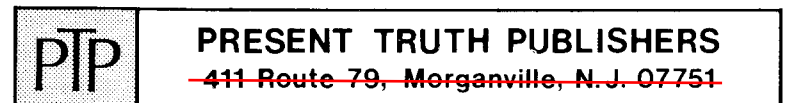


CHRISTMAS

OR

LINKING *CHRIST* AND *BELIAL*

— R. A. HUEBNER



1

WHOSE FAITH FOLLOW

A century ago those gathered together to the Lord's name "stood as one man" in abstaining from any participation in Christmas observances. There was among them an understanding of the origin and character of such observances and they refused complicity with them. Alas, such separation from evil unto the Lord is increasingly wanting now. A fresh consideration of the subject is timely.

I am aware that there are yet many who desire to please the Lord and value help on such matters and therefore lay before you an appeal from God's Word; trusting that those bridal affections in you that respond to our Beloved's words with "even so come, Lord Jesus" (Rev.22:20), will also respond in obedience to His Word, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

Before entering on our subject, let me state that I write this understanding the emotional repercussions one is faced with in separating from the idolatrous observances. I was reared in a Christian home where Christmas was observed with its various nostalgic details We can only thank God for the deliverance from this snare and bondage. Others also have expressed the sense of deliverance from **bondage** when once free of it. May our Lord give us to fix our view on the "perfect law, that of liberty" (James 1:25); i.e., freedom for the new nature to do just what pleases it, namely, to please Himself. This indeed is deliverance from bondage and is true Christian liberty.

The quotations below from some of the brethren of last century make it abundantly clear that we have drifted. Christendom is largely given over to this idolatrous observance; and, sad to say, some who are gathered together to His alone worthy name have joined their hands to it also. The facts have not changed, my brethren. The Word has not changed. What has changed? We have. We have been, and are, giving up principles of God' holy Word. We

are giving up obedience. We are more anxious concerning our reputation, our niceness, our pleasure, our convenience, our business, our "peace", than "harkening to the voice of His words." His voice doesn't thrill us as it should. The bride said: "THE VOICE OF MY BELOVED"! She was thrilled! And just think, our Beloved speaks to us in His Word. What a privilege to have such communications. And as part of His bride to whom He says, "I come quickly", can we really be saying from the heart, "Even so, come Lord Jesus", when taken up with things that His Word condemns? Is that bridal affection? Is that joyful anticipation of His coming? Would we be found coupling Him with Belial when He comes for us?

The following quotation from J.N. Darby leaves us in no doubt as to his attitude toward the "Christmas customs":

Christians, so-called, would have festivals, and they tacked on Christian names to heathen ones. The great Augustine informs us that "the church" did it, that if they would get drunk (which they did even in the churches), they should do so in honour of saints, not of demons. One of the Gregorys was famous for this, and left only seventeen heathen in his diocese by means of it. And another Gregory, sending another Augustine to England, directed him not to destroy the idol temples, but to turn them into churches; and as the heathens were accustomed to have an anniversary festival to their god, to replace it by one to a saint. It was thus Europe, Africa, and Asia Minor at least were Christianised. Sicily, which in spite of all efforts had remained heathen, as soon as it was decided that Mary was the mother of God at what I must call the disgraceful and infamous general council of Ephesus, gave up all her temples to be churches.

It was easy to worship the mother of God as the mother of the gods. But everywhere drunkenness in honour of the saints, and even in the churches, took the place of drunkenness in honour of demigods, the great Augustine and other fathers being witnesses. Such were festal anniversaries, Christmas having been (and it is still celebrated in heathen countries) the worst of heathen

festivals, to celebrate the return of the sun from the winter solstice, without a pretense that Christ was born that day, but as they could not stop the revelry, they put Christ's birth there. Such, in real fact, is the church's celebration of anniversaries and saints' days. This is certain, that the apostle declares that it was a return to heathenism, so that he was afraid his labour was in vain--avowedly turning the great and mighty parts of Christianity, by which God acted on souls, to bring them into blessed and divinely-wrought relationship with Himself, individually and collectively, into certain outward events, or outward facts, and exclusively to their announcement as occurring at particular times. "I am afraid of you." Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Vol.29, pp. 502, 503, Morrish edition.

In writing on the book of Galatians, both J.N.Darby and Wm. Kelly took the opportunity to remark on the heathen festivities which were "Christianized" by the early Church.

