



FESTAL DAYS

and the Law of God



W. H. Molland

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to give a concise examination of the question of the festal days of Christmas and Easter. Are they of God, or of man?

In these pages, the origins of these festivals and their observances in different parts of the world will be traced throughout history, bringing them to the touchstone of Holy Scripture which is man's sole authority, and the one and only criterion by which any practice in both life and worship can be judged.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The content of this book began as a series of sermons preached at North Road Chapel, Bideford, by the minister, Mr W. H. Molland in 1989 – 1990. These were reproduced as articles in *The Link* quarterly magazine, before being published in the current format in 1992. Interest in the work has necessitated four reprints, with this second edition being prepared (making only minor typographical corrections) for online publication in 2020.

Thirty years on, it would be wonderful to report that there was no longer a need for a book of this nature; that the ‘light had dawned’, the veil was taken away, the falsehood unmasked, and the wider Christian church had finally rid itself of these gross errors. Alas, that such is not the case. Despite the unanimous testimony of every secular source to the pagan and pre-Christian origin of these festivals; despite the overt wickedness and debauchery which attends their celebration; despite the universal observance of these events by the godless masses; despite all the evidence that such things are categorically, “*not of the Father, but ... of the world*”, still mainstream Christendom persists in wilful ignorance, and its defence of the indefensible. The sin of idolatry amongst the professed people of God was not confined to the Old Testament; slavish adherence to the ‘weak and beggarly elements’ of man-made tradition did not end in the First Century (cf Galatians 4:9-11); these errors continue to the present. And so long as they do, we trust this little book will also be circulated, as a faithful witness to the Truth.

R. J. Steward

Minister of North Road Chapel
Bideford, March 2020

1. THE PRINCIPLES OF IDOLATRY

Is the celebration of Festal Days, such as Christmas and Easter, a violation of the Law of God?

There are many Christians who have a suspicion that there is a pagan element in these festivals, yet they argue from a pragmatic point of view, drawing attention to the apparent commercial, domestic, as well as supposed spiritual advantages of observing these days. There is a boost to business in the dead time of the year. The family is brought together. The unregenerate attend a place of worship, which normally they would never do. Carols are played in the shops, on the streets, they even sound out from the public houses. What is wrong with all this? Surely, it is good!

This line of reasoning will not be embarked upon in this book; the appeal throughout will be *“To the Law and to the testimony”* (Isaiah 8:20). Some will immediately say that on such a subject as this, Christian liberty must not be infringed; there are many things which confront us in life which are not mentioned in the Bible. In such matters, if an individual sees no wrong and is at ease, then it is concluded the person has liberty of conscience to proceed. But is this really valid?

It is vital that we go to the foundations of this subject. When fair examination of the facts has established whether or not Christmas and Easter violate the Law of God, then, and only then, will it be possible to determine the relevance of Christian liberty. Christmas and Easter are to be put on trial using the Bible as our Statute Book.

Where there is a ruling upon a matter there is no liberty. The extra-Biblical innovations of man, however harmless or advantageous they may appear to be, do not alter the everlasting Law of the eternal God. This then is the basis upon which the subject will be approached. It will be dealt with in the light of God's Law. This necessitates that we first become conversant with the Law itself.

There is a sense, and a very real sense, in which the whole Bible is to be regarded as the Law of God. In the sacred volume of Holy Scripture there are guiding principles given which apply to all problems which cross one's pathway. However, to go through from Genesis to Revelation in order to discover the answer to any particular question could be a very laborious task.

God has summarized His requirements in just Ten Commandments. Whatever the problem, if it is brought to the first seventeen verses of Exodus 20, it will be proved to be either lawful or unlawful.

There are Christians and ministers who teach that the Law is done away in the New Testament age, and that it now has no place in the life of a believer. This is a most serious matter. Through the grace of God, Christ has fulfilled and met all the claims of that Law, and its curse has been taken away from all His redeemed people, nevertheless its holy precepts remain. This Law was upon Adam at the first. It is the Law of God; therefore it is perfect – immutable and unchanging, and around it all Scripture centres. *“Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first*

commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31). “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:40). Christ emphasizes that there is nothing greater; everything hangs upon it and revolves around it. The whole of Scripture is an expansion of the truth of this Law.

The ceremonial law given to Israel was an enlargement upon the first four commandments – the Godward aspect of the Decalogue. In the ceremonial law, Israel was told and shown how to worship God. They were told what to do, and what they were not to do. The judicial law was given to govern Israel socially: this was a clear exposition of the last six commandments – the manward aspect of the Decalogue.

The ceremonial and judicial law given to Israel, as to the letter, has been done away in the New Testament age. We do not now sacrifice lambs and bullocks, or stone men and women. Nevertheless, there are principles even in that section of Holy Writ which are ongoing. Whilst the actual pattern is not the same, yet we still have principles of Divine order and regulation for worship in the New Testament. There is also a mandate for governments and ‘powers that be’ in society. Upon what are they based? Precisely the same as of old time, the moral Law of God – the Ten Commandments. *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself” (Luke 10:27).* If carefully analysed all regulation is condensed into those few words. Our Lord expanded upon these commandments in His great Sermon on the Mount.

The same principles are found throughout the New Testament epistles. If Almighty God abrogated His moral Law, then the whole universe would be plunged into anarchy. There would be no ultimate standard. All laws, rules, regulations and precepts throughout Scripture are but detailed expositions and applications of the Ten Commandments. This being so, in order to examine the spiritual validity of festal days, they must be brought to the Law of God, to the first commandment, “*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*” (Exodus 20:3). The Law of God is not to be understood just in the letter, but is to be understood in the light that each commandment is a summary of far broader principles.

In the first commandment we are to learn that our worship is limited to the God of Holy Scripture and Him only: “*No other gods before Me*”. We are to respect or countenance no other god. How then are we to worship? According to the Holy Scriptures it is to be “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:23). In truth – that is, in obedience to His Word; there is no other way to worship in the spirit. Whatever our sacrifices, be it by our lips, or by gifts, all is worthless apart from obedience to the Word of God. King Saul in his rebellion to God’s commandments discovered this to his condemnation, as is set out so clearly in 1 Samuel 15:22,23.

When we disobey God, whom do we obey? We obey our own inclinations and ideas. Immediately that we do this, we have put self before the Almighty. We have broken the first commandment and have become our own god. We have rebelled against the true God.

When Almighty God has spoken clearly and we say ‘No! We are not going to concern ourselves with that particular precept’, then automatically we are taking instructions from another source. This is nothing less than stubborn rebellion to the sacred mandate. God is no respecter of persons, or their ideas. It matters not whether we get our ideas from tradition, liberal evangelicalism or our own vain imaginations, if it is not from the Scriptures of truth then it is rebellion. Rebellion means to ‘resist established law’.

The Law of which we are treating is established forever. It is the Law of God. If we resist this Law, or turn aside from it, then we turn away from God Himself. The verdict of God in Scripture is: you have another god before me. This is idolatry, and our reluctance to obey God is the same as worshipping a false god. No other conclusion can be drawn.

In this matter of Christian liberty, of which we hear so much today, many Christians claim that they can follow their own conscience. This is not valid. Conscience ceased to be a sure guide when our first parents fell into sin, which infiltrated the whole personality of all Adam’s posterity. A conscience must first be enlightened before it will operate aright and there is only one source of enlightenment; that is the Word of God. A truly enlightened conscience will always be in perfect harmony with the preceptive teaching of the Word of God, which is summarized in the Law of God. The conscience therefore, needs to be thoroughly instructed in that Law in order to distinguish between right and wrong - sin and obedience. The Word of God is absolutely binding on the conscience: there is no liberty to pick and choose. In the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ there was absolute harmony between His

conscience and the Law of God. The current, widespread, misguided teaching on the subject of Christian liberty is no more than another snare of the adversary to entice believers to lawlessness.

If a person chooses to depart from the Divine Mandate, then they have chosen another god. If they decide to please themselves, then they have become their own god. They have determined their own rule of life, and in so doing have usurped the throne of God. When any man or woman acts after their own inclinations, then they are exercising God's prerogative. The first commandment forbids totally our desires or our ideas. There is no leeway here. It is not for us to say: 'but I believe so-and-so', or 'I think', or 'my feelings are...'. God's Word states, "*Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and judgments, which I teach you ... ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you*" (Deuteronomy 4:1,2). There is no place for man's inventions or ideas, and as for liberty, such does not exist. These are principles which are vital if we are to understand rightly the meaning of idolatry. This may be very shattering to us, but the truth of it will become ever more apparent as the subject develops.

The question which needs to be addressed is, 'where did our thoughts and ideas come from?' Did they in the first place come from the Word of God, or are they a tradition passed down, or perhaps a new idea of the present day? The age of the tradition or of the idea is irrelevant – if it be not founded upon the Scriptures of Truth, it is false. There is no middle ground when it comes to the Law of God. He has left no central, or neutral path. God evaluates all human activity, open and secret, by

His Law (cf Ecclesiastes 12:13,14). It is either of God or it is the vain imagination of man.

This black and white situation was spelt out clearly in Eden, but not accepted by Adam and Eve. It was in that garden of perfection that we first read of false and idolatrous thinking. It might be said that there is no evidence that Adam and Eve had idols, but idolatry is a principle, this is what we must understand.

