

Presenting a reasonable faith with an 'unknown god'

Readers who have pondered the significance of my column title, "The Altar of an Unknown God," will find enlightenment here. The following meeting of the Greek and

'For we also are His offspring.'"

Paul beautifully knit together the truth he had seen revealed with the cultural context he addressed. When he encountered metaphysical questions within the culture the altar "To the unknown god"—these questions he answered through his Christian, monotheistic viewpoint, yet without discarding the Greeks' cultural reference ("as some of your own poets have said. . .").

THE ALTAR OF AN UNKNOWN GOD

JOEL P. SHERPERT
Copy Editor



Christian mind, recorded in the Book of Acts, is my inspiration and the model for my own discourses.

Paul of Tarsus, journeying throughout the Mediterranean region spreading the Christian faith in the First Century A.D., found himself in Athens, and began preaching in the marketplace. When the Stoics and Epicureans encountered him, and heard his strange message about Christ's death and resurrection, they brought him to the council of the Areopagus to hear his new doctrine of "foreign gods."

Paul's response to the Greeks is fascinating. Though initially upset at the idols (a major Jewish taboo) about the city, he did not attack Greek thought, but rather synthesized it with his Christian message. Here is what he said to the assembly:

"Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious, for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.'

"Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you. . .for in Him we live and move and have our being, as some of your own poets have said,

A healthy Christian perspective sees the Faith not as an antithesis to other world views—i.e. Christianity is totally true and all other paths are totally false—but as a completion of other forms of wisdom and knowledge. It may be the ultimate truth, but as C.S. Lewis claimed, other faiths may contain "at least some hint of the truth."

Lewis saw Western religious thought as "something coming gradually into focus. First you get, scattered throughout the heathen religions of the world. . .the idea of a god who is killed and broken and then comes to life again."

Then the Hebrew scriptures come along, and religion becomes slightly more focused—"connected with a particular nation... then, in the New Testament, the thing really happens. The dying god really appears—as a Historical person, living in a definite place in time."

My aim is one with Paul's—to present a "reasonable faith," which is relevant to and understandable by my surrounding culture. If my message is true, it is the one cure for a dying world, and the one answer to an eternal question. I would therefore "be a Greek to a Greek, and a Jew to a Jew," so that all might be saved. *I show you a more excellent way.*



Christmas every day?

Christmas in September? Crazy as that sounds, it's true. I walked into work mid-September—before school even started—to find that my store had just got-

FANTASY VS. REALITY

LEAH CHAPIN
Staff Writer



ten a shipment of hipswaying Santa Claus dolls that sing "Jingle Bell Rock" until your face implodes from grimacing.

That immediately plunged me into a dark mood that has yet to lift.

My next thought was: "What happened to Thanksgiving?"

Is it just me, or is the Christmas Season coming earlier and earlier every year? By the year 2005 I expect the age-old joke of "Christmas In July" to be a reality! And by 2015, it really *will* be Christmas every day of the year!

Did I miss the point of Christ-

mas entirely? I thought Christmas was about family celebration, giving, love and charity. . .did I miss the mark?

'Christmas is a *religious* holiday. Thanksgiving is not—it is a patriotic holiday, and if any holiday should be exploited, it should be a patriotic one. And yet Turkey Day is tossed by the wayside and Christmas is extravagantly exploited to the point of causing no few handfuls of hair to be suddenly detached from their former roots.

I saw a Thanksgiving card the other day that made my stomach turn. The gist of it was: "Thanksgiving: Today we eat, tomorrow we shop! (I love this Holiday!)"

Have we lost all track of the meaning of Turkey Day? Stores seem to have five major themes for decorating or sales. Valentine's Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Halloween and Christmas. St. Patrick's Day and Thanksgiving are only two of countless holidays

dismissed or overlooked, but which are no less important. It seems the only people who acknowledge a lesser-known holiday are car dealers, who offer "One Day Only Savings Just For This Generic Holiday," which is missing the point of that holiday anyway.

And exactly *what* ever happened to Chanukah, Ramadan or Kwanzaa? They are just as important to those who practice them as Christmas is to those who practice that holiday. Christmas is no more important to a Christian than Chanukah is to an orthodox Jew. So why is our country's businesses promoting one religion's holiday over all others, when America claims to be the "melting pot" nation? Christmas is no more sacrosanct than Chanukah or Ramadan, or Kwanzaa for that matter. It's all in what a person believes.

That is all Christmas is, when you break it down and look at it in its rawest form. It's just a religious observation of the birth of a Christian figure, and to promote Christmas as a holiday and downplay all other coinciding holidays is wrong.

Absolute problem

Once again Joel Shempert has used his column to promote the idea of an Absolute Principal using the idea that murdering children is wrong. He says that this is some-

first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of the Pharaoh on the throne to the first-born of the prisoner in the dungeon, as well as all first-born of the animals."

The implication is that the author of Moral Authority says killing children is wrong then goes against his own injunction by killing innocent Egyptians. Substitute

history's Egyptians for today's Iraqis and you see the dilemma.

If Joel wants to inform of the crisis in Iraq and exhort us to action in defense of innocent children he should be commended. But if he is going to muddy his argument by once again resorting to defending his version of Absolute Authority he should realize he runs the risk of diminishing his own authority in educating us to this unfortunate reality.

Bill Briare
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

thing that most people will agree on. I too agree that killing children is wrong and do not want to undermine his argument that Iraqi children are dying at the hands of U.S. policy.

However, he once again runs into a logical problem in appealing to an Absolute Moral Authority (for him expressed as the God of the Bible) by ignoring biblical stories while constructing his philosophy. I suggest he read Exodus 12:29, "At midnight the Lord killed every

THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

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