In his book on Galatians, W. Kelly wrote,

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Not to do this now is the wonder. Alas! the Galatian evil is thought a proof of religion. He marks this observance, not merely as an error, but as a proof of idolatry. In heathenism these festivals were of great account; and God permitted them in Judaism because the Jews had a means of religion suited to their state and the worldly sanctuary. But now all is completely changed and the observance of special feasts and seasons as a means of pleasing God is put down with a high hand by the Holy Spirit. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

Let us hear J.N.D. on Galatians.

Yet these poor Christians now desired to return to the weak and beggarly elements from which, when heathens, they had been delivered, through the knowledge of the redemption that is in Christ

Jesus! Mark well that all their ceremonies are but the same thing as paganism, the elements of the world. Even if those who subject themselves to them be Christians, yet the principles according to which they walk are the elements of the world, and their practices are heathen practices. We learn this here as doctrine, but the history of the church shews it to us as a fact. Holy days and holy places were taken from the heathen, who had holy places and days on which they held festivals in honour of deified men, such as Theseus, Hercules, and others. The names of saints were afterwards attached to these places and days, and the saints celebrated instead of demi-gods.

Saint Augustine has told us what was done, and how it began. He sought to put an end to these evil habits, not to the days, but to what was practiced upon them, for they got drunk in the churches. This occurred in Africa, and the same thing was done elsewhere. The feast of the Nativity was the worst of all pagan festivals, and it is still celebrated among the heathen in the East. Not being able to prevent those who, emerging from paganism called themselves Christians, from continuing the disorders practised at this festival, the leaders of the church decided to put in its place the Nativity of Christ.

Augustine also said, respecting the memory of the saints who took the place of Theseus, &c., that the church thought it better for people to get drunk in honour of a saint, than in honour of a demon. It is certain that Christ was not born in December. The time at which Mary went to visit Elizabeth proves this, if compared with the order of the twenty-four courses of the priests. Zacharias was the eighth course.

In taking up again from the Jews these elements of the world, the Galatians were returning to their former heathen practices. Until the coming of Christ these things had an important meaning; they were figures of that of which Christ has been, or is now, the reality: moreover they tested man, and

shewed that he cannot walk with God as man in the flesh. But when once Christ was come, the substance was there, and the figures had no more ground of existence, the test had been already applied. What is done in fulfilment of the law is but the denial of the fulfilment of all in Christ, heathen elements of the world, in which the Galatians walked when they lived as heathen in the world.

We also note that in writing on "The Leaven" in his Our Lord's Miracles and Parables, W.W.Fereday said,

But an unfaithful church, in order to make Christianity palatable to the masses, compromised God's truth most pitifully. Thus, as the heathen had been accustomed for ages to hold carousals at certain seasons of the year in honour of their gods, they were suffered to continue them in the name of Christ. This is the unholy origin of Christmastide, Wakes, etc.

Alas, as years went by there was a drift into the observance of Christmas, as is evident from the following letter.

When in 1877 I first came into fellowship with those called Brethren, they were practically a unit in abstaining from all complicity with the observance of Christmas and similar abominations tracts were written against it But now with all those witnesses to divine truth gone, other generations have come upon the scene, and there are now few who regard with the same abhorrence these heathen, aye Satanic, for who but Satan, the one great foe of our Lord, would dare to commit this climax of heinous wickedness of attaching His Name to a lie? But beloved brethren, have you not been "keeping Christmas"? Have you been wishing each other to be "merry", even whilst thus bringing Christ into full accord with Belial? That seems to me unspeakably terrible, am I wrong my brethren?
F.C.J., "An Open Letter".

Your attention is again called to what was quoted from J. N. Darby above. In this we saw pointed out:

1. The heathen origin of Christmas as connected with the worst of heathen festivals.
2. That demon worship was connected with the feast upon which Christmas is based.
3. Worship of Mary was part of Christmas observance in its 'christianized' form. The Mary of "Christmas" is the mother goddess, the queen of heaven, worshipped by the ancients.

J.N.Darby also wrote other remarks on this subject. These may be found in the following references:

Collected Writings, Vol.18, pp.191-193, 291-293, Morrish ed., (pp.125,126, Stow Hill ed.); Vol.14, p.107, Morrish ed., (p.70 Stow Hill ed.); Vol.24, p.370, Morrish ed., (p.246, Stow Hill ed.); Vol.29, p.357, Morrish ed. (p.236, Stow Hill ed.); Notes and Jottings, pp.221, 222 (one vol. ed.).