Adam and Eve, our first parents, in their primal state had full access to all creation with one exception - the tree in the midst of the garden. In Genesis chapter 3 it is recorded the Serpent approached Eve with the words, "*Hath God said?*" Eve replied, "*...God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it*". She knew God's Law; she knew that Law was binding. The Devil misrepresented God, and misled Eve: "*...in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*". These lies brought Eve to think the fruit of the tree was desirable. Thus, her own thoughts became her rule of conduct. She rebelled against God's Law. Self took precedence over the Creator. The first commandment was broken "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*". At that point, the very beginning of human history, idolatry entered.

Idolatry was perpetuated by Cain, the very first man to be born of Adam. In Genesis chapter 4 we read he brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. But Abel, his younger brother, by faith (cf Hebrews 11:4) offered to the Lord a firstling of his flock – a lamb. Abel's offering was accepted but not Cain's; the Lord told Cain his offering was sinful. Sin is a transgression of the Law (cf 1 John 3:4).

Hence the Lord charged Cain with breaking His Law when he offered to the Lord the fruit of the ground; his sin was false worship – idolatry. In 1 John 3:12 Cain's act is described as evil; he sought to worship the Almighty according to his own evil, idolatrous thoughts.

This approach has never dropped out of man's reasoning, and as time has rolled on man's thoughts have taken an ever-increasing precedence over the Word of God. The ideas of men have become more subtle. They are constantly designing and inventing from their own imagination to improve, as they think, upon the Law of God. But does the God of heaven ever co-operate with man's proffered improvements or amendments? He does not! His Law is perfect. To add to, or to diminish from, the Law of God is nothing less than the creation of another religion. Cain's offering was never even countenanced by the Almighty.

In the beginning there was nothing but a true religion. Cain, like his parents, rejected this and invented his own. He did acknowledge God in his offering, and what is more he was seeking to worship Him, but it was not in God's way. Cain's worship was a product of his own imagination. He had established another god before Jehovah; therefore it was totally rejected.

In this opening chapter much reference is being made to early human history because certain principles must be established. It is vital that the nature of idolatry is understood, and the origin of false religion. It did not spring out of heathendom; all false religion sprang out of true

religion. It came into being soon after creation, it was a deviation at the first, nevertheless it was idolatry.

Many academics today teach that the Christian religion is the refinement of the heathen religions of the world. This is false. All other religions are a corruption of the true. This will be shown clearly later.

All the religions of the world outside of Holy Scripture are the invention of rebels. It will always be found, if traced to their origins, that they are the product of someone saying 'I think'. In this way, God's Law has been subjugated to man's thoughts. This is to put another god before the true God – **Idolatry**.

2. GOD’S WORD OR MAN’S THOUGHTS?

In the first chapter it has been established that idolatry is a principle; it is the thoughts and ideas of man taking precedence over the mind of God. Consider this hypothetical illustration: A man moves into a new area where he is a complete stranger. He wants a place of worship to attend and to become involved, and so he visits a number of places in the locality to test them out. After a month or so he is heard to say, ‘I like the church in such-and-such a street; that is where I shall settle; they seem to be ‘with-it’. The people are jolly and friendly; the music is lively, and they have a good youth movement. The officers appear to be switched on as to what the people want in this age, and the preaching is short and pithy. There is a light atmosphere about the place, nothing sombre or heavy’. Such a man has disclosed at once that he is controlled by the principles of idolatry. He is not vitally concerned that the truth of Holy Scripture is preached and practised in all its fulness. His concern is for the inventions of man within the church; it is added extras which are important to him. Or, in the Lord’s words: “*Other gods before me*”.

It is because so many who profess to be Christians are looking for this kind of thing that more and more places of worship cater for them. In consequence keen competition is seen as to which church can put on the best show. The reasoning and the motivation soon become: ‘the church down the road does it, so we must. In fact, we must try and do one better or we shall not get the people. Indeed, we might well lose the ones we have if we do not move with the spirit of the age’.

This is the highroad to apostasy; in fact, it is apostasy because it is a violation of the very first commandment of God. Our Lord said concerning the Godward aspect of His holy Law, ‘this is the first and great commandment’ (cf Matthew 22:37,38).

In the final analysis concerning matters spiritual, all must come under one of two headings. It is either ‘God has said’ or ‘I think’. When a person takes the course of their own thoughts, inevitably will they distance themselves from the Word of God. They will not want to consult the Scriptures, or to hear ministry on the subject concerned. If they do, they will put their own interpretation upon it, in order to try to cover up the pre-determined choice and course of their own inclinations.

The subject of election and predestination will serve as a glaring example of this approach. How many there are who say they could never believe in a God who chooses some, and passes-by others. What is going on in that person’s mind? Such a person is not concerned with what God has said in His Word; that person has his own ideas about the matter; his thoughts take priority over God’s thoughts. This is the very principle of idolatry; it is most sobering and far reaching, and as we look more specifically into the second commandment it becomes more alarming.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the

fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6).

These words set out clearly one of the consequences of obedience and disobedience. Our attitude to the Law of God not only affects us, it will also affect our children. Parents who have a high regard for the mandate of Holy Scripture and who train their children accordingly, must never be looked upon as hard or rigid, for they are doing them the greatest kindness they could possibly do upon earth. The future life and blessing of the child is crucially involved in this matter. More concerning this will come out later.

The first commandment binds us to the worship of the true God – ‘no other gods before Me’. The second commandment binds us to the worship of the true God in the true manner – ‘no graven image’. It is no exaggeration to say that we live in a day when the second commandment is almost entirely overlooked. Most professing Christians today hold the Romanist view of the second commandment; this statement will probably startle the reader, nevertheless it is true.

The Romanists believe that the Bible is the Word of God, yet in their places of worship one finds numerous images, crucifixes, statues of the virgin, and so on. If one asked a devout practising Romanist how they, who profess to believe the Bible, could bow before an image in worship, the reply would be, ‘We do not worship the image. The image is but a help in the worship of God, there is a great advantage in our having these things around us’. In all fairness it must be said that many of these folk

genuinely think this way. Notice the phraseology – they **think** this way.

The same could be said of the Buddhist, the Muslim, or any other religion; their images, idols, relics and shrines are but a means which they have set up whereby they are helped to worship their unseen supposed deities. However, let it be said the Romanists would not have a statue of Buddha before them. They would say that was another god; but to have a statue of Christ, the virgin or a cross is not another god, it is all a part of the Christian religion. In this way do they merge the first and second commandment into one. They claim to worship the God of heaven and to have no other gods before Him. All their paraphernalia is but helping them in the carrying out of their worship. This, of course, is wrong. The first two commandments are distinct, and their meaning cannot be blurred in this way.

It must be plainly stated that the Romanist is in no way alone in this. The invention of any thing which a man may think to be helpful in worship, if it is not found in the Scriptures, is a transgression of the second commandment. The first commandment is concerned with **who**; the second with **how**.

It is important that the wording of the second commandment be carefully registered. The majority of people seem to think that an idol, or idolatry, centres around wood, stone or metal images. The Scripture is not worded in this way, it says, “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image*”.

We must not forget that the Decalogue summarizes broad Divine principles which are given throughout the Bible; the word ‘principle’ meaning, ‘a rule of action’, ‘that which is firmly established in the mind’, ‘a tenet on which conduct is founded’. Men and women act according to principles established in the mind. The operative question is: where did these tenets come from?

The important word in the second commandment is ‘graven’, a “*graven image*”. The basic underlying thought is, anything which man has carved out. The Christian is not to use anything in worship which he or she has carved out.

A sculptor is one who chisels and carves, and so moulds an image. There is an art involved in this work. The sculptor is expressing himself in that which he is doing. The same applies to an artist; as he paints so he puts his ideas and his thoughts into a tangible form. A heathen image is nothing more than the work of a human sculptor. The man responsible chisels and moulds his image according to what he thinks his god is, or ought to be like. That is sheer idolatry; yet many who profess the name of Christ are no different, for they have carved out in their minds, and built up an image of God which is totally different from the God of Holy Scripture. In consequence, their understanding and concept of the Almighty is according to the image which has been moulded by their own thoughts; that which they think God is, or ought to be. This is termed in the Scriptures ‘vain imaginations’, which we are commanded to cast out. “*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The word ‘imagination’ is derived from the word ‘image’. It is defined as ‘a fanciful opinion’, ‘the mental faculty that forms images from impressions’. The definition given by Alexander Cruden in his concordance is ‘corrupt reasonings’; that is, the thoughts of corrupt minds rather than the Divine revelation of Holy Scripture.

The Christian is never to go outside Holy Writ. If we do, we shall use our own imaginations. By doing this we invent our own god – one that is different from the God of the Bible. We have carved out an image. *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things”* (Romans 1:21-23).

The depraved mind of man can think up the most grotesque things, so that his appreciation of God is completely different from the God who is revealed in Scripture. Our thoughts can so change the glory of the uncorruptible God that we have an image of Him in our minds which is not unlike to a corruptible man. This is all too common today. Men think they are clever when they bring the eternal God down to a human level. Many preachers do it; they oversimplify, bringing profound truth down to little more than a spiritual nursery rhyme. They argue that God must be so presented that the natural man can understand and appreciate Him. This is a nonsense. Man, apart from regenerating power, will never understand spiritual truth. Man has to be lifted, yea raised up, not the Almighty God brought down!

Men who profess themselves to be wise in their modern approach, are fools. What is more, they have changed the glory of the uncorruptible God. They have created in their own minds, and in the minds of those they teach, an image. What has happened is, they have left the real truth and turned to their own thinking; by so doing their foolish hearts are darkened. True light is then shut out.

This is a tragedy; for when the light is excluded, people just cannot see the truth. The image in their minds holds sway, they worship and serve the creature more than the Creator. The creature being that image which they have carved out – their thoughts, and not the Word of God. Instead of: “*Thus saith the Lord*” they have said, ‘but I think’. In a nutshell, they have designed their own god.

