Subject: THE REAL REASON FOR THE SEASON
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THE REAL REASON FOR THE SEASON

THE TIME-HONORED tradition of a midwinter celebration in honor of Christ's birth is seldom scrutinized, and almost never suspected of sinister implications. Even to suggest that its observance is a paganistic import and that its festivities are fraught with idolatrous significance is sure to shock, alarm, or even anger the many men and women who cherish its celebration as the high point of their year. Despite the sentimentality associated with its observance, an unbiased review of its historical roots will reveal a startling reality--Christmas is thoroughly unchristian! Beneath the glittering lights, greenery, gift-giving, and reckless gaiety there is a lurking evil of sinister proportions: a thinly disguised paganism parading as "Christian"! Bombastic rhetoric? Ill-informed rant? Hardly. The facts speak for themselves, and in the following paragraphs we intend, by the grace of God, to underscore those considerations that make participation in Christmas unthinkable for true Christians.

Where Did It All Come From?

As one seeks to trace Christmas to its historical roots, one thing becomes obvious: Christmas was not celebrated among the Christians of the New Testament era. Albert Henry Newman, writing in The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, states quite frankly: "There is no historical evidence that our Lords birthday was celebrated during the apostolic or post apostolic times.â€• Echoing this observation, the M'Clintock And Strong Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature adds rather bluntly: "The observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of New Testament origin... the fathers of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observance of the nativity. "

The fact of Christmas' relatively late introduction (A.D. 360) into the realm of church observance has profound implications: (I) It indicates that the festival was definitely not a tenet of the early, apostolic understanding of Christianity (Acts 2:42; Jude 3); and, (2) it suggests that the festival is an unauthorized addition which lacks Divine approval.

In exposing the relatively late origin of the Christmas observance, the above quoted authorities confirm that it was never part of apostolic Christianity. Though often hailed as an expression of Christian piety, the celebration was utterly absent from that body of truth preached by Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John. The churches of Asia and Europe, who were the privileged recipients of the Apostles' labors, were absolute strangers to the idea of a midwinter festival in honor of Christ's birth. It was definitely not part of the "faith once delivered to the saints," for which the believers were exhorted to earnestly contend (Jude 3; c.f. also Heb. 2:1-4), and is consequently an

unauthorized addition-lacking both Biblical support and divine sanction.

While this consideration may seem of little consequence to the casual observer, those familiar with the backward-glancing sentiment of Scripture recognize it as one of the weightiest arguments against Christian participation in the Christmas festival. Basic to any question of Christian practice is the test of antiquity. Says the inspired prophet, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls " (Jer: 6:16). Therefore, any observance of a post apostolic origin becomes immediately suspect of being an unwarranted alteration. A striking illustration from the Old Testament may serve to illustrate the point. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire (a type of well-intentioned, but unauthorized worship) before the Lord, which he commanded not, "...there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them" (Lev. 10:1, 2). Clearly, any observance, worship form, or practice lacking a Divine and Biblical precedent falls short of God's approval. If for no other reason, the Christmas festival must be rejected by conscientious Christians on this account. The Lord's work and His worship must be conducted His way if they are to enjoy His endorsement.

A crucial question, however, remains to be answered. If Christmas did not derive its origin from Christ or His apostles, from whence, pray tell, did it originate? If you are a patron of this winter festival, you may want to brace yourself for an answer that might prove unnerving.

Out of Paganism and Into the Church

"By us who are strangers to sabbaths, and new moons, and festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the Brumalia, and Matronalia, are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year's day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar; oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians."

TERTULLIAN IN LAMENT, DE IDOLATRIA.

"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

THE APOSTLE PAUL IN ALARM, GAL. 4:9-11

The year was 336 A.D. and the church had but recently emerged from the fiery trials of imperial persecutions. With the alleged conversion of the emperor Constantine himself, the church began to breathe more easily and to bask in the surprising recognition and endorsement that a new era seemed to have bequeathed it. However, as the church adjusted to the changing times, there was a noticeable shift in its attitude toward the world. Its former aversion to all things pagan was rapidly giving way to a growing acceptance of heathen practices. As the salt began to lose its

savor (Matt. 5: 13), a policy of cultural accommodation arose whereby the church, in an attempt to make Christianity more appealing to the masses, adopted outright pagan observances and sought to invest their symbols and rites with Christian meaning. It was in the midst of this climate of apostasy that a December 25th celebration in honor of Christ's birth was born. Two observances that especially lent themselves to the church's tendency to Christianize the pagan were Saturnalia and Brumalia, celebrated from December 17th-24th, and on December 25th, respectively. Writing in The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Albert Henry Newman takes note of this attempt to christen the pagan festival and thereby traces the Christmas celebration to its true source:

"The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit or manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Nearer East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun-worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival.â€• 1 (emphasis mine)

That this aforementioned accusation was not farfetched may be amply demonstrated from other reliable sources. The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, for instance, adds its weight to our contention with these words.