* * * * *

For some who knew not the facts, such information is sufficient. They will flee from idolatry (1 Cor.10:14), bow to Gal.4, and realize that a moral stream cannot rise above its source, nor can the passage of time change the moral character of wedding pagan religious observances to the name of Christ -- joining Christ and Belial.

2 Cor.6:16,17 says, "what agreement of God's temple with idols? Be separated, saith [the] Lord, and touch not [what is]unclean."

2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

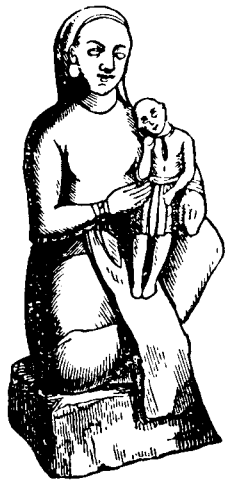
While the historical facts which are the basis for the judgment of the brethren cited in chapter 1 may be found in a number of sources, they are thoroughly presented and documented by A. Hislop's, The Two Babylons or the Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife.

The story starts in Gen.10:8-12 and ends in Rev.17,18 and 19:1-4.

After the flood in Noah's day men multiplied and journeyed from the east and came to the land of Shinar. There was then but one language (Gen.11:1-5). They intended to disobey God's command to replenish the earth (Gen. 9:1) and sought to avoid being scattered. Not only did they attempt building a great tower for their own pride and unity; they were also building a city (Gen.11:8). "Babel" here means confusion. In a related form this word means "gate of God". Gen.10:10 chronologically follows, I suppose, Gen.11:1-9; and we are there introduced to Nimrod, who, with his wife Semiramis, was the great fount of Babylonian idolatry which spread over the world in various forms. This idolatry plagued Israel and also is now part of the "mystery of lawlessness" in the professing church.

Nimrod means "rebel". He was an outstanding man as signified by the words, "he began to be mighty on the earth". The beginning of his kingdom included Babel. He was an imperialist. He was a rebel against God. He set himself up. It may well be that Babel as the "gate of God" signifies the divine honours he took to himself. Thus in Babel, the first city, we find imperial power and divine honour combined in a man, Nimrod the rebel. He had numerous cities under his dominion and no doubt imposed one idolatrous worship. Subsequently, from the celebrations in the various mystery religions, A. Hislop concluded that Nimrod had a violent death. Nimrod's wife, Semiramis,

secured the deification of Nimrod. He was allegedly reincarnated as her son. Among the various names of this god in the different mythologies, he had "the name Zoroastes, 'the seed of the woman'". Many ancient mythologies picture him as slaying a serpent. Thus were the statements of Scripture perverted and imitated by Satanic deception. And thus was born the worship of the mother goddess and her son.



FROM BABYLON



FROM INDIA

A. Hislop wrote,

If the child was to be adored, much more the mother. The mother, in point of fact, became the favourite object of worship. To justify this worship, the mother was raised to divinity as well as her son, and she was looked upon as destined to complete that bruising of the serpent's head, which it was easy, if such a thing was needed, to find

abundant and plausible reasons for alleging that Ninus or Nimrod, the great Son, in his mortal life had only begun.

The Roman Church maintains that it was not so much the seed of the woman, as the woman herself, that was to bruise the head of the serpent. In defiance of all grammar, she renders the Divine Denunciation against the serpent thus: "She shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise her heel." The same was held by the ancient Babylonians, and symbolically represented in their temples. In the uppermost story of the tower of Babel, or temple of Belus, Diodorus Siculus tells us there stood three images of the great divinities of Babylon; and one of these was of a woman grasping a serpent's head. Among the Greeks the same thing was symbolised; for Diana, whose real character was originally the same as that of the great Babylonian goddess, was represented as bearing in one of her hands a serpent deprived of its head. As time wore away, and the facts of Semiramis's history became obscured, her son's birth was boldly declared to be miraculous: and therefore she was called "Alma Mater", "the Virgin Mother." That the birth of the Great Deliverer was to be miraculous, was widely known long before the Christian era. For centuries, some say for thousands of years before that event, the Buddhist priests had a tradition that a Virgin was to bring forth a child to bless the world. That this tradition came from no Popish or Christian source, is evident from the surprise felt and expressed by the Jesuit missionaries, when they first entered Thibet and China, and not only found a mother and a child worshipped as at home, but that mother worshipped under a character exactly corresponding with that of their own Madonna, "Virgo Deipsta," "the Virgin mother of God," and that, too, in regions where they could not find the least trace of either the name or history of our Lord Jesus Christ having ever been known. The primeval promise that the "seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," naturally suggested the idea of miraculous birth. Priestcraft and human presumption set themselves

wickedly to anticipate the fulfilment of that promise; and the Babylonian queen seems to have been the first to whom that honour was given. The highest titles were accordingly bestowed upon her. She was called the "queen of heaven." Jeremiah 44: 17, 18, 19, 25. (pp.76-77).