The second commandment binds men to a prescribed worship. Nothing is left to the imagination, or to further invention. All such is idolatry, although people may still claim to be worshipping the true God. Israel did this at the foot of Mount Sinai. The molten calf was an aid to worship, an advantageous extra as they thought. It would draw the people together; it was something which they would enjoy. Before that molten image, Aaron built an altar and made a proclamation saying, “*Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord*” (Exodus 32:5). ‘Incredible’, we say! Yes, but we have the self-same thing all around us today.

The people of God must be alert to this. It may not be a molten calf, but we have the self-same principle of man’s thoughts and inventions in worship, which is idolatry. There are plenty of modern Aarons. The big names are not only in christendom at large, but also in many

evangelical and reformed circles, building their altars around extra-Biblical inventions which they have allowed into their churches. All these idolatrous practices they pretend to sanctify, by proclaiming that it is in honour of Christ and for the furtherance of His cause.

There are many ministers and churches whose practices prove that they have idolatry right in their own camps. Whilst this remains the case, preaching on the molten calf, or mention of the Regulative Principle is to their own condemnation.

Idolatry is a principle. It is anything which is of man's invention or imagination. Indeed, it is anything that is not according to the Word of God.

3. THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE DISPLACED BY HUMANISM

This third chapter will continue to analyse, and give emphasis to, the Law of God; for it is only as one understands God's Law and its principles, which run throughout Scripture, that one can come to a correct conclusion of the subject concerned. God's commandments are exceeding broad (cf Psalm 119:96). The scope of the Decalogue is wide and all-embracing. Sad to say, man is little interested in God's Law; and sadder still, by far the major part of the church has abandoned it as not being relevant to the Gospel age. In turning from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them, men in general, yes! and also professing Christians have turned to their own thoughts and ideas on many matters.

This is a most subtle and dangerous thing, for little do people realize, nevertheless it is a fact, that they are making themselves their god. This is the most popular religion today – Humanism, a looking to one's own self, one's own reasoning; the putting of confidence in the wisdom of me; focussing upon man and his thoughts as being the authority. Humanism is self-centred, or man-centred worship. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the most common form of idolatry today.

We now examine in further detail the second commandment. *"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God"* (Exodus 20:5). 'Jealous'; the word means 'Anxiously watchful of one's rights', 'Requiring exclusive devotion'.

In Holy Scripture, the marriage relationship is held up as the supreme analogy of spiritual relationship. If a man becomes neglectful of his wife, she immediately becomes jealous of whatever it is which is causing that neglect. Let a husband or a wife be seen to become too familiar with another of the opposite sex, and at once there is a strained relationship. This is inevitable, for the marriage relationship is a most tender and delicate one, indeed it is sacred, for it is of God; therefore, it is to be guarded and preserved at all cost. It is a relationship requiring exclusive devotion. The man or woman who does not understand that God has ordained jealousy in the marriage bond should never embark upon marriage, for jealousy is an inbuilt protection for that relationship.

This Biblical analogy will greatly help us to understand something of the meaning of this clause in the second commandment. The Almighty says, *"I am a jealous God"*. He requires 'exclusive devotion'; He is 'anxiously watchful of His rights'. *"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"*. 'Before Me'. We are not even to cast an admiring glance to any other. The first commandment does not mean that God is to be the chief God; it means that He is the only God. Added to this is the second commandment which in essence is – man is not to carve out or bring his ideas into the worship of the Almighty. Man is limited in his worship of God to the manner in which God has prescribed in His Law; and of that Law God is jealous. He 'requires exclusive devotion' and He 'anxiously watches over His rights'.

It has been established that the Ten Commandments are a summary of all the laws and precepts of Holy Writ. The Scriptures are an enlargement and exposition of that Law. This being the case, it is not

difficult to find examples in the Bible of where these principles are outworked. One such example is found in Genesis chapter 4. What was Cain doing wrong? Was he worshipping another god? Was he offering a shoddy sacrifice? No! He was doing neither; Cain was worshipping God in the way in which he wanted to worship, and not in the manner which God had ordained. Cain invented his own way. God said to him, *“If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door”* (Genesis 4:7).

This could not be set out more clearly. To worship God in His way is acceptable, to worship Him in our own way is sin. There is no middle road, yet so many Christians think there is.

Today we see three lines of practice in christendom:

1. The holding of the mandate of Scripture as being the sole authority.
2. Blatant departure from truth, leading to open idolatry.
3. A subtle alternative way which professing Christians have invented – that which God has said, plus supposed ‘aids’ and ‘helps’.

It must be stated categorically that, in the eyes of God, this ‘third way’ is not distinguished from the second. The so-called middle way of liberal evangelicalism is merely one of the lanes of the idolatrous spiritual motorway. It is nothing but another of man’s vain imaginations. It is a breach of the second commandment.

1 Chronicles 13 furnishes us with a further example of this principle. David, with every leader, priest and Levite in all Israel consulted together to bring again the ark of God to the tabernacle which David had pitched for it. In Exodus 37:1-5 we have the means provided by God for carrying the ark; in Numbers 4:2-5 we have God's instruction as to who should carry the ark; and in Numbers 7:9 we are told how it was to be carried. David and the leaders (civil and spiritual) decided to carry the ark in their own way (cf 1 Chronicles 13:7). It was the way of the Philistines (cf 1 Samuel 6:7,8). The carnally-minded person will consider the intentions as being both good and sincere, furthermore this was a spiritually joyful occasion (cf 1 Chronicles 13:8). But man's thoughts are not God's thoughts. His Word had been disobeyed. The sin of David and Israel's leaders, including the Levites, was disobedience to God's Word.

Is it not true – yet tragic – that spiritual leaders do the same today? Man-made inventions are brought into the church as aids in worship. Men have ideas which they think will be a help to their witness, so extra-Biblical activities invade the house of God. For all such actions every man and woman will be held accountable. If God has told us the way to do a thing in His Word, then we are not to attempt some other method even though it seems to work, and attains the same end.

Arminian evangelistic enterprise is a glaring example of this: mass, high-pressure spiritual salesmanship. No-one would say that none are ever saved through it. True it is that masses are deluded and brought to a false profession; nevertheless, some are brought to salvation. Does it matter that these evangelistic salesmen are peddlars of only partial truth?

They may not preach all the counsel of God. They may by-pass sovereign election, decry predestination and denounce reprobation, but does this matter provided souls are saved? In the eyes of God, it is of great account.

Every man and woman, boy and girl ever saved, was ordained unto eternal life before the foundation of the world (cf Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 2:10, 2 Timothy 1:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2). All the elect in every generation, regardless of nationality, will be saved. The invincible power of the Holy Spirit will reach them, every one, be it in an Arminian evangelistic rally, a Calvinistic church, or the 'far country' in the gutter of sin (cf Luke 15:13). But all those who invent other forms of preaching, and strange methods of reaching sinners, other than that which is God-ordained, are noted by God. One day they will have to give account, for it is sin. It is a violation of the second commandment. Why do men do this? The molten calf of Exodus 32 provides the answer. Moses had gone up into the mount to receive the Law. All the people knew he had gone up, and they were waiting for him to come down with that Law, but they grew tired of the delay in receiving this God-given instruction; it was their impatience which led them to sin.

One of the main reasons why professing Christians of our day pay such little attention to the all-important Divine Mandate, is because they do not have the patience, or the desire to study, search out and wait upon God to discover His revealed will. In consequence vast numbers get caught up in the swirl of modern gimmickry, which bears no resemblance whatsoever to what God has said. It is much easier to

devise our own way of doing things, than to get down to the Scriptures of truth and discover exactly what God wants us to do and how He wants us to do it.

The impatience of the Israelites brought them to do something. They approached Aaron to make them gods, and Aaron co-operated fully (cf Exodus 32:1,2).

Is this not the principle which motivates Arminians today? Do not many leaders of churches follow in the footsteps of Aaron? A council is formed, a steering committee set up, to organize church activities and plan programmes. Neither are some reformed churches strangers to this pattern of thinking. Is there not evidence to prove that ministers fall in with 'good ideas' which have originated in the pew? 'Let us have a fraternal, a conference' say they, out of which come all the extra-Biblical activities that are now seen on chapel notice boards and in magazines.

So, Aaron collected the gold, and he made the image; it was a golden calf. It was no shoddy effort; much time, thought and effort went into it. What is more, these Israelites did not intend to turn their backs completely upon God, indeed not! Rather were they just going to do things a little differently; but it was still going to be the worship of Jehovah. Aaron proclaimed that it was to be "*A feast to the Lord*" (Exodus 32:5). Yes! Aaron put his name to it all, so it must be alright. The happenings at the foot of Sinai in that far-off day are typical of what is going on in the church today, and is a solemn warning to our generation.

What occasioned this tragic happening? Impatience and discontent with God's way. When this happens, Christians will soon raise up a golden calf. In other words, dissatisfaction with God's way results in disregarding what God has said, which is always the first step in idolatry.

Yet another example of this principle is found in 1 Kings 12. The twelve tribes of Israel were now divided. There were two kingdoms: Rehoboam was king down in Judah, Jeroboam was king up in the northern kingdom, and the two were enemies. The question of worship obviously arose. The temple was in Jerusalem in the south, and Jeroboam dare not let his people go there to worship or he might lose them. What was he to do? He had an idea. He made two golden calves and placed each in a convenient location in his kingdom, one in Bethel and the other in Dan. Is it not a fact that if a thing is convenient, more often than not, it will become popular? Men and women will accept even strange things if it is convenient for them so to do. Jeroboam did not command his people to turn their backs upon God and worship calves instead. These calves were an extra, a man-invented means of worship; something tangible upon which to centre. Then in conjunction with it, he ordained a feast and fixed a day. *"So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel; and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense"* (1 Kings 12:33).