â€œDecember 25th eventually became the officially recognized date for Christmas because it coincided with the pagan festivals celebrating Saturnalia and the winter solstice. The church thereby offered the people a Christian alternative to the pagan festivities and eventually reinterpreted many of their symbols and actions in a way acceptable to Christian faith and practice.â€• 2

To this evidence we may add the witness of the Dictionary of Bible and Religion:

â€œCelebration of Christmas on December 25th dates from A.D. 336, when the pagan festival of natalis solis invicti (the birthday of the invincible sun) established by the emperor Aurelian in the third century A.D. was converted to a Christian holy day, referring to "the Sun of Righteousness.â€• 3

Thus, Christmas, with its gift-giving and merry making, good cheer and universal good will -- that most cherished of the holidays --is actually a paganistic intrusion into Christianity! Don't let its innocent looking face fool you. Don't let its good humor cajole you. Beneath that mask of merrymaking are the insidious minions of hell, laboring behind the veil of the supposedly Christian to lure the unsuspecting into the embrace of the decidedly worldly. The very fact that the world rushes madly into a gay celebration of this allegedly Christian holiday is in itself a witness against a divine origin. You see, the Bible reveals that the world always hates those whom and that which God has chosen. Jesus said to His disciples: â€œIf ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the

world hateth you" (Jn. 15:19); and in another place: "...For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16: 15). No, my dear reader, if Christmas were of God, the world would avoid it just as they do a true New Testament church (Acts 5:13), the uncompromised preaching of the Word of God (In. 3:20), and other genuinely spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). The reason why Christmas is so popular with the masses is because it is not genuinely spiritual. As we have clearly shown, it is of the world, and it is for this very reason that the world loves it so. The unregenerate throng recognizes in Christmas a license and frivolity that answers to their own desire for carnal indulgence (and with the additional sanction of religion!); they simply recognize and love their own (Jn. 15: 19). The Bible, however, warns us as believers not to capitulate to the mindset and ways of life of this world's culture. For those unfamiliar with this Biblical stress, we highly recommend an open hearted reading of the following passages: Rom. 12: 1, 2; 1 Cor. 2:12; 10:14, 21; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 4:17; James 4:4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; 5:19, 21).

Surely, the Puritan, Prynne, was writing in concert with the ruling sentiment of Scripture when he observed:

"Our Christmas lords of misrule. together with dancing. masks, mummeries, stage-players, and such other Christmas disorders now in use with Christians were derived from these Roman Saturnalia and Bacchanalian festivals, which should cause all pious Christians eternally to abominate them" (emphasis mine). 4

If Prynne's "heavenly accent" is a bit too strong for you, please continue reading; there is more evidence to come!

A Birthday for Jesus?

Perhaps such a flurry of evidence will constrain the conscientious to cry out, "Enough. I concede that Christmas is pagan in origin and was never a part of the original gospel." But then, in an attempt to rationalize its observance, some resort to the sentimental plea: "But isn't it praiseworthy to honor our Lord Jesus Christ on His very own birthday? After all, you celebrate your own, don't you? Such an emotional appeal tends to sway the sentimental and uninformed; for who would object to honoring the birthday of Christ? Consequently many well-meaning but misguided Christians continue to participate in an utterly pagan celebration with a view to providing Jesus Christ with the unrequested privilege of a birthday observance.

In view of this common alibi for continuing to celebrate the holiday, it is ironic that one of the primitive church's primary objections to Christian participation in the Christmas festival was the holiday's dubious claim to be a birthday for Jesus. The early church, as have some Christians since, opposed birthday observances per se on the grounds of their obviously pagan origin. Jane Hatch, in The American Book of Days, makes an interesting observation:

"...In any event, the observance of birthdays generally was wholly condemned as a pagan

custom repugnant to Christians. It was in this vein that Origin, the African church father and philosopher, wrote in A.D. 245 that it was sinful even to contemplate observing Jesusâ€™ â€œbirthday as though He were a King Pharoah.â€• 5

In a similar vein, the Encyclopedia of Early Christianity remarks:

"Origin said that Christians should not celebrate birthdays because it was a pagan custom, adhered to by unrighteous people, such as Pharoah and Herod." 6

That Christmas is definitely not the birthday of Jesus is clearly seen from the fact that the date of the festival, a wintry December 25th, is at variance with the time of Jesus' birth as suggested by the Biblical narrative. Luke records that at the time of Christ's birth there were "shepherd's abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8); whereas, according to Talmudic writers, the flocks in Palestine were brought in at the beginning of November, and not driven to pasture again till toward March. This would rule out a mid-winter birth for Christ.

December 25th, however, was the date of another birthday-the birth of the "invincible sun" at the time of the winter solstice. As the days began to lengthen, winter's back seemed to be broken and the sun appeared to be reborn or resurrected after a wintry death. In pagandom, this astronomical cycle was attributed to the activity of the gods. In fact, the Roman Saturnalia, which no doubt gave Christmas its mid-winter date, was a festival dedicated both to the agricultural god, Saturn, as well as to this renewed power of the sun. Therefore, the birthday unwittingly celebrated by many misguided Christians is sadly that of the physical sun, not that of the Divine Son of God, and their perpetuation of this purely pagan concept brings them dangerously close to virtual sun worship!

