

# TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 52. December 22, 2019. ADVENT 4



It's once again the time of year for the usual online Christmas controversies: ardent secularists vs. defensive Christians over what Christmas actually is – whether it's a feast we stole from the Nordic pagans or is it a purely Christian festival: is it really Christ-mass, or is it in fact Yule-tide? It certainly generates a lot of heated rhetoric both online and off – but when all is said and done, it's really a pointless argument.

It's perfectly true that Yule or Yuletide (a twelve-day affair for the pagan Anglo-Saxons,) was an ancient Germanic feast of Light in the deep, dark midwinter, and that our traditions of the Yule log, the lighted Christmas tree, the Advent wreath and several others were originally pagan. It's also true that we really don't know when Jesus was born, but it probably wasn't December, not if there were shepherds watching over their flocks by night involved.

So what? There's nothing for Christians to be defensive about. When the pagans were converted to Christ, so were their festivals and customs, and it makes perfect sense: they understood that Christ *is* the Light, the very Light they'd been celebrating for untold ages without realizing it. The symbolism was already there – a light shining in the darkness, a hope of the renewal of everything come spring. Of course this does cause a bit of a problem in the Southern Hemisphere, but such are the vicissitudes of history.

As to the precise date of Jesus' birth, there's no way we can ever know it, and besides, if HM the Queen can have an 'official birthday' so can Jesus Christ!

In short, if our secularized brothers and sisters want to celebrate Yule as a feast of Light, of Hope in the midst of darkness, without naming Christ, that shouldn't bother us: they're on the right path. It's just that we have a Name for that Light, that Hope, and it's Jesus, born sometime 2020 odd years ago, who lived, suffered, died and rose again to open for us the way to the Father, the source of all. That's what we are celebrating so let's get on with it!

I was going to end with Merry Christmas, but as an ardent 'Adventist' I'll save that till the 24<sup>th</sup>. See you then!