

The Great Fallacy of Great Joy!

By

Elder Enoch Ofori Jnr

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The Big Fuss

It's a world festival with deep roots in the ancient past. It's a commercialized festival with religious overtones. It's a season in which shops are bursting with goodies and the streets are teeming with shoppers and window shoppers and, well, confidence tricksters as well. Radio and television stations broadcast distinctive mellifluous festive songs and commercials. Religious men, from street preachers to televangelists, shout from the rooftops the birth of the king and the upcoming commemoration of his birth. Images of the jolly old fellow, Father Christmas, decorate the fronts of shops and feature in TV ads, dressed, as always, in his red and white fur coat with a white beard to match. Homes and offices are overflowing with provisions and presents. It's the Christmas festivity, and the atmosphere tells it.

For us in Africa, the 'exotic' scene setting with decorated Christmas Trees, a white Father Christmas (though some are Africanizing him with a black bearded Father Christmas!) and the singing of carols certainly add to the atmosphere. The Europeanized ambience is proof enough that Christmas is a European cultural import.

The festival is great fanfare, but it's all fake! Theologically, it stands on wobbly legs; religiously, it's delusive; socially, it's a mere fuss; spiritually it verges on idolatry. Christmas is really much ado about nothing!

The issue is that it makes people commemorate something for what it is not; they acknowledge and celebrate a complete falsity, a lie!

Non-Deity at the Centre of Christmas

The great irony about Christmas is that it pretends to honour Deity but in practice pays homage to what is not deity. As to its pretensions to be Christian, we will do well to remember that the scriptures mention it nowhere as sanctioned by God or kept by the Biblical church. That it supposedly marks the birthday of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on 25th December is a barely concealed trick that does not survive beyond a few pages of scripture and history reading. But still, it marks a birth.

Whose birth?

Natalis Solis Invicti! The birthday of the unconquered sun! The sun has been deified. The journey to our present time in history has been a long one, and the festival has gathered myths and accretions and moss along the way.

It all began with Nimrod, the founder of the Babylonian religion of sun-worship. History has it that he died a violent death (supposedly slain by Shem for his wickedness) following which his followers claimed his soul had migrated to live in the sun and so he had, in effect, become the sun-god. Annually, his birth was marked during the winter solstice with evergreen trees as the sun returned to its previous position in the sky after reaching its lowest point there. With the sun's return, the days became longer again after a spell of shorter days.

To the ancients, this sun causing this wonder in the sky was their Nimrod! The return of the sun signaled his evergreen rebirth, year after year! While the shorter days (Dec. 21-23) meant their beloved sun-god was deserting them, now he had returned to them--by 25th December. Sun-god Nimrod was like an evergreen tree; he would never fade! And so the luminous sun and the evergreen tree became allies in the celebration of his birthday on 25th December.

This explains why no Christmas Tree is complete without its twinkling baubles, representing the sun!

Another way, the unconquered sun's rebirth was commemorated was by burning a Yule log in the fireplace overnight and replacing it with a well trimmed evergreen tree the next morning. It was a Scandinavian innovation in the celebration.

From Babylon to the cold regions of north-western Europe is quite a distance. But the cult of sun-worship was and is universal. It held the ancients spellbound and still has a stranglehold on the world. From the humblest hamlet in Africa to the grand cosmopolitan capitals of the West, the Christmas fever has gripped the entire world.

The birth of a 'great one' will soon be celebrated with partying, church services, exchange of gifts, sports events and all sorts of merrymaking, the riotous and the moderate. But be forewarned, the celebrations do not mark the birth of your King and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now seated on the right hand of the Father in Heaven with all principalities and powers under Him. This is not to say that Christ was not born at a particular time in history. Yeshua Messiah was an actual historical figure who was born on a certain day in a certain month in a certain year and, we may add, in a particular land. While scripture has given us the bare facts, it has withheld some of the exact details--the details of dates, because apparently they are not vital to our salvation.