With such birthday overtures Jesus remains entirely unimpressed, for, despite their appearance of piety, they remain beggarly "rudiments of the world" (Gal. 4:9; Col. 2:20) to which the true believer is dead (Col. 3:2). In fact, their practice involves one in "will worship" (Col. 2:23), which, due to its arbitrary and self-devised nature, lacks both Biblical authorization and Divine endorsement. Self-made holydays can no more please God than Nadab and Abihu's strange religious fire (Lev. 10: 1, 2), for in matters of worship, it is only the precedent of Divine ordination that lends endorsement to human sincerity (Mk. 7:7; 1 Chron. 15:13; Isa. 8:20).

What's In A Name?

Then again, there is the tell-tale significance of the holiday's name. As is generally the case, titles tend to be descriptive, and the designation, "Christmas," is no different. It describes for us a distinctively Catholic religious rite with ramifications that should disturb every Bible-believing Christian.

According to The Dictionary of Bible and Religion, the name "Christmas" derives from the Old English "Christesmesse," which means "a mass for Christ." 7 This rite, which has for centuries obscured from devoted Catholics the once-for-all efficacy of Christ's atoning sacrifice, purportedly

involves a mysterious transformation of the wafer and wine into the actual body and blood of our Lord (see in refutation: Heb. 10:10,12,14). However, the idea that Jesus must be continually sacrificed in this material form flies in the face of the Biblical evidence, which asserts that Christ died once and for all time at Calvary (Heb. 9: 12, 24-28; Jn. 19:30), and is utterly repugnant to the true believer. Nonetheless, multitudes of uninformed Christians lend their moral support every year to this heretical doctrine by joining the happy throng of Christmas patronizers! Oh, Consistency, thou art a rare jewel indeed!

Pagan Potpourri

In addition to the evidence already cited against Christian participation in the Christmas festival, there is the indisputable fact that many of its customary practices are fraught with idolatrous or superstitious significance. Despite the admonitions in Scripture to "flee idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14), "learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2), and "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22), the average church member conforms to the prevalent practice of this evil age (contra Rom. 12: 1,2) by turning his once-innocent home into a showcase of pagan practices. Just over the doorstep, a pagan potpourri awaits the unsuspecting visitor. First to strike his shivering senses are melodious strains celebrating a mid-winter birth of the Christ child which never occurred (Jesus was not born in mid-winter; see the above discussion). Then, as he makes his turn into the living room he is greeted by a most unusual and unnatural sight: an erect evergreen, wrenched from its original setting and fastened with hammer and nails (Jer. 10:3-5) to a wooden base-the ancient pagan emblem of eternal life. A disguised idol in any spiritual man's estimate. Curled like a long coiled serpent around its aromatic branches is an ordinary extension cord, studded with glittering bulbs of assorted colors, flashing fitfully like tiny warning lights-a sophisticated version of the lighting that decorated pagan homes during this darkest period of the year to combat evil spirits. Almost taken in by the sight, our visitor tears his eyes from the magnificently decorated tree to canvas the walls of the room. There, over a distant entrance way, he locates a sprig of mistletoe fastened to the wall just above the door frame, an evergreen honored by the Druids at pagan winter solstice festivals as possessing magical properties. Turning to leave, he spies a row of red stockings, hanging neatly from the fire-place mantle, as though anticipating a visit from the popular gift-giver, Santa Claus. This imaginary figure is an American invention, combining features from the traditional children's saint, Nicolas of Myra, with elements of the Germanic fire god, Thor: This jolly obese man, with a penchant for playing God, has perhaps occasioned more parental lies than any fiend this side of perdition. His incredulous story is perpetuated through the generations by those who love and make a lie (Rev. 22:15)-a most unworthy guest in the home of a truth-loving Christian (2 Thess. 2: 10-12). As our visitor makes his way over the threshold into the cold mid-winter wind, his mind reels with thoughts of his recent encounter. Troubled, he muses, as must each of us, "An idolatrous evergreen, and lighting to ward off evil spirits, magical mistletoe reminiscent of Druid belief, and the lie of Santa Claus. What does .it all have to do with Jesus Christ, His Bible, and holy living?"

In the silence of his own heart he formulates an answer: "Nothing. Absolutely Nothing." His calm

conclusion rings true with those who "have ears to hear."

Notes

1 The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,
s. v. "Christmas," by Albert Henry Newman.
2 The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. s. v. "Christmas."
3 Dictionary of Bible and Religion,
s. v. "Christmas," by John Cooper. .
4 Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature, s. v. "Christmas."
5 Jane M. Hatch, The American Book of Days,
(New York: The H. W. Wilson Co. 1978), 1142.
6 Encyclopedia of Early Christianity. s. v. "Christmas."
7 Dictionary of Bible and Rebellion,
s. v. "Christmas," by John Cooper.

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Subject: Re: THE REAL REASON FOR THE SEASON
Posted by Michael The Disciple on Thu, 13 Dec 2007 06:57:16 GMT
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Not that I know of. Now we have. You can read my thoughts on Faith Assembly here:

http://overcomersonline.com/FUDforum2/index.php?t=msg&th
=100&start=0&S=99c2c11609a921b2f865d249e0dcdbee

Peace and love to you.