All that is being set out from the Scriptures in these early chapters should be carefully noted and registered, for it has a great bearing upon the

subject of festal days. Jeroboam ordained the feast. He fixed the day. It was all devised out of his own heart.

In Psalm 106 we have a concise summary of Israel's history and God's dealings with them. *"They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt"*, verse 21. *"They provoked Him to anger with their inventions"*, verse 29. *"They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them"*, verse 35,36. *"Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions"*, verse 39. *"Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance"*, verse 40.

Leviticus 10:1-7 gives us the account of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offering strange fire before the Lord. It mattered not where that fire came from, or how well it appeared to glow. It was not that which God had commanded; therefore, it was strange. In judgment these two men were cut off by the hand of Divine vengeance, and in that tragic happening we read Aaron remained silent. Later Moses warned Aaron that he was not to mourn for those sons, lest it appeared to God that he thought more of his sons than he did of the correct order in the worship of Jehovah.

Sufficient portions of Scripture have now been cited to prove that the God of heaven is a jealous God - 'anxiously watchful of His rights'. *"I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me"* (Leviticus 10:3). When we come to worship, we are on holy ground. No man or woman drawing nigh unto the Most High must bring their own ideas, or in any way be

entangled with the inventions of man. God is to be sanctified – set apart. It is Him, and Him only. He is not to be our chief God; He is our only God.

We have now seen something of the far reaching and all-embracing principles which are found in the first and second commandments. Some may retort that this teaching has been over-stated, and is not common belief today. That may well be, due to the lack of in-depth ministry and a woeful neglect of the teaching of the Law. But what has been stated so far is no novel interpretation. A brief glance at a couple of historic Confessions of Faith will serve to prove this point.

In *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Confession*, question 109 reads: “What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?” The answer given is: “The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and in any way approving any religious worship not instituted by God Himself, tolerating a false religion, the making of any representation of God, of all, or any of the three Persons, either inwardly in our minds, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever ... all superstitious devices corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented, or taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other practice whatsoever ... all neglect, contempt, hindering and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed”.

If that is not a Biblical rule of life for the believer, then surely there cannot be one! Yet let it be said, it is based upon the Law of God – the second commandment.

In *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, chapter 22 paragraph 1, the following statement is made: “The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures”.

An abundance of further historical evidence could be brought forward to show that what has been written has been the touchstone of the faithful down through the generations. Sadly, much contemporary evidence shows that this is not common belief or practice in our day. Humanism – man’s ideas, have displaced the regulative principle so that God’s Word is not authoritative in many areas of life.

4. VAIN IMAGINATIONS

Because this book is designed to answer the question: ‘Is the celebration of festal days such as Christmas and Easter, a violation of the Law of God?’ one has to be fully conversant with that Law, and well versed and proficient in all the Biblical principles which are summarized in the Ten Commandments.

It is the first and second commandments which are particularly relevant in this examination – who is to be worshipped, and how our God is to be worshipped.

It has been established that idolatry is a principle, something which man has carved out in his mind, a vain imagination stemming from the image which is of his own corrupt reasoning. In the Book of the Preacher we read, “*Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions*” (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

At this point we go back to Eden again because here is the main spring, indeed the source of all vain imaginations. God made the first man (Adam) upright, even in His own image (cf Genesis 1:26), but they (Adam and all his progeny) have sought out many inventions – extras, adding to that which God has prescribed.

In Eden, God provided for every need of man. Everything was his, even to having dominion under God, over the whole of this planet (cf Genesis 1:26). Adam was God’s viceroy upon earth. There was but one

prohibition, one test of allegiance to his Maker; the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was forbidden. As long as man was obedient to the Law of God, he would live and know full communion with God, but if he rebelled against that Law then he would die.

The question which obviously arises is, what was it that moved Adam and Eve to partake of the forbidden tree? Listening to the words of Satan, they thought that by eating of that tree they would be as God, knowing good and evil (cf Genesis 3:1-6).

To be as God was a very great attraction, for then they would be able to make their own choices and write their own laws. No longer would they have to be subjected entirely to God's Law; for of themselves, they would be able to decide that which was good and beneficial and that which to them, was evil.

The alternative to the rigid Law given to them appealed; they could see advantages in it. It was their thoughts as opposed to God's commands, and this was the very beginning of man inventing his own worship. Here we see humanism in embryo. A looking to one's self, one's own reasoning; man, and his wisdom and knowledge as being the authority. This is seen all around us today but its roots were in Eden's garden – vain imagination!

This is a truth that none can contradict. Was anything more vain or worthless, more empty and unreal (for that is the meaning of the word 'vain') than the imaginations of our first parents? What havoc was wrought by their moving outside of the Law of God and resorting to the

law of 'I think'! It was a breach of that which we now know as the second commandment. Man's thoughts and ideas superseding God's Law. From that time, right down through history, this sinful trait has been in all Adam's descendants.

However, the true Christian, the one who has been born again of God's Holy Spirit is a new creature, he is no longer in Adam, he is in Christ. He is now to "*mortify the flesh*" (Colossians 3:5), to "*cast down imaginations*" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Man-made inventions, or traditions of men, are to have no place in the believer's life. The Christian is to be, "*filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*" (Colossians 1:9).

God is the God of all knowledge. He has laid down the rules, and it is for man to obey. In this matter, let every thinking man and woman be reasonable: where has man's wisdom got him? What is the result of Adam's vain imagination? Has he not plunged the whole race into sin, misery and ultimate death? Did not his action put every human foot of every generation, of all time on the road to hell? Adam thought it was a good move; he saw it as a good idea; but was it? Could a more vain step ever have been taken? "*Cease ye from man*" (Isaiah 2:22), God alone has all knowledge and wisdom, His Law is perfect. "*His commandments are not grievous*" (1 John 5:3). There will never be any grievous consequences in the obeying of God's Law. The God who knows the end from the beginning, legislates accordingly. Mortal man knows not what a day may bring forth. What rank folly for him to suggest that he will make his own rules and act independently of his Maker. Man is no

more than a lump of clay in the hand of the Potter, yet he has the audacity to pit his will against the Law of the Almighty God.

It is little wonder that the Bible states that, “*the imagination of man’s heart is evil*” (Genesis 8:21). It cannot be otherwise, because the seed is there; therefore, all so-called spiritual inventions of man are evil, because the source is the flesh.

If we are truly born again, we are to forever give up writing our own law. We cease to invent and come up with our ideas; rather do we begin to delight in the Law of the Lord. We commence to study and look into the Scriptures to discover exactly what that Law is and what is required of us. The Christian life is one of learning and submitting to the Law of God in all its broad and far reaching principles, which is the whole mandate of Scripture. If this is not the attitude of the Christian, then something is radically wrong, and that person needs to seriously examine himself (cf 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Sufficient must surely now have been said to have brought home to the reader the deep and solemn implications of the first and second commandments; their all-embracing principles should be apparent to everyone. So, having established the Divine yardstick in our minds, and having a working knowledge of the supreme Statute Book, we now come nearer to the matter of putting Christmas and Easter on trial. But just as we have probed deeply into the Law, its origin, its wording and its requirements, so we must now examine the origin and details of these festivals.

In our examination, we must commence at the book of Genesis; this is the book of beginnings. Here we find the institution of marriage, the home, the family unit and the definite setting-apart of one day in seven for God; but although this book is so basic as to foundational matters, we find no reference in its fifty chapters to the observance of any special day other than the Sabbath (the principle of one day in seven).

Is there any evidence they were instituted later? Perhaps after Israel was more clearly identifiable as a nation, and a fixed form of worship laid down, where the coming of Christ and His sacrificial death would be foreshadowed, two special days would be laid down to commemorate these events? But no! So, we go through the other books of the Pentateuch, then on to Joshua and Judges, and still find no mention.

Could it have been revealed to David or to Solomon? We carefully examine the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, but there is no reference to these festivals. We now turn to the poetical books; such a 'romantic' scene as Christmas will surely be mentioned there, but again Scripture is silent. We now refer to the writings of the prophets with the same result – no mention.

Having scanned the Old Testament, we turn to the New Testament. First the Gospels where is set out in great detail the birth and death of the Lord Jesus; but we find no date that lines up or approximates to Christmas Day or Good Friday. Moving into the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the information which we seek is still missing. With hope, we now turn to the Epistles, for therein are full instructions given to the Church of the New Testament age; so these sacred festivals must

necessarily be set out there, and a full church calendar giving us the days and dates of these special seasons which we are to keep, and which are to be a vital part of the church's worship. This calendar is in the Prayer Book so we would expect it to be in the Bible somewhere – Advent, Epiphany, Lent, etc., but in all the Epistles there is not a single word about any of these festal days.

At this point the reader is confronted with a problem. If all churches, of whatever denomination, observe these festal days in some form or another, except those reckoned to be false cults or isolated cranks, then there must be some information in the one remaining book, that of the Revelation; but throughout those twenty two chapters also, there is not a sentence to support the observance of festal days.

