

# **A Message from the Patriarch of the Apostolic Orthodox Church**

*Does it Matter?*

I read with interest in the newspaper that there is still an on-going debate about the Great Holy Day, Easter, which we celebrate today, April 4, 1999. It seems that there are three distinct schools of thought on the matter: 1) it happened as related in the Scriptures; 2) as postulated in the book, *The Passover Plot*, Jesus drank a potion which put His body into a coma-like state, simulating death, and the resurrection was nothing more than His awaking from that state—a clever plot on the part of Jesus and His Apostles to fool the gullible; and, 3) Jesus did die, did not revive, His body was stolen by His Apostles, and they spread the rumor that He was alive, the empty tomb being the only proof. To the vast majority of Christians, #1 is the only choice. The resurrection of Jesus is the central theme around which Christianity is built. It is the triumph over death as He predicted, proof that He was God, and therefore establishing Christianity as a (and to many, *the*) true religion. But does it really matter which of the above is true? Does it matter if *any* of them are true?

No.

“Heretic,” you cry, “he’s gone too far this time!” But it doesn’t matter, I tell you. And even as I’m led away to simultaneously be drawn and quartered, tarred and feathered and burned at the stake, I won’t recant. But I *will* explain.

Since we’re using this medium of the Internet to communicate, let’s consider the now-favorite scapegoat of the computer world, Bill Gates. At some point in time, Bill will die, and you can be sure that at another point in time, there will be one or more posthumous biographies written and published. Now, imagine that the following information was either unavailable, incorrectly relayed to the author, or “colored” to make the book more in line with the author’s feelings: name, birth place, birth date, schooling, youth, career. But under career, only one item was correct: he founded Microsoft. Would the errors delete the rest of Bill’s life and accomplishments? To go further, if an author stated that Bill *did not* found Microsoft, would this in any way negate the fact that he did?

No.

That’s the same answer as above. Interesting, isn’t it?

Now let’s consider Jesus. We have no idea of His actual birth date, estimates running the gamut from 100B.C. to 4A.D. We have always believed that He was born in Bethlehem, but modern archeology has cast a shadow or two upon that. Schooling? We hear only that he was in the Temple as a young man and that He was “subject” to Mary and Joseph. His youth and young adulthood are equally obscure, His approximate thirteenth through

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thirtieth years are totally missing from the Scriptures. His name in Hebrew, *Yeshua* (h[Wy]) was extremely common, as “Joe” or “John” are today. To say with any degree of certainty that a *specific* Jesus named in the Scriptures was *the* Jesus Who founded Christianity is similar to declaring that “Bill”—just “Bill”—founded Microsoft. How many “Bills” do you know? How many are there in the city in which you live? I could go on and on, but I won’t belabor the point.

I hear some of you saying, “Alright, you’ve told us what doesn’t matter. What *does*?” Just this: that at some instance in this linear flow that we call “time,” in this sphere of being called “matter,” on a seemingly insignificant thread in the fabric of creation called “Earth,” a Christ, a manifestation of God the Son, released what Mystics term the *Christian Current of Initiation*, and that which we call “Christianity” came into being. The virgin birth, miracles, ministry, resurrection—indeed, the entire New Testament—are meaningless unless seen in that light. The who, where and when matter not; the fact that such a thing occurred *does*. And we know this occurred not by history, not by knowledge but by the ineffable, indefinable, incommunicable medium of *experience*. For Christianity—*true* Christianity—is not something that can be defined or intellectualized. It transcends time, space, culture, and even that which we narrowly term “religion.” For it is something that stirs within the soul. It is the essence of God Himself.

May the Light of Lights enfold you!

Mathias Mar Yusef, Patriarch

April 4, 1999