

We have included “The Two Babylons” in our collection of rare books on the subject of Rome, though over the years, some questions have been raised about the reliability of this book.

Ralph Woodrow is the author of a popular book entitled “Babylon Mystery Religion,” which is based in part on Alexander Hislop’s “The Two Babylons.” Long after “Babylon Mystery Religion” was published, Woodrow repudiated Hislop’s work and his own work based on it. In the interest of fairness, we are including Woodrow’s critique of Hislop’s book since some have doubts about Hislop’s conclusions.

However, before completely abandoning Hislop’s book as unreliable, we have also included a counter-argument by Pastor George C. Bruns who believes that Woodrow is selling Hislop far too short.

Having traveled to many countries and seen first hand the similarities between paganism and Rome, we are persuaded that even if direct lines cannot always be drawn, the same spirit that was at work in the ancient pagan religions is the same spirit that is at work in the Roman Catholic Church.

David Cloud

### ***First, the argument against the reliability of “The Two Babylons.”***

Message from Ralph Woodrow regarding the book BABYLON MYSTERY RELIGION

For a number of years my book BABYLON MYSTERY RELIGION was very popular, enjoyed a wide circulation, and was translated into various languages. To this day, we do not cease to receive orders and inquiries about it. Despite its popularity, several years ago we pulled it out of print and now offer a replacement book [THE BABYLON CONNECTION?](#)

Because misinformation about this decision persists on the Internet, and in other ways, the aim of this article is to set the record straight.

According to one rumor, “the Catholics” put so much pressure on me, I had a heart attack and almost died! Consequently, I “recanted” and wrote the other book. There is no truth to this!

Another rumor is that my motives were financial—my desire was to be popular and make more money. To the contrary, BABYLON MYSTERY RELIGION was extremely popular and provided more income to our ministry than all other books and offerings put together! We have faced much financial loss because of the decision to pull the book out of print.

Some letters we have received have been very warm, commending me for honesty and integrity, expressing appreciation for the clarification provided by the replacement book THE BABYLON

CONNECTION? But other letters have been mean-spirited—that I am “stupid,” “scum,” “scared of the truth,” a “low down coward,” a “traitor to Christ,” following “a false god,” and am an “undercover Jesuit”! One even said, “I hope you die soon, I want you dead!”

It puzzles me how some can be so fanatical against one set of errors—or what they perceive to be errors—only to develop greater errors: becoming judgmental, hateful, and dishonest.

My original book had some valuable information in it. But it also contained certain teachings that were made popular in a book many years ago, *THE TWO BABYLONS*, by Alexander Hislop. This book claims that the very religion of ancient Babylon, under the leadership of Nimrod and his wife, was later disguised with Christian-sounding names, becoming the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, two “Babylons”—one ancient and one modern. Proof for this is sought by citing numerous similarities in paganism. The problem with this method is this: in many cases there is no connection.

Let’s suppose that on May 10th a man was stabbed to death in Seattle. There were strong reasons for believing a certain person did it. He had motive. He was physically strong. He owned a large knife. He had a criminal record. He was known to have a violent temper and had threatened the victim in the past. All of these things would point to him as the murderer, except for one thing: on May 10th he was not in Seattle—he was in Florida!

So is it with the claims about pagan origins. What may seem to have a connection, upon further investigation, has no connection at all!

By this method, one could take virtually anything and do the same—even the “golden arches” at McDonald’s! The *Encyclopedia Americana* (article: “Arch”) says the use of arches was known in Babylon as early as 2020 B.C. Since Babylon was called “the golden city” (Isa. 14:4), can there be any doubt about the origin of the golden arches? As silly as this is, this is the type of proof that has been offered over and over about pagan origins.

By this method, atheists have long sought to discredit the Bible and Christianity altogether—not just the Roman Catholic Church.

By this method, one could condemn Protestant and evangelical denominations like the Assemblies of God, Baptist, Church of Christ, Lutheran, Methodist, Nazarene, etc. Basic things like prayer, and kneeling in prayer, would have to be rejected, because pagans knelt and prayed to their gods. Water baptism would have to be rejected, for pagans had numerous rites involving water, etc.

