

On The Frontier

“For the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

Modern Trends In Paganism Part Two

by Linus A. Mathis III

We've observed some of the varied ways in which idolatry is being presented today. There's the very insidious doctrine of "unity in diversity." Initially it may seem good but further scrutiny reveals otherwise.

At times it may even seem that the activities suggested aren't spiritual at all. For instance, the overt concerns regarding the preservation of our environment. As we have noted these are popular ways of promoting paganism in a modern "enlightened" world. They both pander to our concerns.

Certainly none of us wish to see our wilderness areas decimated. Who among us is in favor of the wanton butchering of wildlife? Yet, those who would be the "environmental police" are in reality, dangerous terrorists. They target the sportsman and declare him as culpable for the squandering of the earth's living resources. When in truth, hunters and fishermen provide the financial support which helps guarantee the stability of the environment. They are the ones who have the real concern. Those who oppose the use of public lands for hunting and fishing rarely, if ever, make monetary contributions. Rather, they would jeopardize a human life to demonstrate their love for a tree. How godly is that?

As for promoting unity amongst our Churches, how can any of us object to that? Except that the Written Word of God is not given Its rightful position. After all, we can afford to sacrifice Truth for unity. Right? Wrong!!!

At first glance these pursuits seem rather innocuous, even respectable. Which is why they garner so much support. However, we must never forget that the Adversary has the ability to make evil appear good. Therefore, his workers can and do seem to be okay. We must consult the written Word of God so that we can make learned observations and not be bamboozled by God's enemies.

II Corinthians 13-15

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

The work these individuals do will never produce godly fruit. Be wise and don't be fooled by outward appearances. The concept that evil only shows itself as evil has been manipulated by the Devil. The bulk of novels which we may have read or movies that we may have seen have given us a misleading concept of what a "worker of evil" should look like. Do you really think that Satan is going to present evil as it truly is? The concept of a slime-drooling ghoul with fangs is exactly what the Devil (and Hollywood) want you to think evil looks like. Don't you think a well cultured, intelligent, sincere individual with good people and communication skills would be more effective? Of course. That's not to say that some evil isn't evidently evil. Some of it is. But only on a base level. The drug dealers and smut peddlers do not hold high positions in life. They're not unusually influential. Therefore facades are less important. This is not so for the

more significant offices in life. The more influential the position, the more demanding the need for a cover-up. This is where counterfeiting becomes so vital. Make no mistake, the Devil is a master counterfeiter. Think about it. Would you accept a twenty dollar bill if it were three feet long and purple? Of course not. It would have to look just like the real thing. Genuine, credible and inviting. Who has ever gone from a normal happy life directly to intravenous drug use? Most drug users have been gradually led on by seemingly innocent yet incredibly provocative means. When evil is presented in its rawest form, it's so repugnant that the need to cringe from it is irrepressible.

Which is more devilish, the Church of Satan or a pseudo-Christian Church? Most folks would say the Church of Satan. However, the Church of Satan leaves no guess work as to intent. It's a no-brainer. They openly admit to Satanism, no surprises there. But when it comes to the other often the "true colors" are not shown. It may be a while before you perceive that you shouldn't pray to dead men and women. They place the Bible in a very low position on their list of importance and elevate pomp and ceremony. Consequently, it may be years before you realize you've been rehearsing the commandments of men for the worship of God. So appearances, in and of themselves, are an invalid means for discerning truth.

What then am I to do? How can I know?

I John 3:7

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

What wonderful advise! What then is our standard for righteousness? The written Word of God. This is why Jesus Christ when tempted by the Sadducees

as pertains to the resurrections answered thus:

Matthew 22:29

Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

If we don't want to err, we must know the Scriptures. We must also know the power of God. But, what exactly does that mean? The following verses give marvelous insight:

I Corinthians 2:4,5

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

So then, the power of God is shown or demonstrated by the spirit. There are only nine ways we can show forth the spirit of God. They are the manifestations, i.e., speaking in tongues, speaking in tongues with interpretation, prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discerning of spirits, faith, gifts of healings and miracles. When we confess Jesus as Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we receive God's gift of holy spirit. This gives us access to the power of God. We have the Word and we have the spirit. If we familiarize ourselves with them we will not err. Neither will the Devil be able to gain an advantage over us or deceive us. It's only when we ignore one or the other (or sometimes both) that we are taken in.

What does all this have to do with modern trends in paganism? Just this, the Devil is capable of amazing counterfeits. If we are not wise we will be caught. But God has loved us enough to give us both His Word and His gift of holy spirit. With this background we can proceed with our study of idolatry.

