

Re: Asian natural disaster or evolution in action?

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From: Raymond Griffith (*tiffirgrReverse_at_ctc.net*)

Date: 12/31/04

Date: Fri, 31 Dec 2004 13:03:11 -0500

in article 41d54c2f_1@Usenet.com, Precision at precision@Usenet.com wrote on 12/31/04 8:01 AM:

>
> *"Raymond Griffith" <tiffirgrReverse@ctc.net> wrote in message*
> *news:BDFA4B70.76AC%tiffirgrReverse@ctc.net...*
>> *in article 41d4c3c9_3@Usenet.com, Precision at precision@Usenet.com wrote*
>> *on*
>> *12/30/04 10:19 PM:*
>>
>>>
>>> *"Raymond Griffith" <tiffirgrReverse@ctc.net> wrote in message*
>>> *news:BDF9AE11.75D1%tiffirgrReverse@ctc.net...*
>>>> *in article 41d3f531_1@Usenet.com, Precision at precision@Usenet.com*
>>>> *wrote*
>>>> *on*
>>>> *12/30/04 7:37 AM:*
>>>>
>>>>>
>>>>> *"bob young" <alaspectrum@netvigator.com> wrote in message*
>>>>> *news:41D3CAC6.F4F41893@netvigator.com...*
>>>>>>
>>>>>>
>>>>>> *William Kimbler wrote:*
>>>>>>
>>>>>>> *Try this on for size maybe; just maybe it was just nature and all*
>>>>>>> *the*
>>>>>>> *right*
>>>>>>> *factors happening at just the right time to cause such a disaster. In*
>>>>>>> *short*
>>>>>>> *terms it just happened because everything just fell into place at the*
>>>>>>> *right*
>>>>>>> *time.*
>>>>>>>
>>>>>>> *I guess what I am saying is don't read more into it than what's*
>>>>>>> *there.*
>>>>>>>
>>>>>>> *The earth's plates are moving all the time and seismic actions are*

>>>>> *recorded*
>>>>> *daily, only occasionally do things get out of hand.*
>>>>>
>>>>> *Read no more into it than that.*
>>>>>
>>>>> *The size of this tradegy, bad though it is, does nothing, but nothing*
>>>>> *to*
>>>>> *bolster belief in any gods or a god that would cause such a tragic*
>>>>> *event*
>>>>> *a*
>>>>> *few*
>>>>> *days after celebrating the birthday of His so called son, leading to*
>>>>> *the*
>>>>> *death*
>>>>> *of over 30,000 children.*
>>>>>
>>>>>
>>>>>
>>>>> *Excellent point that God is likely angry about the choice of dates to*
>>>>> *celebrate His only–begotten Son's birthday,*
>>>>>
>>>>> *Not another one! And no, he did not make a point about the "choice of*
>>>>> *dates".*
>>>>>
>>>>> *But if God is angry that people celebrate the Birth of Christ on*
>>>>> *Decemeber*
>>>>> *25, then that is awfully petty to be angry about, considering we don't*
>>>>> *know*
>>>>> *exactly when He was born. The important thing is that people remember*
>>>>> *Him*
>>>>> *and why He came. On December 25, as well as December 24, 23, 26, 27,*
>>>>> *etc.,*
>>>>> *I*
>>>>> *thanked God and worshipped Him.*
>>>>>
>>>>> *And almost nobody cares about what you have posted below. Only a few*
>>>>> *cranky*
>>>>> *fundies who don't understand what real worship is about. Whether a*
>>>>> *"heathen"*
>>>>> *holiday was coopted or not is unimportant. No one worships Mithra today.*
>>>>> *He*
>>>>> *is all but forgotten. Those going to church on Christmas to worship were*
>>>>> *worshipping Christ.*
>>>>>
>>>>> *The Letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Your Letter is devoid of*
>>>>> *God's*
>>>>> *Spirit.*
>>>>>
>>>>> *although I wouldn't go so far as*
>>>>> *to think He caused the disaster to send a signal of His displeasure in*
>>>>> *this*