By this method, the BIBLE itself would need to be rejected as pagan. All of the following practices or beliefs mentioned in the Bible, were also known among pagans—raising hands in worship, taking off shoes on holy ground, a holy mountain, a holy place in a temple, offering sacrifices without blemish, a sacred ark, city of refuge, bringing forth water from a rock, laws written on stone, fire appearing on a person’s head, horses of fire, the offering of first fruits, tithes, etc.

By this method, the LORD himself would be pagan. The woman called Mystery Babylon had a cup in her hand; the Lord has a cup in his hand (Psa. 75:8). Pagan kings sat on thrones and wore crowns; the Lord sits on a throne and wears a crown (Rev. 1:4; 14:14). Pagans worshipped the sun; the Lord is the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2). Pagan gods were likened to stars; the Lord is called “the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16). Pagan gods had temples dedicated to them; the Lord has a temple (Rev. 7:15). Pagan gods were pictured with wings; the Lord is pictured with wings (Psa. 91:4).

Here is a list of the some of the unsubstantiated claims that are made about the religion of ancient Babylon:

- The Babylonians went to a confessional and confessed sins to priests who wore black clergy garments.
- Their king, Nimrod, was born on December 25. Round decorations on Christmas trees and round communion wafers honored him as the Sun-god.
- Sun-worshippers went to their temples weekly, on Sunday, to worship the Sun-god.
- Nimrod’s wife was Semiramis, who claimed to be the Virgin Queen of Heaven, and was the mother of Tammuz.
- Tammuz was killed by a wild boar when he was age 40; so 40 days of Lent were set aside to honor his death.
- The Babylonians wept for him on “Good Friday.” They worshipped a cross—the initial letter of his name.

It is amazing how unsubstantiated teachings like these circulate—and are believed. One can go to any library, check any history book about ancient Babylon, none of these things will be found. They are not historically accurate, but are based on an arbitrary piecing together of bits and pieces of mythology.

Hislop, for example, taught that mythological persons like Adonis, Apollo, Bacchus, Cupid, Dagon, Hercules, Janus, Mars, Mithra, Moloch, Orion, Osiris, Pluto, Saturn, Vulcan, Zoraster, and many more, were all Nimrod! He then formed his own “history” of Nimrod! He did the same thing with Nimrod’s wife. So, according to his theory, Nimrod was a big, ugly, deformed black man. His wife, Semiramis—also known as Easter, he says—was a most beautiful white woman with blond hair and blue eyes, a backslider, inventor of soprano singing, the originator of priestly celibacy, the first to whom the unbloody mass was offered! This is not factual history—it is more in the category of tabloid sensationalism.

Some claim that round objects, such as round communion wafers, are symbols of the Sun-god. But they fail to mention that the very manna given by God was round! (Exod. 16:14). Some are ready to condemn all pillars and historical monuments as pagan. But they fail to take into account that the Lord himself appeared as a pillar of fire; and, in front of his temple, there were two large pillars (Exod. 13:21,22; 2 Chron. 3:17).

Because Babylon had a tower (Gen. 11:4), some suppose this must be why there are church buildings with towers or steeples: they are copying Babylon! A newspaper reporter in Columbus, Ohio, wrote to me about this. In that city, and numerous other places, this claim has been made. Let me say it quite clearly: No church ever included a steeple or tower on their house of worship to copy the tower of Babel! Why discredit thousands of born-again Christians by promoting ideas that have no connection? If a tower in itself is pagan, God would be pagan, for David described him as “my high tower” (2 Sam. 22:3; cf. Prov. 18:10).

No Christian who puts a bumper sticker with a fish symbol on the back of his car has ever done so to honor the fish-god Dagon. No congregation has ever put a cross on a church building for the purpose of honoring Tammuz. No Christian has ever gone to an Easter sunrise service to worship Baal. No Christian has ever worshipped a Christmas tree as an idol. Claims that imply “all these things started in Babylon,” are not only divisive and fruitless, they are untrue.