I John 4:1-6

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but

try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

Wow! What wonderful guidance! Don't believe everything you hear. Try it. How? By holding it up against the written Word of God and by the spirit of God which is in you. Usually when something doesn't sit well with you there's a reason for it. Often that reason is a spiritual one. Furthermore, there must be a confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This is a great test. In your speaking of God's Word you will notice a decided difference in the tenor of the conversation when ever the Lord Jesus and his resurrection are brought up. Many people will talk to you about God and the Bible all day long. But, when you bring up the resurrection of Jesus Christ things change rapidly. Also, it's significant that those who are of God speak and hear the things of God. Those of the world, speak and hear only the things of the world.

Now let's contemplate man and God. Adam was given remarkable abilities by

God. Let's look at some of them.

Genesis 1:26-28

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

According to Jesus, God is spirit (John 4:24). Therefore, God's image is spirit. So, what God did was to create His image (spirit) in or within man. Spirit has no form or shape, so the idea that we look like God has no Scriptural documentation to back it. God has made us each as diverse as snowflakes. Which of us is not an individual? We all don't look alike, but we may all have His spirit within us (if we do as Romans 10:9,10 directs). This is the first mention of man in God's Word. How significant that spirit is mentioned also. Look at verse 26 again.

Verse 26:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Notice how this verse says; let us make man in our image . . .

This is a figure of speech where the singular is stated as plural. Whenever God uses a figure of speech in His Word He does so to emphasize what He deems

important. This act of giving man spirit is extraordinarily important. So vital is this to man that God has marked it with a figure of speech. This figure is used here to illustrate for us the **MAGNITUDE** of what God has done. He gave man (Adam & Eve) spirit. You might call this the *CROWN OF CREATION*. It was for God His crowning achievement and for man his most valuable possession.

Verses 27,28:

So God created man in his *own* image [God created His image in man], in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

He says this in three different ways to further emphasize the importance of this event.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Notice also that He gave man dominion (rulership) over all His creation.

It's spirit that sets man apart from the rest of creation. Not his intellect. God made man intelligent but what gave man dominion was spirit. Animals don't have spirit, only man does. Spirit is also the category wherein man could have an intimate loving relationship with God. This is crucial to understand!

Man was made second in command to God. The Prince of the earth and Master of the universe, that was man. In all of creation only God was over man. But, as you know, man fell. Consequently, man lost spirit AND his connection with God. What devastation has since plagued mankind. Although this matter is a select subject for further study it's also a vital part of what we're looking at. Because, it was after man fell that paganism began.

Look at the close working relationship man and God enjoyed:

Genesis 2:19,20

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

What wisdom and knowledge man was able to demonstrate! Today we see man engaged in brilliant accomplishments. Nevertheless, they are but a vestige of what once was. What man does today is a shallow remnant of what God made man to be. That being the case, we should not be held in awe by any technological achievements. Why man can do what he does is explained (in brief) by the verses we have just read. For the reasons cited by God and only for those reasons is man even able to tie his shoe laces.

Sadly, after man fell and lost his relationship with God, sin and death came upon all mankind. It wasn't long after this that Adam and Eve's son Cain rose up to murder his brother Abel.

Genesis 4:25, 26

And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, *said she*, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

This reads as though men were beginning to seek God. But that's not what God intended to communicate. According to Dr. E.W. Bullinger, in his Companion Bible, the latter phrase in

verse 26 would be better rendered as follows:

". . . began to call upon [their gods] by the name of Jehovah."

or

". . . began profanely to call upon the name of the Lord."

Dr. Bullinger further states that the majority of ancient Jewish commentators supply by ellipsis the words "their gods." This, they suggest, indicates they called the stars and their idols gods and worshiped them.

The AV has the word "themselves" in the margin producing the phrase as thus:

". . . to call themselves by the name of the LORD."

Finis Jennings Dake in his Annotated Reference Bible draws the same conclusions.

What began? A sacrilegious use of God's name. The "official" beginning of paganism. This is not to say that Adam and Eve were not idolatrous in their actions. However, this is where the Scripture documents the established beginnings of practiced pagan idolatry.

The Young's Literal Translation is also worth consideration.

". . . then a beginning was made of preaching in the name of Jehovah."

This is very popular today. Men preach in the name of God but it isn't the True God who they are preaching. They use His name to their advantage and not His. Biblically, true preaching calls attention to the greatness of the Word and God It's Author. Preaching is very much in vogue today, but it isn't the written Word of God that's preached. It's either an issue, or a man, or a ministry or even an incident. Everything it seems BUT the Word. When it should be; **THE WORD, THE WORD AND NOTHING BUT THE WORD**. It amounts to nothing more than "name dropping" and that's

real trendy.