>>>>> *regard.*

>>>>

>>>> *That would be rather silly, wouldn't it, considering that most people in*

>>>> *that part of the world are not Christians, much less celebrate*

>>>> *Christmas?*

>>>>

>>>> *Anti-Christmas rant deleted.*

>>>>

>>>> *Regards,*

>>>>

>>>> *Raymond E. Griffith*

>>>>

>>>

>>>

>>> *Instead of arguing with you about whether history should be dismissed*

>>> *with*

>>> *the waive of a hand,*

>>

>> *I didn't say that. But even so, you don't consider the entire history of*

>> *everything you do or are associated with.*

>>

>>> *I just want to say that I cannot imagine any Christian*

>>> *who believes in celebrating birthdays wanting their birthday celebrated*

>>> *on*

>>> *the birthdate of a false god instead of the actual date of which they*

>>> *were*

>>> *born.*

>>

>> *Provided that someone knows the day I was born on, I'd rather like them to*

>> *celebrate that day. However, there have been several times in which my own*

>> *birthday has been celebrated early or late, depending upon circumstances.*

>> *It*

>> *really didn't matter.*

>>

>>>

>>> *If one believes it is important to celebrate someone's birthday, and they*

>>> *do*

>>> *not know the date of that person, then suppose others arbitrarily chose*

>>> *the*

>>> *date of an ancient god because they figured it was as good as any other*

>>> *day.*

>>> *"Since we don't know the exact day or month of their birthday," they*

>>> *reasoned, "why not use the god Mythra's birthday instead?"*

>>

>> *Well, you'd be hard pressed to actually *prove* that this was the exact*

>> *reasoning behind the date for Christmas. The reasoning was a good little*

>> *bit*

>> *more complex than that.*

>>

>> *But you'd have had a hard time finding any day that was not associated*

>> *with*

>> *some god or other. Why, you have probably said that "Today is Thursday",*
>> *and*
>> *you thus acknowledged that today is the day dedicated to the Norse God*
>> *Thor.*
>> *Congratulations on your idolatry. (Yes, it was a ridiculous statement, and*
>> *you do not worship Thor). Then again, you probably worship God either on*
>> *the*
>> *day devoted to Saturn or the day devoted to the Sun. Hmmmm. It seems to me*
>> *you have a problem.*
>>
>>>
>>> *Now suppose that the person whose birthday they are celebrating on this*
>>> *arbitrary date may feel strongly about false gods, and prefer that if*
>>> *you're*
>>> *going to celebrate their birthday at all – but don't know the exact*
>>> *date –*
>>> *to pick some neutral date instead?*
>>
>> *You are supposing that there exists a nice, neutral date. Got any in mind?*
>>
>> *But what does Paul say about these false gods? "We know that an idol in*
>> *this*
>> *world is nothing, ", and that "there is no God byt one.' If after all there*
>> *are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth ... Yet for us there is*
>> *one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whome we live, and*
>> *one*
>> *Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live."*
>> *I*
>> *Corinthians 8:4b–6.*
>>
>> *I submit that God doesn't care about the birthdays of other so-called*
>> *gods.*
>> *When I celebrate Christ's birth, I celebrate Him, not some other so-called*
>> *god who does not exist.*
>>
>> *And, when the early church was helping new converts turn from their old*
>> *pagan associations by celebrating godly things on the days the pagans*
>> *celebrated other things, they were doing what God has done with His people*
>> *from the start.*
>>
>> *Oh yes! Do you think priests with vestments were unique to Israel? Or that*
>> *a*
>> *priestly family was a unique thing within Israel? Why God's commands to*
>> *Moses concerning the priesthood were, in some measure, a copy of what the*
>> *Israelites had known from Egypt and from their contacts with the other*
>> *nations around them. Priests wore special garments, breastplates with*
>> *precious stones and elaborate headdresses, were generally a caste or*
>> *family*
>> *(not just anyone could become a priest), made sacrifices for*
>> *transgressions,*
>> *and were alone able to minister the things of God. There was a place for*