The night of Jesus' birth in the town of Bethlehem during the reign of Augustus Caesar (probably in 4 BC) was a holy occasion. There was joy in heaven and angels sang. On earth, baby Jesus lay in a manger "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). Apart from His human parents, shepherds tending their sheep by night were the first to hear of His birth from an angel:

Luke 2:8-14

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Such holiness, such serenity, such modesty! Such hope-filled message! The Prince of Peace has been born, bringing divine peace and goodwill to mankind. No instruction to organize a formal celebration but to rejoice in the birth of the Messiah for the divine peace and favour it brings.

Then, several centuries after Jesus' ascension to Heaven and the death of the original apostles, men who were pagans at heart infiltrated the Church and brought in the pagan festival of *Natalis Solis Invicti*, held on 25th December. And they claimed on their own authority, without any scriptural support, that they had replaced the sun-god with Christ, the Son of God, as the object of the festival. So the birthday of the sun-god became Christmas, Christ's birthday, held on 25th December, though in the bitter December winter of Israel no shepherds would take their flocks out for pasture--and at night!

Sadly, Christmas not only gives Christ a false date of birth but also ascribes to him the birthday of a false god, creating the bizarre situation where 'Christ's birthday' celebration is characterized by revelry and traditions that are contrary to His nature and Word. Father Christmas who leaves gifts for children is a myth but it's a recycled lie told to children every year at Christmastime. The pursuit of sensual pleasure is the order of the day exemplified by the custom of kissing under the mistletoe! And then there's the obscene commercialization and binge drinking, and that's all part of the Christmas celebration.

The Lord Jesus, in whose name the festivities are purportedly being held, is not impressed by all the rapturous partying and ceremonies taking place the world over:

Luke 16:15

And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

So what is abominable about Christmas?

It's that it venerates what is not deity--an illogical thing to do when one has knowledge of the true God:

Gal 4:8-11

⁸ Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

⁹ But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

¹⁰ Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

¹¹ I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

A return to paganism while a professed believer is a spiritual anticlimax 360 degrees anticlockwise! It's back to square one and a long way from the ultimate prize of eternal life. The text did not say they bowed to idols, but still they had gone back to the "weak and beggarly elements" to which they were previously enslaved. They had refined their return to idolatry. Instead of worshipping images, they "observed" the festive times and days of pagan gods which were inherently not deity! And Paul lamented that they had made the gospel, which he preached to them, of no profit to them!

The sun is no God, neither Nimrod supposedly deified as such. To celebrate its birth is therefore an abomination and an exercise in self-delusion. Yahweh warned the children of Israel, saying to them:

And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven (Deut. 4:19).

The ancients tended to venerate the heavenly bodies. They held them in awe. But God said it was wrong to regard them this way. The sun, the moon and the stars were not to be worshipped since they were made to serve "all nations" in giving them light and energy among other benefits.

But the people turned them into objects of worship--created things which are not God. The result was that all their worship was in vain. We read in Jer. 10:

¹ Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:

² Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

³ For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

⁴ They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

⁵ They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good (Jer. 10:1-5).

It's the Christmas Tree in description. And it's made at a time the heathen are "dismayed at the signs of heaven". This refers to the time of the winter solstice when the sun after reaching its lowest point in the sky regains its strength, and shorter days give way to longer days. The heathen were "dismayed" at the shortened hours of sunlight, to them the dimming power and glory of their sun-god. But the truncated daylight only lasted a few days. With the return of the sun, they cut a tree and decked it with silver and gold and fixed it upright in honour of the sun!

Customs die hard. The way the decorated tree in the text is made is basically the same way the Christmas Tree is made.

And God says it's all futile and of no benefit or significance whatsoever.

The implications may not readily sink in, but venerating a mere object as if it were God is like dealing with a fake professional, say, a doctor. The danger is in the effect on the client or patient of the contact. To the unsuspecting patient, he's dealing with a competent professional--for so he presents himself, but in reality all the advice, prescriptions and injections of this so-called doctor are likely to worsen his condition.

We equally expose ourselves to spiritual danger, to the mischief and corrupting influence of evil spirits and the righteous indignation of God when we treat what is not God as God.

But what if we now observe the pagan festival in honour of God, although it was previously held in honour of idols?

No Compromise with Paganism, No Accommodation

When the issue of the pagan roots of Christmas is raised, many Christmas-observing Christians try to explain it away by saying the festival has since been sanitized and is now celebrated in honour of Christ. The Christian rebranding, they seem to suggest, makes it acceptable to God.