No, there is not a word in the whole of Scripture concerning the annual celebration of Christmas or Easter with all the trappings which accompany both festivals. They do not figure in the Divine Mandate, there is no "*Thus saith the Lord*". Where then did they come from, if God did not institute these seasons? Who set up the so-called church calendar? It came from the vain imaginations of men; it is an adding to the Word of God; men have thought it a good idea; it would be helpful in the worship of God and a most advantageous means of interesting the people, and getting them to understand certain aspects pertaining to the Christian religion. It is idolatry! A carving out of an idea other than that which God has prescribed. This is a graven image. It is not the worship of the true God in the true manner.

In the celebration of these festal days, professing Christians may well claim that they are worshipping God. The trimmings of Christmas are but a help to them in their remembrance. What is more, it is a means of getting others in who would not normally go to a place of worship. It must be stated clearly, to be faithful to God and to His Word, that these man-invented helps and means are the very essence of Romanism, as has been stated in a previous chapter. It is idolatry, for idolatry is a principle – something which is established in the mind which is outside the Law of God.

To the Pharisees the Lord said, *“For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men ... making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition”* (Mark 7:8,13). The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians under a great burden. He was gravely concerned about them. What was the trouble? *“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain”* (Galatians 4:10,11).

To observe days and seasons other than that which God has commanded is a most serious matter.

In the light of the ground thus covered, is not the case proved? Need one go further? We have come through from Genesis to Revelation and there is not a single hint of such a festival to be celebrated by Christians such as Christmas and Easter. Having proved that these festivals are not found in Scripture, from whence did they come? If they are not Christian (and they are not), how did they come to be almost universally

recognized by the professing Christian church? These are valid questions which must be answered.

In the Bible we have a very comprehensive history of the people of God, and in this inspired record we have much detail given as to when those people forsook the Law of God and turned to their own imaginations. We are informed when they so defected, and who was in the main responsible for bringing in new inventions, how the masses reacted to such idolatry, who if any stood against it, and the long-term consequences. All this is “*written for our learning*” (Romans 15:4).

Although the Biblical record closed in the first century A.D., we still have authentic historical writings, albeit not inspired, giving indisputable evidence of vital happenings and crucial turning points in the Church’s history over the past 1900 years. To ignore all this, together with the current events of our own generation, is to bury our heads in the sand and to live in continued idolatry. The Lord grant grace to all, to face up to these most serious matters.

5. ORIGINS OF FESTAL DAYS

It is now proved beyond all doubt that these festive seasons carry no Biblical warrant; they are the inventions of men; vain imaginations; practices which not only have no warrant, but are actually at variance with the Law of God. There are no mitigating features in this; no case for the defence. It is a flagrant flouting of the Divine Mandate; none can sue for clemency, for the case is too clear. The evidence being such, certain obvious questions arise, such as: 'who invented these things?' 'How did they become a vital part of church life?' Surely the 25th of December has some meaning; and Good Friday, such a holy day as this can never be fictitious! Remaining chapters will deal with these questions: where these seasons came from, whose inventions they were, and when such vain imaginations were first carved out of men's minds.

It may surprise the reader to learn that these festivals go back well over 4,000 years and they are nothing whatsoever to do with Christianity; indeed, they are totally opposed to God and to His Law. Their origins are in paganism of the deepest and most perverse order. All that we are now to see originates from ancient Babylon; here issued all the false and heathen religions of the world: Christmas and Easter are relics of ancient Babylonish religion adopted and slotted into Christianity by the cunning craftiness of men, instigated of course by the master deceiver himself, Satan.

In order to trace this and substantiate it, one has to have a certain knowledge of Babylonish worship. We would not expect to find in the Scriptures a detailed treatise which sets out all the finer points of their

procedures; of their pagan rites and practices. Nevertheless, frequent references are made in the Word of God to such heathen deities as Baal, Ashtaroath, Bel, Nergal, Tammuz and many others. From now on, attention will be drawn to some of the religious rituals of Babylon of old, and the observant reader who knows anything of the Old Testament will readily spot the significance of certain portions of Scripture which perhaps previously meant nothing to him. What is more, it will not be difficult to see that remnants of Baal are by no means extinct; indeed, they are very much alive today, even in the professedly evangelical wing of the church.

The man who is the key figure in this false worship is first mentioned in the book of Genesis, *“And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar”* (Genesis 10:8-10). The wording of Holy Scripture as this man Nimrod is introduced to us is of great importance. *“He was a mighty hunter”*. Not of wild beasts as some commentators foolishly suggest: Nimrod was a hunter of men, in order to gain territory and so establish a kingdom. His name means ‘rebel’ which is defined as one who ‘renounces allegiance’, ‘resists established law’. Another vital phrase in these inspired verses is *“Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord”*; the word ‘before’ meaning ‘in place of’ or ‘rather than’.

So, at the outset of this man’s career we learn that he was a rebel, resisting the established Law written upon man’s heart at the first, and renouncing allegiance to the God of heaven. This was gross violation of

the first and second commandments. Nimrod had carved out his own god. Self came before the Almighty – another god before (rather than) the Lord.

This rebel had the vain imagination of establishing himself and a kingdom ‘in the place of’ God, and His true kingdom. Then does the Scripture go on to say: “*The beginning of his kingdom was Babel*” (or Babylon) and this word means ‘confusion’. Another observation to be made is the statement that, “*He (Nimrod) began to be a mighty one in the earth*”. These somewhat obscure verses in the tenth chapter of Genesis are of immense importance, and a knowledge of them is fundamental to the Christian warfare, and to us, in order that we have an understanding of the times in which we live. One of the basic principles of war is the ability to spot the enemy. Thus it must be with us. It is essential that we are able to detect that which is false or counterfeit.

We are now at the main spring of all false religions. A rebel had arisen from amongst the sons of men. This man was different from Cain or any others before him, in that he was a most forceful character. Renouncing allegiance to God and resisting His Law, he commenced to be famous; so famous as to be almost counted a deity; for this kingdom which commenced in Babylon was a highly religious kingdom, but it was a kingdom which was outside of the Law of God. However, this founder of false religion was a mighty hunter. By decoy and deceit, as well as stealth and force, his kingdom grew. To find evidence of that kingdom today one has not to go into the jungles of Africa or the hills of Tibet. Throughout the land in which we live there is stark evidence of Nimrod’s kingdom. The principles are the same today as they were at

the first in ancient Babylon, namely, a renouncing of the Law of God and setting up of inventions according to man's ideas. That Scripture in Genesis 10 stated that the beginning of this kingdom was Babel, and it has indeed become mighty in the earth.

This religious kingdom which commenced in the plains of Shinar, continued throughout Old Testament times, and is still with us today. The fact that the ancient city of Babylon no longer exists makes no difference whatsoever to the kingdom, for that goes on, and will not be destroyed until the end of time, as the Scriptures make plain: *"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. ... And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come"* (Revelation 18:1-3, 9,10).

There is no doubt that this religious kingdom has become great in the earth. Because her inventions are at variance with the Law of God, she has become the habitation of devils, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird, also the hold of every foul spirit. By this we are to learn that all false religions and practices are incorporated in this system.

Nevertheless, the kingdom is doomed. In the last great day, within one hour, this worldwide, mighty, religious kingdom, founded by Nimrod, will be totally and eternally destroyed.

However, it is not the prophetic or future aspect of Babylon which is the concern of this book; it is her beginnings and continuing presence. The perpetuity of this kingdom in the earth is set forth in the Word of God under the figure of a woman: *“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration”* (Revelation 17:3-6).

This woman, who prefigures Babylon or Babel, is described as blasphemous, which in simple terms means ‘against God’. She is decked in gold and precious stones, denoting that she is rich. She is filthy and a fornicator, revealing that immorality is commonplace. Indeed, she is called *“The Great”* and the *“Mother of Harlots”*. By this we learn that Babylon was the original harlot, but harlots through immoral relationships have offspring. Is it not obvious to the reader how the Scriptures dovetail? The references to Babylon in the book of the Revelation perfectly harmonize with those in the book of Genesis. Nimrod commenced this kingdom at Babel, but from that religious

invention has sprung all false religions, until they have become the abomination of the whole earth. Babylon is the mother of them all.

There is no shortage of religion in Britain today, but it is religion into which has infiltrated man's imaginations and inventions. There is so much that is not according to Holy Scripture; other things have come in **before** the Lord, or **instead of** that which God has said. In such a situation, what is the true child of God to do? Remain in a cage with unclean birds? No, the child of God is commanded to: "*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities*" (Revelation 18:4,5). This voice is none other than the voice of the Great Head of the Church Himself and with supreme authority He says, "Come out". Quit anything and everything which is of a Babylonish nature, anything which is set up in the place of that which God has said. Such religion is of the imagination of men's minds, and it is an abomination unto the Lord.

The greatest manifestation of this Babylonish system today as practised in this country is, without doubt, the Romanist religion; yet not exclusively so, as inferred by some Protestant organizations. If one studies the Roman mass, her baptismal regeneration, purgatory and other dogmas and beliefs, one is bound to query, 'where did this religion come from, and by what authority?' None of these dogmas are found in Holy Scripture, therefore they are outside of the Law of God, a breach of the first and second commandments. But in all fairness, it must be said that other systems also carry imaginative and unscriptural beliefs and practices.