>> *worship, and the tabernacle (and later the Temple) had layouts that were*
>> *not*
>> *really unique either. The people saw the familiar symbols they had always*
>> *known, but worshipped God instead of the gods they had known before.*
>>
>> *If God was willing to take these familiar points of the nations around*
>> *them*
>> *and use them to direct worship to Himself, what do you have against it?*
>> *Probably an ignorance of the way God has done things throughout the Bible.*
>>
>>>
>>> *Let's take Jesus Christ as a case in point. Is there evidence Jesus, if*
>>> *nobody knows the real date of his birthday, would be okay about them*
>>> *choosing the birthday of a mythical god that people once worshipped?*
>>
>> *"We know that 'an idol in this world is nothing.' and that 'there is no*
>> *god*
>> *but one.'"*
>>
>> *Why, Jesus Christ was even OK with paying tribute to Caesar with coins*
>> *bearing Caesar's figure on them. Why should He be so worked up about a*
>> *little thing like a birthday? And Paul was OK with people eating meat*
>> *sacrificed to idols, even though the heathen saw the act of eating that*
>> *meat*
>> *as participating in the worship of those idols. Paul said it wasn't, since*
>> *the false gods didn't exist.*
>>
>> *And for a real kicker, think about this! Paul told the men at Athens that*
>> *their "unknown god" was actually the Lord Himself, and that God wanted*
>> *them*
>> *to know who they were really worshipping in their ignorance (see Acts 17).*
>> *Now, was this "unknown god" *really* God Himself? Of course not. They had*
>> *constructed an altar to every god they could think of, and wanted to make*
>> *sure they hadn't missed any. And Paul used that fact to bring them the*
>> *gospel in a way that caused people to hear it who otherwise would not*
>> *have.*
>>
>> *And you are concerned about a birthday? Paul used a *PAGAN ALTAR* and*
>> *called*
>> *it God's.*
>>
>> *You are hung up on the wrong things, brother!*
>>
>>>
>>> *Raymond, I'm not going to even go there or debate that issue.*
>>
>> *That's fine. Scripturally, you lose anyway. Nothing even to really debate.*
>> *I*
>> *have just shown from the Bible that God was willing to use familiar*
>> *symbols*
>> *-- even heathen ones -- to point people to Himself.*

>>
>>>
>>> *If I believed in celebrating birthdays, hypothetically speaking (!),*
>>
>> *I bet you do! Particularly your own. Or if you are a parent, then you*
>> *almost*
>> *certainly celebrate your children's birthdays (else you are likely the*
>> *meanest grinch I have ever met). And celebrating the birth of the Son of*
>> *God*
>> *was something even the Angels did! I see no reason not to join them!*
>>
>>> *I will*
>>> *simply state that I would personally have told them, "I don't feel*
>>> *comfortable with your picking the date of a mythical god to celebrate my*
>>> *birthday.*
>>
>> *And you know, Jesus, God incarnate Who surely Knew this would be the case,*
>> *was silent about the issue. It doesn't really matter what you would have*
>> *done -- He didn't do it.*
>>
>>> *If you don't know the date of my birthday then why not pick some*
>>> *neutral date to celebrate it? It bothers me that according to history,*
>>> *the*
>>> *early church decided that Mytha's birthday was a good date to celebrate*
>>> *my*
>>> *birthday.*
>>
>> *It shouldn't. It was common sense.*
>>
>>> *Why not pick another month to celebrate it? If you really want to*
>>> *celebrate it at all?"*
>>
>> *Because if you don't replace a heathen practice with a godly one, then you*
>> *will have people fall back into heathen practices. Mithra's birthday was*
>> *celebrated. So you do *nothing* on that day? Then your young believers go*
>> *and celebrate because they always have, then feel guilty about it and fall*
>> *away from the church. Why not give them something better, more Holy and*
>> *reverent?*
>>
>> *And if your church is like most others, on Halloween night you have some*
>> *kind of church activity, right? By your own objections, horrors! You are*
>> *doing something spiritual on a day which ancient people worshipped false*
>> *gods! Why, if you are like most fundamentalist churches, you have a*
>> *"harvest*
>> *festival" and you decorate the fellowship hall and play games and the*
>> *children wear costumes. How worldly can you get?*
>>
>> *But it isn't worldly at all. You are directing the minds of the children*
>> *away from "trick or treat" and witches and ghosts and spirits to a fun*
>> *time*
>> *based upon more Christian values. But you still had to have it on the same*