This mother goddess is the "Asherah" of J.N. Darby's translation (translated "grove" or "groves" in KJV) and the list of uses in the O.T. is found on page 181 of The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance (listed as #842 in the The New ... version). The object of worship appears to have been wooden in construction since in times of revival these were cut down and burned. She seems to have been a consort (and progenitress) of Baal who, according to A. Hislop, was a form of Nimrod (pp.30-32).

Another form of the same mother goddess is Ashtaroth (Judges 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam.7:3,4; 12:10; 31:10; Ashtoreth in 1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings 23:13). She, too, is associated with Baal worship.

The queen of heaven is mentioned in Jer.7:18; 44:17,18,19,25. This, in essence, is the same mother goddess.

Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14), too, is Nimrod; and they wept for his death.

The Israelites were constantly engaging in Babylonian religion, for that is the ultimate source of this evil. And God finally sent them to Babylon, the fountain of idolatry. The final form of the professing Church is called Babylon the Great in Revelation 17 and 18 because it has long been Babylonian in character and when believers are caught up, this will receive its full manifestation. The worship of the mother goddess and her son was the bane of Israel. It is true that all Christians do not openly worship, or adore, the mother goddess now (i.e., the Mary of Christmas), **but neither do they flee from these idolatrous connections.**

We see, then, that the Jews were engaging in a form of 'Christmas' observance and worship before our Lord was born. It always accompanied decline from obedience to what

was written in God's Word. Christians engage in this observance also -- now under the name Christmas.

The mother in the Christmas observance is the queen of heaven (as I have seen Romanists designate her) = Isis = Diana; and her son is Tammuz = Baal = Osiris = Adonis = Nimrod.

And now we turn to the relationship of this worship to Christianity. This Babylonian worship is part of the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2), the corruption of the Christian profession by man doing his own will. How did Christmas come to be celebrated by Christians? Why is it celebrated on December 24th and 25th? What practices were introduced?

A. Hislop wrote,

... within the Christian Church no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of till the third century, and that not till the fourth century was far advanced did it gain much observance. How, then, did the Roman Church fix on December the 25th as Christmas-day? Why, thus: Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated among the heathen, at that precise time of the year, in honour of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of the nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ. This tendency on the part of Christians to meet Paganism half-way was very early developed; and we find Tertullian, even in his day, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the Pagans to their own superstition. "By us," he says, "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." Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition. That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond all doubt. The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin. In Egypt, the son of Isis, the Egyptian title for the queen of heaven, was born at this very time, "about the time of winter solstice." The very name by which Christmas is popularly known among ourselves -- yule-day -- proves at once its pagan and Babylonian origin. "Yule" is the Chaldee name for an "infant" or "little child;" and as the 25th of December was called by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, "Yule-day," or the "Child's day," and the night that preceded it, "Mother-night," long before they came in contact with Christianity, that sufficiently proves its real character. Far and wide, in the realms of Paganism, was this birth-day observed. This festival has been commonly believed to have only an astronomical character, referring simply to the completion of the sun's yearly course, and the commencement of a new cycle. But there is indubitable evidence that the festival in question had a much higher reference than this -- that it commemorated not merely the figurative birth-day of the sun in the renewal of its course, but the birth-day of the grand Deliverer It is no mere astronomical festival, then, that the Pagans celebrated at the winter solstice. That festival at Rome was called the feast of Saturn, and the mode in which it was celebrated there, showed whence it had been derived. The feast, as regulated by Caligula, lasted five days; loose reins were given to drunkenness and revelry, slaves had a temporary emancipation, and used all manner of freedoms with their masters. This was precisely the way in which, according to Berosus, the drunken festival of the month Thebeth, answering to our December, in other words, the festival of Bacchus