Bereft of spirit, man became "wise" and "all-knowing." Or so he thought. But pride and arrogance have had their way with him, making him the fool.

Romans 1:21-25

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

So then, whatever is exchanged for the Truth of God is a lie and that which takes His rightful place is idolatry. When God gave the Apostle Paul the revelation found in Romans it was common place to worship a bird or four footed beast. What's changed? Under the pretense of environmental concerns, very little. When the be-all and end-all for a man is the preservation of an animal, that man is an idolater. What's the difference between a man who carves out a tree and worships it or a man who plants it and worships it? Simply put, for those who have given themselves over to ANYTHING, that is for them their religion. The same would be true for politics. If you are a died-in-the-wool partisan (party of your choice), to the degree that the party's platform and doctrine is supreme, you differ little from the loin cloth wearing, blood sacrificing pagan of yesteryear. The only

contrast may be your garb, i.e., you wear a business suit, they wore a toga or something.

From the time of Genesis 3 to present, man has continued to revamp and modernize his pagan pursuits. Things became so bad, that by the time of Noah, God was sorry He had made man.

Genesis 6:5,6

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

As you know the result of man's wickedness was the great flood. God being loving and merciful shed grace upon Noah and his family and mankind was able to continue.

Ever eager to advance technologically and "spiritually" man found himself in the following situation:

Genesis 11:1-9

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

And the LORD said, Behold, the

people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Many have thought that the problem here was that the tower was built to reach into heaven. If that were the case the World Trade Center in Manhattan and the Sears building in Chicago would be in big trouble. In the Hebrew there are no words for "may reach" as found in verse 4. If you have a KJV you will notice that the words "may reach" are printed in italics. This is an admission by the translators that they have added the words. Hence, there is nothing in the text to suggest that this tower would be so high as to reach into the heavens. Simply put, they were going to dedicate the top of this tower to the heavens. It was to have the signs of the Zodiac portrayed on it as objects of worship.

Up to this time there was only one language and the idolaters had only one religion. They were well unified and set to carry doctrines of devils to all men everywhere. God confounded their language and they began to disagree on their beliefs as well as other issues. This caused them to branch off into different sects and factions thus disappointing their purpose.

Today man has come full circle. It's commonplace to look to the Zodiac for guidance and to acknowledge these

things in architecture. Many other things are done today which are nothing more than efforts on the part of pagan idolaters to add permanence to their devilish beliefs. Each day the religious world makes strides to bring us closer to one world religion. This can only be accomplished if the truth of God's Word is stifled and if governments agree. Why do you think the United Nations is so very active? One world government will ultimately yield one world religion which will doubtlessly produce devil worship.

In the Old Testament times Baal and Dagon held sway. Today it's science and technology. What you look to for guidance and deliverance is your god.

The world around us continues to persuade people to look to technology for answers. Invention may have made life easy from a physical perspective but it can in no way take the place of God. Man looking to science for answers is nothing more than man looking to man for help.

Psalms 108:12

Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.

Psalms 62:11

God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power *belongeth* unto God.

Not only power but this too:

Psalms 3:8

Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

John 6:63-69

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

If this is true, then where should we be going for answers? Yet, much of science today concerns itself with efforts designed to disprove the Bible. Look at what God instructed Paul to record for Timothy:

I Timothy 6:20

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings [reminds me of Babel], and oppositions of science falsely so called:

The Darby Version has it this way:

O Timotheus, keep the entrusted deposit, avoiding profane, vain babblings, and oppositions of false-named knowledge.

The current trend of naming false knowledge science is rampant. After all, if it's science it must be true. So to make it credible we call it science. But, anyone with any experience knows that science (yes, even in the medical field) is trial and error. Often imprecise, what you would call hit and miss. It's amazing, you can propound the most absurd things as long as you do it in the name of science. Bring up the Bible and they go to sleep, mention science and their ears "perk-up."

Some assert that man came from an

experiment in genetics conducted by aliens. The same aliens who are so advanced they're able to travel millions of light years. Yet, they must not be good drivers because as soon as they get to Earth they crash. They've figured out how to fold space and warp time, they just aren't any good at parking. People will swallow that and reject the notion of a loving God who is spirit. God is orderly, as is everything He's created. There's nothing hit and miss about creation. It's all by Divine design. Everything works together and always has. Nothing random about it.

How can anyone with more than one brain cell reject the logic of God's Word in favor of aliens who can't drive? Something's drastically wrong there. Science is the god and the scientists her priests. Likewise with technology and medicine. Either way, it's paganism.