Returning again to the book of Genesis, we learn of one of the very first imaginative notions of Babylonish worship. They would build a tower which would reach unto heaven (cf Genesis 11:4). This was nothing other than a man-invented approach to God; man's own idea, man's own work, it was that which man imagined to do (cf Genesis 11:6). Again and again in the Holy Scriptures, concerning the matter of false beliefs and practices, do we find the words 'imagine', 'image' or 'imagination'; all are vitally linked with Nimrod, Babel, Baal, Babylon and Ashtarothe. They are but one and the same in essence – idolatry. More light will be shed upon this by further reference to the Word of God. *"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim ... and they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtarothe"* (Judges 2:11,13). Here we have Baalim and Ashtarothe listed as religions and gods whom the people were serving; but it must be registered that it was not only the heathen who were worshipping these strange deities – it also included Israel. In an earlier section pertaining to God's Law, it has been established that the Almighty is not to be the 'chief god'; He is the only God. But God's people had introduced others, and invented practices which were outside of His Mandate.

It is necessary that we know something of these heathen deities. Their names and terms vary depending upon language and country. Ashtarothe was a mystery goddess identified with the planet Venus; Beltis is another name for her, and Astarte is the Greek word for the same goddess. 'Easter' is the English expression of Astarte. Ishtar was the Assyrian term. This deity is the goddess of sex, sensual love and fertility, and is also spoken of as the 'Queen of Heaven'.

With this information we turn to the Holy Scriptures. *“The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger”* (Jeremiah 7:18). *“We will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil ... Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows”* (Jeremiah 44:17,25).

From the preceding Scriptures we learn that the ‘Queen of Heaven’ had become very important; her incorporation into their worship had been established over the generations, *“as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes”* (Jeremiah 44:17). But who was she? Did she really exist? No – she was nothing other than a figment of man’s imagination. Yet despite the fact that she was a vain invention, victuals, cakes and drink in abundance were prepared for her worship. Everyone was in a frenzy, even the children gathering wood, the women kneading dough, and the fathers stoking the fire. Were these added extras in Judah’s religious life acceptable to God? *“They provoke me to anger saith the Lord... Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place”* (Jeremiah 7:19,20).

Other Scriptures which have a very great bearing upon Babylonish worship must be cited. *“These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree”* (Deuteronomy 12:1,2). *“And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree”* (1 Kings 14:22,23). *“And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree”* (2 Kings 17:10). *“He (King Ahaz) sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree”* (2 Chronicles 28:4). *“The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot”* (Jeremiah 3:6).

The foregoing Scriptures are but a few of the many references relating to festivals and celebrations to heathen deities. Particularly should the constant mention of the green tree and its association with the pagan idolatry which sprang out of Babylon be noted. This has been perpetuated throughout the generations and is with us today. Not only in the world but equally so in the professing church is it evident that the kingdom of Nimrod has become ‘great in the earth’. It is spiritual harlotry. This will become the more apparent in that which is to follow.

6. CHRISTMAS

We are now coming to the heart of this matter of Babylonish religion. Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord (dealt with in Chapter 5) established a religious kingdom. His name means ‘rebel’ and he renounced allegiance to God, resisting established law. Issuing from this false religious system are many gods and goddesses whose names are familiar throughout history, many of whom are mentioned in the Word of God.

Attention has already been drawn to passages of Scripture referring to the ancient Babylonish worship of the Queen of Heaven with father, mother, and children all engaged in frenzied activity to celebrate this mystery queen with cakes, drink and goodies. This pagan ritual over the generations gradually infiltrated into the ranks of God’s people and eventually became so entrenched that they saw nothing wrong in it; although it was clearly blatant idolatry (cf Jeremiah 44:17-25). So blind had Judah become, and so infatuated with the celebration that they “*saw no evil*” (verse 17) and they defiantly affirmed their intention of continuing by saying “*We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out our drink offerings unto her*” (verse 25).

Not only do the Scriptures make mention of heathen deities with which His ancient people had become contaminated, but also many references are made to high places, groves and green trees (cf Deuteronomy 12:1-2; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 17:10; 2 Chronicles 28:1,4; Jeremiah 3:6). All this was a part of Babylonish worship and idolatry, and these

observances were in great prominence during the days of the Old Testament prophets. People living at that time would have been fully acquainted with all the detail and paraphernalia of such celebrations; we, some several thousand years later and living in another part of the world, are not so familiar. Nevertheless, as the Scripture stated, Nimrod would become great in the earth; so great, that all nations without exception would become affected by this Babylonish worship. Although Britain over the centuries has been by tradition (nominally at least) Christian – in contrast to say Muslim or Buddhist beliefs, in no way can she claim to be free from, or unidentified with, this pagan idolatry. The trappings and remnants of Baal and Ashtarothe are all around us today. They are in the churches and chapels of almost every denomination, and alas in the homes of men and women who profess the name of Christ. Sadly, these folk do not realize it; and sadder still, if one endeavours to tell them, they will not believe it. In fact, they will quickly reply ‘that is your opinion’, and one is immediately branded as extreme and eccentric.

At this point more detail must be brought in concerning the actual festival of Christmas: what does it really mean? We take the word itself first – Christ-mass. The word ‘Christ’ may well be understood by us, but do we appreciate what the word ‘mass’ means?

The mass is a blasphemous custom practised by the Romanist. When a Romanist priest consecrates the wafer and the cup, he is supposedly crucifying Christ afresh, and the elements then become the actual and literal body and blood of Christ. A person partaking of the wafer is said to actually partake of the flesh of Christ, having within him the Person

of Christ; the wafer having saving value, whether the person is living or dying in sin. Ask a practising Romanist if he has received Christ, and he will say, 'yes, I partook of the mass last Sunday morning'. 'That is not Scriptural' we say, 'it does not line up with the Bible'. No it does not! But where did it come from – was it invented by Rome? The answer is, No, but it was adopted and modified by her.

The principles of the mass go right back to Baal, Ashtaroth, the Sun god and the Queen of Heaven. The offering of 'unbloody' sacrifices were deemed to be acceptable to this female goddess, as has been seen by the writings of Jeremiah 600 years B.C. concerning the cake and drink offerings. That would be well-nigh 1,000 years before the Romanist church existed. It was to the Queen of Heaven, the supposed mother god, that these offerings were made. This is the source of Rome's adoration of Mary. The mass in origin is rank heathenism. They may say in these days of ecumenical fervour that the Lord's Supper is akin to their mass; in no way is this the case. The two are totally different in origin, meaning and practice, yet Christ has been put into the idolatrous and blasphemous mass. In the pagan festival of December, Christ and the mass have been joined. So-called Christianity and Babylonianism have been brought together, and the term coined for the unholy alliance is 'Christmas'; and a festal season has been brought into Christianity to celebrate this blasphemous union. In this, with very few exceptions, all Christians are guilty before God. It is an appalling state of affairs; ask almost any Christian man or woman – 'what is Christmas?' The reply will be, 'a day set apart in honour of the birth of Christ'. Ask the further question – 'where are we commanded to set aside a day for this, what Biblical authority have we for such a festival?' The strange silence that

follows will invariably be broken by such words as, 'well I think it is a good idea, it is an old tradition, it does remind people in some sort of way that God's Son came into this world. What is more, it is a happy festive time, it does keep the family together, it gives the children a good time, etc., etc.'

It is indeed a sad reflection upon Christianity if Christians have to resort to a Babylonish festival to remind them of the incarnation of the Son of God. Further, is a day which has its origin in heathen idolatry necessary to keep our families together? Is there not an abundance of national holidays when families can assemble? The interest and happiness of the children should ever be the concern of parents, but let no Christian parent think that God is well pleased with their deception and over-indulgence to their children during the weeks of December, when ridiculous amounts of money are often spent; this latter feature in itself being a very bad example to the children.

This book is written with a heavy heart, and with a tremendous feeling of guilt on the part of the writer, who up to recent years himself celebrated these festivals and gave recognition to them in the pulpit. This has been confessed before God, and publicly before the people, for it was wrong, grossly wrong, yea blasphemously wrong. God in His mercy forgives, nevertheless the past influence which one has had upon others cannot be remedied. None who are aware of the idolatrous nature of these festivals should continue or even play upon the fringe. This is a black-and-white situation, there is no half-way house. Festal days should have no place among God's true children.

Does Derby day mean anything to us as Christians? ‘Of course not’, we say, ‘that is horse racing – it is of the world’. Supposing Christianity was in some foolish way incorporated into the Derby, and it was made a national holiday celebrated by Christendom; then would we all join in? ‘Certainly not’, we reply. Then why should a heathen festival day which has been so-called christianized in such a grotesque and bizarre manner, be so special to Christians? This may be somewhat hypothetical, nevertheless it is fair reasoning.

How is it that we have been so naïve? For no one ever has, or ever can, prove that Christmas or Easter is Christian. Neither will anyone who has any knowledge at all ever challenge this, that these days are totally pagan in origin.

Consult any religious directory, expanded dictionary, or encyclopaedia and the plain facts are stated that these festivals are pagan and have their roots in heathendom. Alexander Hislop’s book *‘The Two Babylons’* is recognized as being the classic work on the subject; it has been reprinted eight to ten times, it is a mine of information on the subject and circulated in many countries. Never on any point has this great work been refuted. The question must be asked in view of all the evidence, Biblical, historical and secular, ‘why the ignorance?’ Can the true believer hide behind the screen of: ‘I did not know’? The writer speaks to his own heart in this, as he addresses the reader – we should have known! The very fact that the world falls into line to celebrate Christmas should be sufficient to alert any discerning Christian that it is not of God, for the unregenerate never seek the things that be of Him – never! Do they rush and strive to keep the Sabbath, the one day that

God does require men to observe? Do they flock to hear the Word of God preached? They certainly do not, they will not come near; yet they will all join in and sing carols at Christmas. What a mockery of Almighty God!

‘But’, some argue, ‘we were brought up this way, our parents and our grandparents made much of it’. Exactly! At this point reference must again be made to the second commandment: *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me”* (Exodus 20:4,5).