was celebrated in Babylon. "It was the custom," he says, "during the five days it lasted, for masters to be in subjection to their servants, and one of them ruled the house, clothed in a purple garment like a king." This "purple-robed" servant was called "Zoganes," the "Man of sport and wantonness," and answered exactly to the "Lord of misrule," that in the dark ages was chosen in all Popish countries to head the revels of Christmas. The wassailling bowl of Christmas had its precise counterpart in the "Drunken Festival" of Babylon; and many of the other observances still kept up among ourselves at Christmas came from the very same quarter. The candles, in some parts of England, lighted on Christmas-eve, and used so long as the festive season lasts, were equally lighted by the Pagans on the eve of the festival of the Babylonian god, to do honour to him; for it was one of the distinguishing peculiarities of his worship to have lighted wax-candles on his altars. The Christmas tree, now so common among us, was equally common in Pagan Rome and Pagan Egypt. In Egypt that tree was the palm-tree; in Rome it was the fir; the palm-tree denoting the Pagan Messiah, as Baal-Tamar, the fir referring to him as Baal-Berith. The mother of Adonis, the Sun-God and great mediatorial divinity, was mystically said to have been changed into a tree, and when in that state, to have brought forth her divine son. If the mother was the tree, the son must have been recognised as the "Man the branch." And this entirely accounts for the putting of the Yule Log into the fire on Christmas-eve, and the appearance of the Christmas-tree the next morning. As Zero-Ashta, "The seed of the woman," which name also signified Ignigena, or "born of the fire," he has to enter the fire on "Mother-night," that he may be born the next day out of it, as the "Branch of God," or the Tree that brings all divine gifts to men. But why, it may be asked, does he enter the fire under the symbol of a Log? To understand this, it must be remembered that the divine child born at the winter solstice was born as a new incarnation of the great god (after that god had been cut in pieces), on purpose to revenge his

And thus were Christ and Belial linked, so far as men's

"... what consent of Christ with Beliar ... what agreement of God's temple with idols? for ye are [the] living God's temple ..." (2 Cor.6:15,16).

3 | CAN THE OBERSERVANCE OF CHRISTMAS BE SCRIPTUAL? & IS IT PLEASING TO THE LORD?

It is serious enough to engage in Christmas observances. It is far worse to drag down the holy words of Romans 14 into support of idolatry. We must not mince words about this.

Was it right to plead "I regard the day unto the Lord" (Rom.14:6) when Christ was first linked to this paganism? Neither is it right now. The passage of time does not change the character of a moral action; nor does a moral stream rise above its source.

Romans 14 has to do with Jewish observances by Jewish Christians who had emerged from Judaism, **a system once owned by God**. It has to do with distinctions that are ceremonial and not moral. Linking with idolatry is a moral matter. When did God ever own pagan idolatry and pagan systems? It is a perversion of Scripture to take a principle that applies to a weak Jewish Christian just emerged from Judaism, a system once owned of God, use it to support concord between Christ and Belial, and then say that those Christians whose conscience is enlightened and reject these idolatrous ways are the weak Christians, are legal, and are not enjoying liberty in Christ. What? you say! Has that been actually done? Yes, and thus is God's holy Word turned upside down in order to save conscience. Nowhere in our valued writings on Romans has anyone dared to so abuse Romans 14. Indeed the passage was faithfully expounded. For example, Wm. Kelly remarked,

The weak were such Christians as were still shackled by their old Jewish observances as to days, meats, etc., by distinctions not moral, but ceremonial; the strong were those who saw in their

death with Christ the end to all such bondage and enjoyed liberty in the Spirit.

Something is wrong with our spiritual sense when the mind turns to Romans 14 for comfort in idolatrous practices rather than turning to Gal.4 or to 1 Cor.10:14:

WHEREFORE, MY DEARLY BELOVED, FLEE FROM IDOLATRY.

The following presumptuous article not only relies on the false use and application of Romans 14; it violates a number of divine principles and in effect labels the opposers of Christmas idolatry as legal and seeking to bring their brethren into bondage.

Neither Epaphroditus nor the others used their old names with any consciousness of the idols. They were not under law, and free Grace can take the old name, and set it free from its idolatrous connection. Thankful we should be to God for this, for otherwise we should find ourselves in bondage even as to the days of the week: Monday is "Moon Day": in honour of the moon: Tuesday is from "Tiw", the old god-of-war: Wednesday is from Woden, the god of the ancient Britons: Thursday is from "Thor", the "god-of-thunder", etc. But we are under no such bondage as to be compelled to link up these old evil idols with these names that we use, -- and may use, -- with a good conscience every day. It would be very wrong to accuse our brethren of being linked with idolatry when they use them. In like manner it is wrong to accuse our brethren of being mixed up with idolatry when they send us a Christmas card, or wish us a happy Christmas: even though the day may have had evil associations to begin with. The scriptures make it perfectly clear that an idol is nothing in the world; and things that once pertained to idols, may now, by faith, in the sight of God (as revealed in the Scriptures), be clear of all such evil associations. We are not under law but under Grace, but how we do love to put ourselves, and our brethren, under law of some kind.