The concern about not wanting anything pagan in our lives can be likened to a ship crossing a vast ocean. This concern has taken us in the right direction, but as we come to a better understanding as to what is actually pagan and what is not, a correction of the course is necessary in our journey. This is not a going back, but a correction of the course as we follow “the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

## **IN DEFENSE OF HISLOP'S THE TWO BABYLONS**

By Pastor George C. Bruns

There is, in the final analysis, only one Truth that exists and that Truth is God (1 John 5:20). When God became flesh and walked as one of us He made it clear that He was the Truth (John 14:6). In a prayer to the Father also recorded by the Apostle John, Jesus stated that The Old Testament Scriptures were the Truth (John 17:17) And, that the Holy Spirit would in the future act as a guide to certain of the Apostles and disciples in the revelation of additional Truth (John 16:13-15). That Truth became known to us as the New Testament. The giving of that Truth ended sometime around the end of the first century with the writing of these words:

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (Revelation 22:18-21)

God in His infinite wisdom and love for mankind has preserved that Truth down through time all the way to us today. And, He will continue to preserve His Word for all eternity (1 Peter 1:25). This writer believes that that infallible and inerrant Truth exists today in the English language in the King James Bible and in no other book. All other writings, no matter how well done, are of natural origin and are therefore subject to human error. Only the Holy Bible is God's revealed Truth. This being said our study of the controversy at hand can now begin.

This article is not intended as an attack on anyone. This author has no axe to grind or hobby horse to ride. It just is what it is -- a defense of a time honored Christian classic. However, it is to be remembered that *The Two Babylons* is a human production. Hislop's so called "proofs" concerning the historical Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz and their associations with one another and with the mythical deities of other cultures is highly speculative. Attempting to "prove" anything that happened so long ago without the confirmation of Scripture is going to be conjectural and speculative. It can't help but be so.

Recently Alexander Hislop's book, *The Two Babylons*, has been criticized by one of its former and most ardent supporters, Ralph Edward Woodrow, an evangelist from California and author of the books *Babylon Mystery Religion*, and his most recent fare *The Babylon Connection*. Most likely anyone who is familiar with Hislop's *The Two Babylons* is also familiar with Woodrow's *Babylon Mystery Religion*. The latter work being somewhat of a condensed version of the former. Woodrow almost proudly brags about the success he has had with it, and rightly so as it is a very informative little book. He writes,

"As a young evangelist I began to share a sermon on the mixture of paganism into Christianity, and eventually wrote a book based on Hislop -- *Babylon Mystery Religion*. In time, my book became quite popular, went through many printings, and was translated into Korean, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and several other languages. I came to be regarded by some as an authority on the subject of pagan mixture. Even a noted Roman Catholic writer, Karl Keating, said: 'Its best-known proponent is Ralph Woodrow, the author of *Babylon Mystery Religion*.'"

"Many preferred my book over *The Two Babylons* because it was easier to read and follow. Sometimes the two books were confused with each other, and I even had the experience, on one occasion, of being greeted as 'Rev. Hislop!'" [Woodrow, Ralph, *The Babylon Connection*, Palm Springs, CA., Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1997, p. Intro.]

Mr. Woodrow now claims, however, that the conclusions that he had drawn from his previous research and the research of his former mentor were all wrong. He explains,

"As time went on, however, I began to hear rumblings that Hislop was not a reliable historian, I heard this from a history teacher and in letters from people who heard this perspective expressed on the Bible Answer Man radio program. Even the Worldwide Church of God began to take a second look at the subject. As a result, I realized I needed to go back through Hislop's work, my basic source, and prayerfully check it out.

"As I did this, it became clear: Hislop's 'history' was often only an arbitrary piecing together of ancient myths.... The subtitle for Hislop's book is 'The Papal Worship Proved to Be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife.' Yet when I went to reference works such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *The Americana*, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, *The Worldbook Encyclopedia* -- carefully reading their articles on 'Nimrod' and 'Semiramis' -- not one said anything about Nimrod and Semiramis being husband and wife. They did not even live in the same century. Nor is there any basis for Semiramis being the mother of Tammuz. I realized these ideas were all Hislop's inventions." [Woodrow, Ralph, *The Two Babylons: A Case Study in Poor Research Methodology*, Christian Research Journal, vol. 22 Issue 2, 2000 Book Reviews 54-56.]

Here then is the basis of Woodrow's attack upon Hislop's classic work. First, using Woodrow's own words "Hislop's 'history' was often only an arbitrary piecing together of ancient myths." Well, whoever said myth is history? A myth is a story that may have historical connections but a myth in and of itself is not history.