>> *day to make it work.*
>>
>> *Do you object to a church having a "harvest festival" on Halloween? If you*
>> *don't your objection to Christmas on December 25 is hypocritical.*
>>
>> *Furthermore today virtually no one except for the rabid letterkeepers even*
>> *think about such a thing. I went to a concert a few days before Christmas.*
>> *Every song was about Christ's birth and the hope it gave to a sinful*
>> *world.*
>> *Have you ever sung any of these Christmas carols? If not, why not?*
>>
>>>
>>> *I celebrate the Lord's Evening Meal, and personally don't see why I*
>>> *should*
>>> *add Christmas knowing the viewpoint of Jesus Christ's Father expressed*
>>> *about*
>>> *false God's in the book of Exodus chapters 33 and 34?*
>>
>> *Read 1 Corinthians 8. Paul had a "Christian" perspective on the matter.*
>>
>> *God is not as rabidly unreasonable as you would make Him out to be. In*
>> *Exodus 32, the people worshipped an idol. But Christians who celebrate*
>> *Christmas are not doing that.*
>>
>>>
>>> *If you're going to condemn me for that, if harshly judging the faith in*
>>> *Christ of others is part of your religion, Raymond, then so be it.*
>>
>> *You are free to do as you like. But you are condemning others for their*
>> *own*
>> *faith in action, aren't you? And that is part of your religion.*
>>
>> *Sigh, I know that fundamentalists like very much to reference the Law.*
>> *They*
>> *are much more comfortable with the Letter than they are with the Spirit.*
>> *And*
>> *yes, the Law is important. Important enough that we are not under the Law*
>> *any longer, right? You have read Galatians, haven't you?*
>>
>> *Or, how long has it been since you have heard a series of messages on the*
>> *Sermon on the Mount? Christ presented His conditions for discipleship in*
>> *the*
>> *Kingdom there, and fundamentalism generally ignores it. It is much too*
>> *hard*
>> *and strenuous and requires too much self-examination. It is much easier to*
>> *focus on the externals of others than to examine one's own self.*
>>
>> *I conclude that most people overly concerned about this issue haven't*
>> *really*
>> *considered how God shepherded His people along over the years, or how He*
>> *used symbols familiar from round about while directing the worship toward*

>> *Himself.*

>>

>> *But I encourage you to do so, and not to judge those of us who find joy in*

>> *Him on December 25.*

>>

>> *Regards,*

>>

>> *Raymond E. Griffith*

>>

>>

>

> *I'll compliment you on the many good points and counterpoints you raised.*

Thank you. I find them rather conclusive, myself.

>

> *I just want to clarify that the basis of my argument on Christmas coinciding*

> *with the date of Mythra's birthday is not that Mythra's birthday*

> *historically just happens to coincide with the early church's choice of date*

> *to celebrate Jesus Christ. For example, if Halloween falls on a meeting*

> *night at the Kingdom Hall you are correct that we wouldn't preempt the*

> *meeting to another night. I'm also not suggesting that a "neutral" day of*

> *the year is a day where nothing of anything of pagan historical significance*

> *has ever happened.*

>

> *Rather, my understanding is the early church in the 4th century specifically*

> *chose December 25th to celebrate Christ's birthday because at the time they*

> *were also celebrating Mythra's birthday on that same date. They decided to*

> *consolidate the two dates so they could celebrate BOTH birthdays at the same*

> *time.*

Actually, your understanding would be wrong. I can see why people say that, but it is almost certainly not the case. It is without doubt an exaggeration.

The Christian church in the 4th century was in competition against a pagan world. This church had refused to acknowledge other gods, and in fact its gospel prohibited the worship of other gods. So *if* the date was chosen to coincide (and there are many other reasons which could be considered), celebrating the birth of Jesus on Mithra's birthday would not have been for the convenience of both, but rather to replace the one with the other.

Now I have no doubt that some weak Christians who had trusted Christ had not completely stopped believing in the other old gods. One usually does not make such a mental replacement overnight. And there were without doubt some who celebrated both.

And yet, consider Naaman, who after being healed by the Lord at Elisha's command asked forgiveness for when he would bow before the altar in Ninevah. Naaman took with him earth for an altar to the Lord, but he recognized the emotional and social pull between systems (2 Kings 5). And he was told to

"go in peace."

Sometimes it is necessary to recognize that salvation, while making a new creation, does not undo the old creation — at least not all at once. But Christianity grew and Mithraism declined and faded away.

>

> *I'll give you an analogy as to why I find this offensive. Imagine if a family member was adopted from a foreign country where the parents were killed (such as an infant orphan from the current tsunami crisis whose parents were killed and birth records destroyed, adopted by an American couple). Since the couple doesn't know the infant's exact birthday, lacking birth records destroyed in the disaster, they decide for personal reasons it would be nice to celebrate that birthday on the same date as their own child's birthday on February 17th. In other words, in lack of knowing the exact birthday (as is the case of Jesus) the couple makes a conscious choice of dates, in this case, it's the same birthdate as their own natural child's, so they can celebrate both birthdays together.*

>

> *Now, in the case of Jesus, the early church in the 4th century made a conscious choice of dates for another reason. Having abandoned pure Christianity and having turned to false gods as did the Israelites chronicled in the book of Exodus (chapters 33 and 34), the early church celebrated Mythra's birthday on December 25th already.*