Of course the Scriptures also make it perfectly

plain that if anyone uses these things with a conscience of the idol, "to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." So, because I by lack of faith, may choose to put myself under law, let me be very careful that I do not condemn my brother for that which he alloweth: which may, indeed, be perfectly clean in the sight of God.

This article really says or hints that:

1. When those who oppose Christmas observances link up idolatry to Christmas, such are under bondage. That is, J.N.Darby, Wm. Kelly, etc., "who were practically a unit in abstaining from all complicity with the observance of Christmas and similar abominations ..." were under bondage. How they did like to put their brethren under bondage, indeed! The abusers of Romans 14 seem to know no shame.
2. Christmas "may have had evil associations to begin with" (is there the slightest doubt?). But that is as meaningless as the names of the days of the week! Does it really require much intelligence to see the absurdity of the analogy? There is not the slightest analogy. Christmas is held to be a Christian observance, a Christian festival -- and it is the worst of the 'baptised' pagan religious festivals. This quotation involves 'religious fellowship' with it. "For what participation [is there] between righteousness and lawlessness? or what fellowship of light with darkness? and what consent of Christ with Beliar? (2 Cor.6:14,15). Monday, etc., is not a Christian observance. And as for Sunday, Scripture calls it the Lord's day. Neither is a Christian's name a Christian observance. The reasoning is a vain attempt to link things that differ in order to justify what is really linking Christ and Belial.
3. If we "accuse our brethren of being mixed up with idolatry" ... "how we do love to put ourselves and our brethren, under law of some kind." Now, I am going to tell you what this is. This is looseness, abuse of grace, abuse of Christian liberty, and the fostering of idolatry, all disguised as graciousness! It is characteristic of the loose and indifferent to decry the faithfulness of those

who oppose their worldiness by calling them legal.

4. The uses made of Romans 14 in the foregoing quotation are perversions of its intent. All the loose and indifferent make similar use of Romans 14. "I'm using the principal," it is claimed. Just picture a Christian back there in 383 A.D. telling Pope Damasus not to declare the celebration of the pagan religious festival on the 25th of December to be a celebration in honor of Christ's birth. Consider, he says, 1 Cor.10 and Gal.4. Not so, says Damasus. I **Think** we ought to celebrate His birth. Besides, it is politic to do it on the 25th. Those 'converted heathen' need something. Furthermore, I am observing the day unto the Lord and I'm fully persuaded in my own mind (Rom. 14). Don't be legal and try to bring your brethren into bondage. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth." And I don't condemn myself for doing it. Scripture says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin". I have faith to change the worship of the mother goddess and her son into a Christian observance. If you don't have faith for it, avoid it. I have liberty. But beware of bringing other brethren under bondage and law with yourself. Remember, too, that "... free grace can take the old name, and set it free from its idolatrous connection. Thankful we should be to God for this, for otherwise we should find ourselves in bondage even as to the days of the week: Monday is 'Moon Day'"

Is it not shocking to every Christian sensibility to have the matter thus plainly illustrated? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). "... abstain from pollutions of idols" (Acts 15:20). "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exodus 23:2).

Others have written,

FASTS AND FESTIVALS multiplied during the third and fourth centuries. In imitation of our Lord's forty days' temptation in the wilderness, a fast of as many as forty hours was observed, out of which afterwards arose the forty days of Lent. The Feast of Pentecost, instituted to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples, followed fifty days after that of the Resurrection, the whole interval being observed as a season of

festival, during which there was no fasting, and prayer was made standing. Pentecost, which was also named Whitsuntide from the white robes of the candidates, was one of the three special baptismal seasons, the two others being Easter and Epiphany. Epiphany (the word signifies manifestation), appears to have been instituted by Jewish Christians in honour of our Lord's baptism, and to have travelled from the East to the West some time in the fourth century. Ascension day is likewise not mentioned before the middle of the fourth century. About the same time Christmas, the festival of our Lord's birth, first began to be observed at Rome, from whence it spread to the East. "It is not yet ten years," says Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, writing about A.D. 386, "since this day was first made known to us. It had been before observed in the West, whence the knowledge of it is derived."