Well, let see how God reacted when the Israelites made a golden calf and then organized a feast to honour Him, the LORD:

Ex 32:1-10

¹ And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

² And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

³ And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

⁴ And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

⁵ And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, **To morrow is a feast to the LORD.**

⁶ And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

⁷ And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

⁹ And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

It was syncretism in crude form. They made an idol, a golden calf, and organized an idolatrous feast, an orgy of booze and sex amid the offering of sacrifices, and they associated Yahweh's name with it--they said it was DEDICATED TO HIM!

And He was SORELY DISPLEASED with them! And threatened to wipe them out for being a stiff-necked people who knew He abhorred idolatry but persisted in indulging in it in His honour willy-nilly! This is the God whose name is JEALOUS! He brooks no accommodation with pagan gods. He warned the Israelites:

¹² Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

¹³ But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

¹⁴ For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Ex. 34:12-14).

His people are neither to copy the religious customs of pagans and adapt them to their own worship of Him nor attempt to mix His truth with pagan ritual in their worship of Him. He instructs in Deut. 12:29-32:

²⁹ When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;

³⁰ Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

³¹ THOU SHALT NOT DO SO UNTO THE LORD THY GOD: for every abomination to the LORD, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

³² What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Yahweh's people are to do to Him what He has commanded them; they are to worship Him the WAY He has TAUGHT them!

A symbol of His worship and that of paganism must not even exist side by side:

Deut 16:21

When you build the altar for the LORD your God, never plant beside it any tree dedicated to the goddess Asherah (God's Word, GW).

A clear breach of the above command is the Christmas Tree. It was *adopted* from pagans and *adapted* to the adoration of Christ. At Christmastime, it's a common sight to see many churches adorned with the pagan 'Christianized' Christmas tree.

Is Heaven impressed or indignant?

We are not Stronger than God

God has already voiced His attitude towards the celebration of pagan festivals, whether it's in His name or held patently as pagan. "The customs of the heathen are vain"! Worthless! Valueless! So then, they neither have His sanction nor His blessing. What they invite is His anger! We read in 1 Cor. 10:18-22:

¹⁸ Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

¹⁹ What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

²¹ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

²² Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?

The point of the analogy is that just as the OT offerer of sacrifice was bound in fellowship with the altar on which the sacrifice was made, so those who participate in pagan sacrifices are bound in fellowship with the demons to whom the sacrifices are made. But the sacrifice was originally made to idols, yet the resulting spiritual fellowship is with demons! Why is it so?

The same way the Altar represented God and therefore it's really He who had fellowship with the offerer, so the idols represent demons. The idols, as images made of wood and stone, are not "anything" in themselves--they are dumb, inanimate and powerless. But they are pagan religious instruments for fellowship with demons. Without them formal contact with the demons is cut. Thus avoidance of idols is avoidance of demons.

Demons are the real objects of pagan worship, and the festive occasions instituted in honour of the pagan gods are really in their honour. So to whom is the pagan festival of 25th Dec dedicated, the sun-god who is no god or the demon whom the unreal sun-god represents?

It's the latter. Being a spirit, he lives to this day. It's to him that homage is paid every 25th December whether or not it's coupled with Christ's name. After all, the devil knows that Christ utterly hates it when people adopt pagan customs in His worship.

The Lord has made Himself clear: we cannot have fellowship with demons through participation in their sacrifices and/or observance of their religious dates and at the same time with Him.

Just as light and darkness will never come together, so God and the devil can never share the same religious space. God calls for separation unto Him. Only then will He accept us as His people. He tells us in 2 Cor. 6:14-18:

¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The choice is up to us: we either worship Him wholly and faithfully without any touch of paganism or we worship Him on our own terms with pagan customs, and He forgets all about us.

If we go the way of the latter, we will only provoke God and His judgement is sure to come upon us. And we can in no way resist Him in judgment. We are not stronger than He is.

Ultimately, as Joshua sought from the Israelites, we need to make a clear choice between God and paganism, fully aware of the consequences of each choice:

¹⁴ Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Josh. 24:14-15).

I recommend the Joshua choice: "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" wholly and faithfully.

Pagan 'Christianized' Christmas is out the window!