We must remember that an image is a principle or practice carved out in man’s mind; an imaginative extra to the worship of God. That is iniquity, and any such iniquity carved out, or invented and practised by the fathers will be visited upon the children. Succeeding generations will follow the tradition and pattern set by their forbears.

Young people are also addressed in this, for children can understand what is here stated as well as their parents; it is as clear as daylight if only it is faced honestly. Then take your stand you younger ones, and if challenged, boldly say in your school and amongst your friends, ‘this is pagan, it is breaking God’s Law, these trappings are all a part of heathen worship, they have nothing to do with Christianity; I refuse to be a party to it and so be guilty of perpetuating this grievous thing and passing it on to yet another generation’. Do not be like the children of Judah who

said, *“But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil”* (Jeremiah 44:17). Dare any who now have had light given to them still say, *“But we will certainly do whatsoever our fathers have done”*?

He who handles the lively oracles of truth has to be faithful to God and not hedge; these practices are to be relinquished, not partially but utterly, for they are idolatrous. Dare we continue and so carry the responsibility to the judgment day by giving continuity of iniquity to succeeding generations? God holds us responsible for the perpetuity of His Law, and to check any departure therefrom. Necessity is laid upon the minister in this matter to state the truth boldly, for the subject is nothing less than Babylonish idolatry.

The Church of Jesus Christ is not to copy the heathen, neither are individual Christians or families to identify with pagan practices. *“Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God”* (Leviticus 18:4). God is the great Lawgiver, we take our commands from Him. His rulings and ordinances are not to be amended by men. Christians are not to incorporate into their worship, or yet their homes, any of the customs or manners of the heathen. In this there is no question of Christian liberty. For a Christian to speak of liberty of conscience on such matters as are before us, is to completely destroy the authoritative Mandate of the Almighty God. Yet are God’s children heard to say, ‘I know that Christmas is pagan in origin, but it is not pagan

to me!'; 'Christmas is what you make it'; 'I keep Christ central in Christmas'. Not one of these statements is valid or will stand a Biblical examination. Basically, such statements are but excuses, because Christians do not want to be counted fools for Christ's sake. What these folk are trying to imply is that they will celebrate Christmas, but will do it right. If Christ be put into the setting of an idolatrous pagan festival, how can it be right? The God of heaven will not be placed within the trappings of heathendom. Putting Christ into Christmas may sound very pious to the unenlightened, but to any who know the Word of God, to put Christ at the centre of Babylonish idolatry is a most blasphemous thing. Christ has no place in these festivals. "*Thou shalt not do so ... What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it*" (Deuteronomy 12:31,32). This is a categorical word from the Almighty, not to bring in any outside innovations, or leave out any fraction of His holy commandments.

This is no easy path, and to stand against such deeply entrenched traditions may well present problems. There is the scorn of the world, the pressures from relatives, the misunderstanding of friends, the unbiblical liberty of the professing church; but God's help and strength is always sufficient for any and every situation.

7. CHRISTMAS SYMBOLS

We are now to look more particularly at some of the paraphernalia associated with the festive season of December 25th, and which makes it so alluring to the young. This we should expect, because Satan wants the Law of God set aside, as seen in his very first approach in Eden. God said, “*Thou shalt not*”, but Satan had a very attractive proposal which he made to Eve, and she and Adam thought it a good idea. This has always been the Devil’s tactics, and in no area is it seen more than in the matter of heathen festivals. Make these to be attractive, especially to the young ones, then will undiscerning and indulgent parents also be snared because they will not want to disappoint their children, and cause them to feel left out of things, or perhaps appear to be odd.

This Christmas festival is very subtle, a wile of the Devil, and if not extremely careful, we shall view the second commandment as being an impossible ruling for the Christian both in society and in the church in our day.

Since the fall of man human nature has always acted contrary to the second commandment, but by the grace of God it can be honoured today as in centuries past. Once we have determined to walk in that way of His commandments then the difficulties will largely disappear. When we come to the position that “*we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*” (2 Corinthians 13:8), then will courage and strength be given and we shall in no way miss out. Has not God said that His commandments are not grievous? (cf 1 John 5:3). Indeed, He has said more, for “*In keeping of them there is great reward*” (Psalm 19:11). No

one will ever suffer loss by obeying the Almighty, “*Them that honour me I will honour*” is His infallible promise (1 Samuel 2:30). “*Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting*” (Luke 18:29,30). Our God is no man’s debtor, no one ever serves Him for nought. As we now examine the glitter and trappings which make these heathen festivals so novel and attractive, may we soberly consider them against these truths.

The Tree. Numerous references have already been given to green trees in Holy Scripture (Deuteronomy 12:1,2; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 17:10; 2 Chronicles 28:1-4; Jeremiah 3:6). All had to do with high places, groves, idolatry and spiritual harlotry. All were a part of Babylonish worship and heathen ritual. Green trees were focal in these pagan observances and still are today. By consulting any modern encyclopaedia on the subject of ‘Tree Worship’ we get information on this idolatry. The presence of a green tree is all important in such circles.

The evergreen fir tree was the symbol of Baal worship in Rome and from there, extended throughout Europe and other countries where this kind of tree grew. In Egypt and to the south where firs did not flourish, the palm tree was selected. Many are the foolish legends which were attached to these trees. The mother of Adonis who was the Sun god and a great mediatorial divinity was said to have changed into a tree, and when in that state she was supposed to have brought forth a son who

was 'man, the branch'. This we know is a title given to Christ (cf Zechariah 6:12).

The yule log burnt in the hearth fire on the Babylonish festival eve symbolized Nimrod cut down by his enemies. The next morning a green tree was set up symbolizing Nimrod come to life again and now deified.

The fir tree was literally worshipped by the heathen. They would bring their gifts to the deities – Venus, Adonis, Bacchus and others and lay them at the foot of the green tree.

The first decorating of an evergreen goes back into antiquity. It was done by pagans in honour of Adonis who, after he had been slain was brought back to life. His death was represented as a dead tree stump; upon this would be fixed an evergreen tree which they would bedeck and adorn. This was symbolic to them of a god who could never die again.

Mistletoe. The mistletoe brought into this country by the Druids also has heathen connotations. The mistletoe seed takes root on another tree. Birds will drop a seed high up in the branches, and that seed will strike. Hence we see thick clusters of the plant hanging from the branches of a foster tree. To the ancient Babylonians that mistletoe represented a messiah, 'man, the branch' previously referred to; a branch which came from heaven and grew upon a tree that sprang out of the earth. Thus by the engrafting of a celestial branch to an earthly tree, heaven and earth which had been severed by sin were joined

together again. So the mistletoe bough became the symbol of man being reconciled to deity; the token of this being the traditional kiss.

Is it not easy to see the subtlety of Satan in these legends? In his scheme there is the birth of a branch, death and resurrection, with consequent reconciliation. A devilish counterfeit of Biblical truth set forth in fables, so forming an idolatrous religion. Our great Adversary by these means unsuspectingly effected a merger of the false with the true, and so caused the people of God to violate the second commandment.

25th December. Later a feast day was held in honour of Baal-Berith. It was called 'The Birthday of the Unconquered Sun' and that day was fixed on the very day which corresponds to our 25th December. Reference to Baal-Berith is made in the book of Judges 8:33 some 1250 years B.C. These practices and festivals which we are now considering were common place in those far-off days, indeed their beginnings were with Nimrod well over two millennia before the birth of Christ, and these pagan idolatrous systems have constantly infiltrated into the midst of God's people. It is a mighty, counterfeit, religious system of which the green tree is one of its symbols.

Decorations. Six hundred years after the days of the Judges, Jeremiah writes of the erection and decoration of the tree: *"Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workmen, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails*

and with hammers, that it move not" (Jeremiah 10:2-4). Here we see how the practice had been perpetuated.

Wax Candles. To these decorated trees were attached wax candles. Wax candles were also an essential feature in Babylonish worship, and on this festive day corresponding to our 25th of December they were lit in honour of their gods. Wax candles are very common today, not only in Romanist buildings, but also in those used for Protestant worship. They are heathen relics and as such are an abomination unto the Lord. These idolatrous ideas were carved out in men's minds in ancient Babylon and they have developed and spread as a canker throughout the generations.

It was in the 4th century A.D that this heathen system was in large measure adopted by Rome. The first celebration was held in the year 345 A.D. The person responsible was a man named Liberius; it took place on the 25th of December, and was called 'Christ's Mass'. This December festival is pagan and idolatrous, and has nothing whatsoever to do with Christ, or Biblical Christianity. Nevertheless, in many churches and chapels this heathen emblem of the tree, lit with wax candles will be found, and even be the centre around which carol singing will take place. Such is the sad state of the professing church in our day.

Wassailing. In our school days we probably have sung the carol, 'Here we come a-wassailing'. It is unlikely we knew what we were singing, neither were we told! Referring again to Babylon; in the month Tebeth which was the equivalent to our December, a feast was held to Bacchus and to Saturn. It lasted five days and was marked by great looseness,

revelry and drunkenness. The word ‘wassail’ means a ‘festive occasion’, a ‘carouse’, a ‘drinking bout’. When we hear the carol, ‘Here we come a-wassailing’, being sung this is what it is – a drunken Babylonish festival. Are not drunkenness and gluttony two of the hallmarks of today’s December festival? The vast amounts of liquor and food purchased at this time of the year is supposedly for the purpose of celebrating the birth of Christ; but this is not valid, for Christ was never in this festival. Many of us were so duped as to believe that He was; this shows how misguided we were, and for Christians to say that we must put Christ into Christmas is indicative of a determination to perpetuate this heathen practice. It is a most serious matter to associate wassailing celebrations with the coming of the Holy Son of God. The birth of Jesus Christ was never intended to be celebrated by carnal festivities. These extravagances in food and drink at this so-called advent of Christ in no way lines up with the humble scene in Bethlehem’s stable, and a more unbiblical notion or heretical practice is difficult to imagine.