Blackhouse, E., and Tylor, C., Early Church History, London: Headley Brothers, 1901, p.251. Lent came from the Babylonian religion and not as stated above.

This false use of Romans 14, then, opens the door to the idolatrous marriage of the Church to the world. It was when decline set in that it occurred and it is as decline continues among us now that practices heretofore condemned are condoned and justified with Scripture.

And so the plea that since our Lord's birth is recorded in Scripture, that is reason enough to keep it, gives reason to keep some of these festivals also. Why not be erroneously consistent? No, my brother, my sister, that is not the reason for observing Christmas. Why not have the matter out in the presence of God? And is it not interesting that one might press in ministry how our Lord asked us to remember Him in His death and when it comes to Christmas observance cites, "I like to...", or, "I think..."? This is the principle of lawlessness, i.e., acting without reference to the will of God.

5. Notice that if you have a conscience about Christmas (as did the writers above including J.N.D.) you are alleged to be a weak Christian. I have read various support of

Christmas and my conclusion is that the support seems to know no shame.

6. The attitude that says that since an idol is nothing in the world (that is true), the issue is thus clear of an evil association -- is an attitude that does not want to hear what God says about it. We condemn this sophistical reasoning with the words of Wm. Kelly.

To count idolatry impossible for a Christian is to trifle. This the Corinthians were doing. They knew, said they, that the idol was a nullity, and therefore it was nothing to them to eat meat which had been offered to heathen idols; nay, they could go a step farther and sit and eat in the heathen temples. The apostle on the contrary maintains the principle of partaking in an evil which you may not yourself do, and especially in things sacred. The true wisdom in such cases is to keep wholly aloof. It is a misuse of knowledge to participate, or even give the appearance of participating, in what is religiously false. It is vain to plead that the heart is not in what one allows outwardly

W. Kelly, **Notes on 1 Corinthians**, p.161.

7. We have been taught that "the passage of time does not change the character of a moral action." Nothing changed the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Isreal to sin; no, not after hundreds of years. Nothing (not even time) changes the moral character of what Pope Damasus did in 383 in officially recognizing Christmas. And of what avail is it to say that we believe that a moral stream never rises above its source if we continue to observe these Babylonian religious holidays now disguising themselves (and very poorly, at that) as something Christian? If we observe such things, it is evident that we do not hold this truth in practice; i.e., we do not hold this truth, whatever we may say. This merging of Christianity and paganism in the 4th century cannot have been right and acceptable to God then. Christians have no warrant for observing it now. The passage of time cannot change the moral character of this matter.

* * * * *

You say, well, it is just a little tree. Ah, a little idol, a little Zoar. "Children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). But I only exchange gifts. Isn't gift-giving good? Why confound gift-giving with exchange of gifts? That is not the same. When they will kill the two witnesses, then they will send gifts one to another (Rev.11). Giving, as God gives, is ever good and never mixed with heathenism. Even the magi didn't exchange gifts. They gave gifts to Him.

You say, but I will have trouble with relatives. When our Saviour's mother wanted to see Him and it interfered with the call of God, He said, "Who is my mother ...?" When she was in need, He, when nailed to the cross, thought of her and commended her to John. Oh, what a Saviour! Here is the fine flour, the Christ of God in all His perfection. He must be considered before relations. We prove our love to Him by obedience (John 14).

If we train up our children in the way they should go, and if we bring them up in the nurture and discipline of the Lord, must we not teach them that Santa Claus is a lie? What do we mean we are only giving the children a good time? Is it good to train them in idolatrous observances? It is putting darkness for light. The pagan holidays are just an occasion to teach the children separation from evil unto the Lord. Moses told Pharaoh that the children were going along on the three days journey into the wilderness to hold the feast to the Lord.

And as to Scripture text Christ-mass cards, perhaps we can learn something from Deut. 22:10,11.

How good it is to take the time, money, and energy that goes into indulgence of self and others, characteristic of Christmas activity, and seek out His mind for an avenue of service to Himself; and devote this money, time, and energy to further His work of separating a people unto Himself, to dwell amidst their praises.

I Cor.5:7,8 says,

For also our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed; so that let us celebrate the feast, not with the

old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth.

The feast we are to celebrate refers to the seven day feast of unleavened bread (Lev. 23:6-8) which typifies the holy walk of the believer as characterized by separation from evil unto the Lord; a holy walk resulting from the fact that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. Let us purge the leaven out of our homes as did the children of Israel (Ex. 12:15-20) and eat UNLEAVENED BREAD, not the feast of paganism. "For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged this; that one died for all, then all have died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

In conclusion, I cite another.