Elsewhere in the same article as quoted above, Woodrow claims that *The Two Babylons* is not accurate because Hislop's method of interpretation of the evidence was faulty:

"Building on similarities while ignoring differences is an unsound practice. Atheists have long used this method in an attempt to discredit Christianity altogether, citing examples of pagans who had similar beliefs about universal floods, slain and risen saviors, virgin mothers, heavenly ascensions, holy books, and so on." [Ibid.]

With all due respect to Mr. Woodrow it is the linking of similarities in myths that help us determine what the truth once was as evinced by the very universal flood myths Mr. Woodrow mentions. This writer has personally studied hundreds of flood myths from around the globe and it is their similarities not their differences that unite them with the Truth as found in Scripture! It is the key words and phrases that many of these myths share, such as "a righteous man," "flood," "rain," "boat," "ark," "mountain," "raven," "dove," "alter," "sacrifice," "all the earth was covered," "all people died," etc. that point to a common denominator of truth. The differences in the details within these myths only identify them with their specific cultures.

Normally this writer would not quote from a profane source but the expertise of this man in the field of myth is legend (no pun intended). The following is taken from Joseph Campbell's "The Hero With A Thousand Faces,"

"Whether we listen with aloof amusement to the dreamlike mumbo jumbo of some red-eyed witch doctor of the Congo, or read with cultivated rapture thin translations from the sonnets of the mystic Lao-tse; now and again crack the hard nutshell of an argument of Aquinas, or catch suddenly the shining meaning of a bizarre Eskimo fairy tale: it will be always the one, shapeshifting yet marvelously constant story that we find, together with a challengingly

persistent suggestion of more remaining to be experienced than will ever be known or told." [Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, New York, NY, MJF Books, 1949, p. 3.]

And again,

"What is the secret of the timeless vision? From what profundity of the mind does it derive? Why is mythology everywhere the same, beneath its varieties of costume?" [Ibid, p. 4]

Yes, indeed why? Because it is the similarities in myths that bring them ever closer to their origins.

The second part of Mr. Woodrow's argument against Hislop's *The Two Babylons* is that he cannot find any definitive proof linking Nimrod and Semiramis in current encyclopedic references. In fact he says that Nimrod and Semiramis according to these references did not even live in the same centuries. While it is true that several modern encyclopedias do not link these names together several ancient writers do. Take for example the following written by Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-395), who also happens to echo the historian Eusebius and others.

"Ninus, [another name for Nimrod] then, who succeeded his father Belus, the first king of Assyria, was already the second king of that kingdom when Abraham was born in the land of the Chaldees.... For when Ninus the son of Belus was king, he is reported to have subdued the whole of Asia, even to the boundaries of Libya, which as to number is called the third part, but as to size is found to be the half of the whole world. The Indians in the eastern regions were the only people over whom he did not reign; but after his death Semiramis his wife made war on them.... Now Abraham was born in that kingdom among the Chaldees, in the time of Ninus.

"At Abraham's birth, then, the second kings of Assyria and Sicyon respectively were Ninus and Europus, the first having been Belus and Ægialeus. But when God promised Abraham, on his departure from Babylonia, that he should become a great nation, and that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, the Assyrians had their seventh king, the Sicyons their fifth; for the son of Ninus reigned among them after his mother Semiramis, who is said to have been put to death by him for attempting to defile him by incestuously lying with him. Some think that she founded Babylon, and indeed she may have founded it anew. But we have told, in the sixteenth book, when or by whom it was founded. Now the son of Ninus and Semiramis, who succeeded his mother in the kingdom, is also called Ninus by some, but by others Ninias, a patronymic word. Telexion then held the kingdom of the Sicyons. In his reign times were quiet and joyful to such a degree, that after his death they worshipped him as a god by offering sacrifices and by celebrating games, which are said to have been first instituted on this occasion." [Augustine, *City of God*, Book XVIII, Chapter 2.

No one that this writer has read believes that Abraham was born in the 8th century B.C. So who is this Semiramis? Although not "proof," it is not the only evidence to be found in ancient

literature that there was a primeval Semiramis existing prior to 800 B.C. Hislop tells his readers as much in a footnote on page 21 of his book.

