, 40, 54, 55, 56,
 68, 72

J

Jacob 54
 Jefferson, Thomas 12
 Jeremiah 25
 Jesus 3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21,
 28, 29, 34, 38, 41, 46, 48, 49, 51,
 52, 53, 55, 56, 39, 56, 55, 56, 57,
 58, 59, 61, 75, 76, 79, 86, 87, 96,
 98, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106
 “Jesus fish” 52
 Job 23
 Jordan, James B. 37
 Joseph 56
 Joshua 58
 Judah 58
 Judaism 13
 judgment 19, 22, 23, 25, 27, 49, 71
 Jupiter 77
 Justin Martyr 75

K

Kelley, J. N. D. 107
 King James 48
 Kinsman Redeemer 58
 Kitchen, K. A. 108

Knights Templars 96
 Komoszewski, J. Ed 105

L

Latin 18
 Latourette, Kenneth Scott 107
 lawgivers 66
 libertarian 96
 liberty 90
 linear history 37
 List, Guido von 69
 Locke, John 90
Lusitania 97

M

Machen, James Gresham 104
 Magi 42
 Maier, Paul L. 103
 Mana 55
 Manethos 69
Manifested in the Flesh 9, 14, 29,
 38, 80, 93, 103
 Manu of India 66
Manusmriti 67
 Mary 54, 57
 Massey, Gerald 33
 McDurmon, Joel 103
 Melchizedek 58
 Mencken, H. L. 65
 messiah 16
 Metzger, Bruce 37
 Meyer, Marvin 30
 Middle Ages 88
 Mill, J. S. 90
 Minos of Crete 66
 Minucius Felix 37, 79
 Mises in Egypt 66
 Mithraism 39
 Mithras 34, 39
 moral *zeitgeist* 81, 83, 84

Moran, William 63
 Moses 22, 28, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68,
 70, 71, 77
 Muncaster, Ralph O. 106
 mystery religions 13, 27, 28, 29, 30,
 35, 36, 50, 101, 103, 104
 mythicists 10, 11, 13, 21, 28, 29, 30,
 35, 38, 39, 40, 43, 45, 46, 48, 53,
 62, 64, 66, 75, 76, 77, 79, 102,
 105
 mythologist 20
 mythology 66
 myths 30
 Mythstorians 86

N

Nag Hammadi 104
 Narmer 67
 natural world 89
 Nazi 69
 Nehemiah 51
 Netanyahu, Benzion 110
*New System or Analysis of Ancient
 Mythology* 17
 New Testament 21
 Nicea 86
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 91, 92, 94
 Noah's Ark 61
 North, Gary 109
 Nut 23

O

Old Testament 21
 "Operation Northwoods" 96
 Origen 79, 87
 original sources 17
Origin of Freemasonry 95
 Orion 25, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 53,
 59
 Osanai, Nozomi 108

Osiris 71
Oxford 82

P

Paine, Thomas 95
parallels 21, 28–30, 34–39, 47,
54–57, 61–62, 67, 70, 72, 77
Paul, Ron 11
Pearl Harbor 97
Pelikan, Jaroslav 107
Perseus 34
Pharaoh 22, 23
Pisces, Age of 48–53
plagiarism 34, 61
precession of the equinoxes 47
presuppositions 12, 15, 35
primary sources 17, 29, 31, 33
Promised Land 24, 58
prophecies 28, 43, 76, 77, 79
prototypes 56
pun 16, 17, 18, 54

Q

Quastens, Johannes 107
queen of heaven 25

R

R. K. Harrison 67, 73, 108
Ra 16, 23
Rachel 54
racism 69, 81
responsibility 90
resurrection 35
Roberts, Alexander 107
Roman Catholic Church 12
Roosevelt, Eleanor 92
Royal Society 82
Runciman, Steven 110
Russell, Jeffrey Burton 110

S

Samson 58
Santillana, Giorgio de 109
Sargon of Akkad 63
Sawyer, M. James 105
Schaff, Philip 84, 88, 93
Scotsman 32, 33
seasons 35
Secret Doctrine, The 65
Semele 54
Set 37
Sin 85
Sirius 41
Society for the Propagation of the
Gospel 20
Solomon 58
Solzhenitzyn, Alexandr 91
Son of God 17, 52, 76, 79, 101
sources 30, 31, 32, 33, 38, 41, 55,
57, 61, 62, 72, 81, 88, 101, 105,
107, 108
Sovereignty 25, 68
Spanish-American War 97
*Star Names: Their Lore and Mean-
ing* 42
Star Wars 64
submission 90
Sumerian Kings List 62
sun 13–28, 35–41, 47, 48, 53, 54,
76, 95
Sun of God 17, 19

T

Taurus 53
Temple 49
Ten Commandments 70
Tertullian 52, 79, 87
Thoth 23
Three Kings 41
toleration 87

tradition 38
 Trafalgar 43
 transference 57
 twelve 44, 47, 56
 twentieth century 88
 types 57
 Typology 57

U

U.S.S. Maine 97
 United Nations 92

V

Vatican 88
Vedas 67
 Virgin 32, 54
 virgin 16, 54, 55, 77
 Virgin Birth 32
 Virgo 54, 55
 Voltaire 88
 Voorst, Robert E. Van 106

W

Wallace, Daniel B. 105
 Washington, Peter 110
 Waterloo 43

Wendy's 29
 Wise Men 41
 Witherington, III, Ben 106
 Wright, N. T. 28, 104
 WWI 97

Y

Yaweh 27

Z

Zebedee 52
 Zeus 69
 Ziusudra 62
 Zodiac 56