With many the associations of Christmas are suggestive of childhood's joys and of tender reminiscence of scenes of delight in the home circle. In this spirit it is perhaps still observed socially in the family, for the children's sake, by some who are aware that the day itself, in its religious claim and character, has no foundation in Scripture. The question that presents itself therefore is: Can the day be observed innocently in this social way, apart from its false religious character?

It is said that the day celebrated as Christmas, was once the day of a wicked heathen feast called Saturnalia; and the season suggests the winter solstice as the occasion of the feast -- the period of daylight being about to increase. The day being handed down as a Christian festival, and its name, "Christ-Mass," tells the rest. A corrupt church, a corrupt ritualistic sentiment, introducing a novelty among many other novelties, to please -- not God, but men. This consideration, of course, is a very serious one, and calls to mind a fertile source of shame and sorrow to the Church: self-will at work -- human choice in place of obedience; as among the Galatians, giving occasion

for the rebuke, "Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

Let us consider the serious nature of this departure from simplicity. It is that setting aside God's word which, as an evil principle at work, has wrought confusion and corruption far and wide in the Church's history, as of old it wrought the ruin of Israel.

This, then, is the meaning of the day -- the establishment of a religious custom, of a sacred day without any command from God. If we do this, where shall we stop? There is no stopping place; and the evil result we have referred to in the previous paragraph.

What, then, is the obligation of the faithful Christian? Should he not consider the observance of the day as a dishonor to the Lord, being disobedience, and therefore opening the door to further departures and dangers, as we have seen? And as to observing it socially with the children in the home circle, ignoring its origin and ecclesiastical claims, can this be done if we have at heart the things that are Christ's? Can we do it without giving up our character as warriors -- leaving to others more faithful than ourselves to fight the Lord's battles and defend the truth? Would it not be a compromise as to the truth, a provision for self indulgence, and a dangerous allowance of the enemy within our borders? The very notice that may be taken of a refusal to observe the day becomes a testimony to the truth, both to people without and to the children at home. And the absence of such testimony tends to perpetuate indifference to an evil which the day represents.

The day is enjoyed with zest by the world in common with the Church, and this is a sufficient warning to us. It is one of the wiles of the devil, against which we need to take to ourselves the "whole armor of God." It is a victory of Satan if he can get

our hearts attached to a thing that is unscriptural and worldly in its origin and character. Such an attachment must enfeeble us in the conflict for the enjoyment of our Canaan possessions, and mar the clearness of testimony in the family that should direct the children in the way of reverence for God's word and uncompromising obedience.

"The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10:22).

From Help and Food, Vol. 18, 341.

APPENDIX
1

WHEN WAS CHRIST ACTUALLY BORN?

The following is cited from The Bible Witness and Review, vol. 1.

In "The Phoenix," "a collection of manuscripts and printed tracts, nowhere to be found but in the closets of the curious (1707)," there is a paper with the above title, "proving that Christ was not born in December." The book is not very scarce, so I need not transcribe the article. The following is the substance of it, which may prove interesting:--

David divided the year's service of the priests into twenty-four courses, and the eighth course fell to Abijah (1 Chron.24:10).

The Jewish ecclesiastical year, commencing with the month Abib or Nisan (Esther 3:7), nearly corresponding to our March, O.S., the eighth course would occur at the end of June or at the beginning of July in our computation.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was of the course of Abia, (Luke 1:5), and as he was ministering, 'in the order of his course', (Luke 1:8), (that is, in June or July), when the angel appeared to him, and that immediately on his return home (Luke 1:23) his wife Elizabeth conceived, (Luke 1:24), it follows that the conception of John the Baptist was about Midsummer, where we place his birth.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:26-36), i.e., in December, (during the sixth month from July), where we place Christ's birth, the angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that she should be the mother of the Christ; and, counting onward for nine months, we come to the month of September, and to the Feast of tabernacles, which was a type of the

incarnation of the Son of God, as the period of the Saviour's birth.

In which feast-time of eight days, Christ pitched in the tabernacle of His flesh amongst us, as appears, John 1:14: 'And the Word was made flesh, and pitched his tabernacle amongst us:' He became a Scaenite. Thus (we) behold the sweet harmony between the type and the thing typified, for Christ came not to break the law, but to fulfil it.

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