>

> *Not knowing Jesus Christ's birthday, the church leaders decided, why not consolidate the two birthdays into one? We can honor the god Mythra and at the same time honor Jesus Christ, they reasoned! And so was born Christmas.*

You are wrong about their reasoning. It is easy to accuse them of such, but I will insist that the anti-Christmas propaganda is distorted. You may or may not believe this as you will, but it is well-documented that there were *many* different proposals for the date of Christ's birth and thus many different dates celebrated. For an excellent discussion of the historical development, see the following from the Catholic Encyclopedia.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03724b.htm>

And no, don't let the name "Catholic Encyclopedia" distort your perspective. Certainly you are a Jehovah's Witness, I am Independent Baptist, and the article is written by a Catholic. But the history is correct and has been verified in other sources.

>

> *This is NOT the same as my making a big to-do about Christmas because it coincidentally happens to fall on the same day as some pagan celebration! Rather, the very church that was supposed to be Christ's prophesied faithful and wise servant or faithful and discreet slave (compare Matthew 24:45-51) turned to celebrating a false god, a practice which Jehovah abhors.*

This is not in evidence as a general phenomena.

- > *Instead*
- > *of setting aside a separate date for the celebrating of Jesus Christ's*
- > *birthday, they decided to consolidate the two, almost as if they viewed*
- > *Mythra and Christ as siblings who should be honored together as equals.*

Again, I will submit that your perspective of the history is distorted and that the propaganda which has molded your viewpoint is unwarranted by the facts.

- >
- > *Interestingly, the only birthday ever mentioned in the Bible was king*
- > *Herod's, who received a gruesome gift: the head of John the Baptist!*

Hmmm. You had better reread the passage below. Herod had a birthday, but he did not receive a gift — he gave it. And the reference is hardly a condemnation against birthday observance in general. When I celebrate my son's birthday next April, I will not think of Herod at all, and my son will get *good gifts*, even as I want Him to expect from his Heavenly Father.

And the angels celebrated Christ's Birth. So shall I.

Beside this, even if people in that day and time did not celebrate birthdays as we do, they also did not drive cars, use computers, read or write English, have modern medicine, and a host of other sundry items. We are two different cultures in two different times and meanings associated with certain things are literally different than they may have associated with them.

- >
- > *(Matthew 14:1–13) 14 At that particular time Herod, the district ruler,*
- > *heard the report about Jesus 2 and said to his servants: "This is John the*
- > *Baptist. He was raised up from the dead, and this is why the powerful works*
- > *are operating in him." 3 For Herod had arrested John and bound him and put*
- > *him away in prison on account of He-ro´di-as the wife of Philip his brother.*
- > *4 For John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to be having*
- > *her." 5 However, although he wanted to kill him, he feared the crowd,*
- > *because they took him for a prophet. 6 But when Herod's birthday was being*
- > *celebrated the daughter of He-ro´di-as danced at it and pleased Herod so*
- > *much 7 that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. 8 Then*
- > *she, under her mother's coaching, said: "Give me here upon a platter the*
- > *head of John the Baptist." 9 Grieved though he was, the king out of regard*
- > *for his oaths and for those reclining with him commanded it to be given; 10*
- > *and he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. 11 And his head was brought*
- > *on a platter and given to the maiden, and she brought it to her mother. 12*
- > *Finally his disciples came up and removed the corpse and buried him and came*
- > *and reported to Jesus. 13 At hearing this Jesus withdrew from there by boat*
- > *into a lonely place for isolation; but the crowds, getting to hear of it,*
- > *followed him on foot from the cities.*
- >
- > *No other mention of anyone's birthday celebration appears in the Old or New*
- > *Testaments of the Holy Bible. I find this very interesting in light of what*

> *I just said above.*

And, for the reasons I outlined, I find it utterly irrelevant. And quite frankly, the Occasion that brought the Angels, sent the Shepherds, and ultimately in time brought the Wise Men is given enough importance in Scripture that I regard it as well.

In any case, your sense of history is too simplistic to be accurate, and again I would assert that you are not only trying to follow the Letter as opposed to the Spirit, but that you are creating Letters where none exist.

So, assuming you have children, you do not celebrate their birthdays? A pity. If they grow up not expecting good gifts from their father, they may also come to expect humbug and grinch from their Heavenly Father. You might want to think about that.

Regards,

Raymond E. Griffith