"Sir H. Rawlinson having found evidence at Nineveh, of the existence of a Semiramis about six or seven centuries before the Christian era, seems inclined to regard her as the only Semiramis that ever existed. But this is subversive of all history. The fact that there was a Semiramis in the primeval ages of the world, is beyond all doubt, although some of the exploits of the latter queen have evidently been attributed to her predecessor. Mr. Layard dissents from Sir. H. Rawlinson's opinion." [Hislop, Alexander, *The Two Babylons*, Neptune, NJ, Loizeaux Brothers, p. 21.]

In support of Hislop the *Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible* claims other women in history have also been called Semiramis.

"...queen Margaret of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (1353-1412 A.D.) And Catherine II the Great of Russia (1729-1796) were both labeled as the Semiramis of the North." [Foryan, George, Ed. *Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible*; G.G. The Jerusalem Publishing House Ltd. Jerusalem.]

Could it be that the name Semiramis is like the name Candice or Cleopatra? Was the wife of Nimrod just Semiramis the first?

An additional area of concern of Mr. Woodrow's is Mr. Hislop's use of his resources. He writes,

"Because Hislop wrote in the mid-1800's the books he refers to or quotes are now quite old. I made considerable effort to find these old books and to check Hislop's references; books such as Layard's *Nineveh and Its Remains*, Kitto's *Cyclopeidia of Biblical Literature*, Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, as well as old editions of Pausanias, Pliny, Tacitus, Herodotus and many more.

"When I checked his footnote references, in numerous cases I discovered they do not support his claims. Hislop says, for example, that the 'round' wafer used in the Roman Catholic mass came from Egyptian paganism. For this he cites a statement in Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians* (vol. 5, 353, 365) about the use of thin round cakes on their altars. When I checked Wilkinson's work, however, he also said the Egyptians used oval and triangular cakes; folded cakes; cakes shaped like leaves, animals, and a crocodile's head; and so on. Hislop failed to even mention this.

"While condemning round communion wafers as images of the sun-god Baal, Hislop fails to mention that the very manna given by the Lord was round. 'Upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing...And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat' (Exod. 16:14-15, KJV, emphasis added). Round is not necessarily pagan." [Op.Cit. Woodrow, *The Babylon Connection*, p. 64.]

First, Mr. Woodrow's argument that Hislop withheld important information concerning the other shapes of bread used by the Egyptians is without merit. The other shapes were not relevant to the topic and hence, there was no need for Mr. Hislop to mention them. Secondly, in Mr. Woodrow's example he compares apples with oranges. The "thin round" disc shaped bread is geometrically different than a spherically shaped seed. "And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed..." (Exodus 16:31) If Mr. Hislop is guilty of deception by omission then so is Mr. Woodrow.

Now this short treatise does not answer all the charges made against Mr. Hislop by Mr. Woodrow. That exercise would require a small book all by itself. Agreed, there are problems in Hislop's *The Two Babylons*, but there are also problems in Woodrow's book *The Babylon Connection*. There are problems with every book ever written save the Bible. This writer has found errors in J. Vernon McGee's *Thru The Bible Commentary*, and in Floyd Barackman's *Practical Christian Theology*, and, yes, even in the notes of the *Old Scofield Reference Bible*, and in the notes of *The Ryrie Study Bible*. However I have learned a long time ago not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Mr. Hislop cites more than two hundred and sixty-five references in *The Two Babylons* to support his claims; eighteen of those references date back to the 1500's. Mr. Woodrow cites fifty-four references in *The Babylon Connection*; only twelve of which coincide with Hislop's! How can Mr. Woodrow claim that Mr. Hislop does not know what he is talking about when Mr. Woodrow hasn't checked out over two hundred and fifty of Mr. Hislop's references? That those references are old and difficult to find is not an excuse. Was Mr. Woodrow's research faulty back when he wrote *Babylon Mystery Religion* as he suggests or is it faulty now?

I will agree with Mr. Woodrow on one point he makes in his book. We do not need the writings of any man to prove that the Roman Catholic Church is in error; all we need is the Bible. But that also means we don't need Mr. Woodrow's book *The Babylon Connection* either.