The Devil doesn't care if you call him Baal or Pentium, Dagon or Doctor as long as God is ignored. Anything that takes God's rightful place is an idol. Therefore, we must never allow anything to usurp His place in our hearts.

I John 5:21

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

An idol is anything worshiped, anything revered for truth and guidance. Keep yourself from anything and everything that looks to occupy the space in your heart reserved for God. God is number one and is due that place in your life. Anything that seeks to replace Him as first must be done away with. It could be religion, work, education or even family. All of these must line up behind Him. God first, anything for Him. To do less would be pagan.

TO BE CONTINUED:

The Counselor's Corner

With Rev. Linus A. Mathis III

What is a Gift?

As another year rushes to a close we are again faced with the annual ritual of holiday gift-giving. Many of us are thrilled with this prospect. But some aren't and justifiably so. For one, the season has been viewed by our free enterprise system as a means to boost sales and increase profit margins. To say that Christmas is commercialized would be an understatement indeed. Furthermore, financial burdens are increased and household budgets are strained beyond reasonable boundaries. This causes far too many people to go into debt. In fact, this debt tends to be self proliferating. Before the last shopping debt is satisfied the new season's purchases are added to it. This vicious cycle can go on without respite for years and years. One week of shopping (with a credit card) can produce a decade of consequence. This gift-giving induced deficit will eat into your cost of living and produce devastating results, strain the family's economy and impact its members. Relationships tend to be less sweet and words tend to be more harsh. When men and women are pressured in this manner they incline towards irrational behavior. Crime and suicide rates increase as a result. Some due to economic strain, others from depression. Those who have families are stressed, those who don't face depression.

It's important that you know that I'm NOT anti-Christmas. I'm very much in favor of celebrating the birth of our Lord. I'm also not against capitalism. I think our free enterprise system is the best. However above these, I'm in favor of people being blessed.

I know, as do many Bible scholars, that December 25 is not the actual birthday of Jesus Christ. But, I'm not one who desires to make an issue of it. I'm glad for any day that men and women look to the Lord. Besides, God's Word says that

I'm not to be a respecter of days and times and I'm not.

Romans 14:1-13

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.

For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. And, he shall be held up: for God is able to make him stand.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* to the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

For whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou show contempt for thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,

and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

Galatians 4:9,10

But now, after ye have known God, or rather are known by God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which ye desire again to be in bondage?

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Colossians 2:16,17

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *day*:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

The last thing I would do would be to dampen anyone's enthusiasm regarding the birth of the Messiah. On the contrary, I want to enhance it. If there's ever anything that I can do to help anyone be more in tune with the Master, I do it. Which is why I'd like to address a root cause for some of these holiday problems.

Very few people really understand what a gift is. This is especially true in the Christian community. Because of this, much is misconstrued pertaining to healing and other spiritual matters. A gift has no strings attached and is motivated out of love. One of the most telling Scripture along these lines is ironically also among the most well known.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God so loved, that's why He gave. Love is what motivated Him to give. Love is the driving force and God is the prime mover. He didn't give His Son because the world is good or deserves such a gift. He gave His Son out of love. No strings attached. A gift of God's divine favor. We didn't deserve it but He gave because He so loved. We have lost this concept and passed on to our little ones our own misconceptions. We've wrapped it all neatly in song and lore. Don't you remember? "You better watch out, you better not cry. You better not pout, I'm telling you why . . . He's making a list, he's checking it twice. Gonna find out who's naughty or nice . . . He knows when you're asleep. He knows when your awake. He knows when you've been good or bad, so be good for goodness sake." Because if your not good, you don't get your gifts. In my house growing up you were threatened with a piece of coal (or worse) in your stocking if your weren't good. But being good is work, hard work. When you work your "payment" is not called a gift, it's called a wage. Why? Because you earned it. I'm sure you don't go to your boss at the end of the week and ask for your gift check. Do you? Of course not. You earned it! It's your pay.

Take salvation for example.

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace [God's unmerited favor] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Do you see what a gift is? It's not something that's earned. It's given freely out of love. Love wouldn't put you in debt. Love doesn't threaten or pressure. Love isn't measured by how much you spend on merchandise. Love is measured by God. He sees you through even though He sees through you. God gave out of love and so should we.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This year why not teach your kids what a gift really is! Incidentally, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Once He gives us something, He never takes it back!

Truly, God has blessed us abundantly! How can we ever out give Him?

-"The Counselor's Corner" also appears in Alaska Parenting Magazine in an edited version and under a different title"-