These ‘festal days’, by legislation, may be national bank holidays, but this does not mean that the children of God should recognize such as being days for ‘religious’ celebration, or that we should give any credence whatsoever to the pagan festival day of the 25th December with its idolatrous trappings. We are not to “*learn the way of the heathen*” (Jeremiah 10:2).

Santa Claus. What is the origin of Santa Claus? He is not as ancient as other matters which have been examined. He certainly does not figure in the B.C. era. Previously we have seen that the Romanists seized upon much of Babylonish idolatry and slotted it into so-called

Christianity, which was not all that difficult if the people were not vigilant and discerning. With the heart of man always prone to idol worship, the Devil had with cunning craft no difficulty in designing and carving out this Babylonish system which lends itself for the adaptation to Christianity. So Rome has endeavoured to christianize these pagan practices and by so doing has paganized Christianity.

In the early days of the Romish organization, many saints were created by her. In this, one is not speaking of saints in the Biblical sense but in the Romanist. Sometime around the fourth / fifth century A.D. a Bishop Nicholas was canonized and so enrolled in the list of saints. He became the patron saint of children. He appears in the church calendar of the Anglican Prayer Book for December 6th with a reference to Isaiah 25:9 for the morning prayer, and to John 13:15 for the evening. It is difficult to see what bearing these two verses have upon Nicholas; it is also hard to understand how, or why, Nicholas figures at all in a so-called Protestant handbook of worship.

However, this saint, with a supposed great interest in children, had many wonderful feats attributed to him. Three young girls were being driven to prostitution through poverty: St Nicholas was reported to have endowed them, and so saved them from such a debased manner of living. One of his amazing achievements was, as legend has it, three children had been chopped up by a butcher and put into a salting vat, but this good saint brought them to life again! Such reports and stories resulted in great devotion to St Nicholas; he had the interest of children at heart. So zealous were the people in the fourth / fifth century A.D to perpetuate the memory of good St Nicholas that there were

twenty-five churches dedicated to him in Constantinople alone, and no less than forty-five in Rome. His supposed miracles became a favourite subject for mediaeval artists and liturgical plays in France, Germany, the Netherlands and England, always with a bias of great kindness to children. Sad to say these superstitions, engendered through mediaeval drama, were never eradicated at the Reformation, and Protestants who left the Netherlands and settled in America replaced the name St Nicholas for the Dutch ‘Sinter Claes’, later Santa Claus. In Germany, St Nicholas was transformed into ‘Father Christmas’. This image of him came to England. He was a supposed kind and benevolent magician. To this most foolish fantasy most Protestants have latched on, yes even evangelicals and reformed churches with but few exceptions. His feast day was moved from early December to the 25th of that month. How the professing church has juggled with dates, legends, persons, and false religions, in order to make things fit their own imaginative ideas!

On this special day in December, he, the modern St Nicholas, who has such a special concern for boys and girls, will come to all good children who hang up their stockings, and fill them with toys and goodies. This is how we as Christian parents have brought up our children. We have lied and deceived them with the Father Christmas story; someone dressed up as a white bearded figure, the origin of which goes back to a Romanist saint, around whom grew up strange legends accentuated by mediaeval drama.

We may try to excuse ourselves, but if honest before God we are without excuse, since if we did not know all the historic details of paganism, we had our Bibles. Let the question be asked, ‘where did we

learn these practices?’ Has even a fraction of them come from the Holy Scriptures? God said, ‘ye shall not add to it or diminish My word’ (cf Deuteronomy 4:2). What have we been doing by having these things in our homes, and giving recognition to such seasons in our churches, sending around greetings with symbols of Baal and Ashtaroth to our friends, pictures of a wizened Romish clown to the children, and wishing everyone a ‘happy Christmas’? It is sheer idolatry, and cannot be explained in any other way; such evidences therefore of Baal all around us should cause deep sorrow, and not be a cause of happiness to us.

Many who read this book will say that they see nothing wrong in these celebrations, therefore it is a matter of Christian liberty whether they observe them or not. This is humanism; an argument that is nothing less than setting up man as the judge of right and wrong. Indeed, it makes man to be his own law-maker. The person who holds that the Law of God must be subject to their own conscience, makes conscience their supreme authority. Whatever that person’s persuasion or church association may be, Anglican, Salvation Army, Presbyterian, Brethren, Pentecostal, Baptist or whatever, that person is basically a humanist. God has spoken, and let Him be true and every man a liar (cf Romans 3:4) - He is supreme, not man.

God has given His Law. It matters not one iota whether we think it right or wrong. It is written, and written upon tables of stone, signifying that it is imperishable. The whims of our so-called conscience do not in any way alter the Law, and to transgress that Law is sin. Sin is not a transgression of what we think God’s Law means, or how we

think it ought to be worded. Sin is a transgression of the Law of God as He has plainly stated it.

The evidence against Festal Days is overwhelming, and the celebration of Christmas is a violation of God's sacred mandate. May we be given grace to understand the seriousness of the transgression and to separate from this paganism.

8. EASTER – ASTARTE

Having dealt at some length with the festive season of December 25th and all the paraphernalia associated with it, we now turn our attention to the festival of Easter.

It is well that we first analyse the word as to its origin and meaning. “The word Easter is of Saxon origin, Eastrā the goddess of spring, in whose honour sacrifices were offered about Passover time each year. By the eighth century, Anglo-Saxons had adopted the name to designate the celebration of Christ’s resurrection” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary).

Easter is not a Christian term; in its original, Easter is the same as Astarte and Ashtaroth, a heathen goddess, the mother god, or the Queen of Heaven. “Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the Queen of Heaven ... the worship of Bel and Astarte was very early introduced into Britain, along with the Druids, the priests of the groves” (Hislop, *The Two Babylons*). Immediately do we see that although this term now appears in the church calendar, and indeed is commonplace throughout christendom, it is of heathen origin and pertains to idolatrous religion. That such words as ‘Christ-mass’ and ‘Easter’ should ever have become a part of the Christian’s vocabulary is most tragic. If we say that we are going to celebrate Easter, it is a most serious thing if we only knew. Do we come into the house of God to celebrate Ashtaroth, the Queen of Heaven? Such a figure only exists in the vain imagination of the idolater.

A subject of such consequence as this demands thorough investigation in the light of Holy Scripture, and the Spirit of God does give some revelation as to the antiquity of these heathen practices and the idolatrous figures associated with them. In the Old Testament it is stated, “*And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth*” (Judges 2:11-13). This is an historical record of events some fourteen to fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ.

Baal and Ashtaroth are two distinct heathen deities; in the religion of Babylon these two are very prominent. Baal is supposedly the male, Ashtaroth the female, the wife of Baal.

In these verses quoted from Judges chapter 2, we learn that the people of God had introduced these two deities into their worship. It was not that Israel had entirely dismissed Jehovah, for this was not so; what had happened was that they had incorporated this as an extra. However, verse 13 of that chapter states, “*They forsook the Lord*”. Here is a most solemn lesson; for in the eyes of Almighty God, to incorporate something pagan and of man’s invention into the worship of the true God is to forsake the Lord.

Upon the surface this may appear a drastic statement, but in this examination we are putting festal days on trial as was made clear in previous chapters. These festive occasions are being brought to the

touchstone of God's Law, which is the only standard. What that Law states has been clearly seen, and that which constitutes idolatry has been established. Idolatry is a broad and far-reaching principle. That which is evidenced when we introduce something of man's imagination is that we have made a decision of our own will. God has said 'No', yet we do it regardless. To be logical in this, we must admit that we have chosen another authority, we have turned away from God's holy Law; that is equivalent to forsaking the Lord. Our wills and desires have taken precedence over the will of the supreme, eternal God. In this let us not think that He is deceived. No pious talk or well-adapted reasoning will impress the Almighty if His Law is being spurned by us. Let none be so foolish as to think that our sentimental devotions count for anything with Him if we are deliberately walking with a foot in two camps, mixing the false with the true. God's Word to us is clear. *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"* (Psalm 66:18).

This matter of festal days is of great moment; it is a subject to be investigated with gravity. These seasonal festivities are remnants of Babylonish worship. However, many would argue this is not so, as Easter to a vast number of Christians is purely a celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ. But is this a correct assumption? Is an annual celebration of this nature Biblical? As with Christmas, so with Easter, the Scriptures can be searched from cover to cover and such a yearly festival is not to be found. What then is the origin; how can it be explained that this spring festival has become woven into the very fabric of professed Christianity?

Religious directories, encyclopaedias, or that classic work '*The Two Babylons*' will give the information that Easter is purely pagan as to its origin and has nothing to do with the death and resurrection of Christ. This festival existed many centuries before Christ was born; it was a feast connected with spring in ancient Babylon and that part of the world. Spring to us signifies the re-birth of nature, and in it we see the wondrous providence of a Sovereign Creator; but to the idolaters of Babylon it was different. They believed that Baal and Ashtaroath were responsible for this, and they created a special festival in the spring; it was their Astarte, or in English, Easter. Ashtaroath, the female goddess, carries the thought of spring and fertility.

At this point another heathen god must be introduced, his name is Tammuz. He is mentioned in Scripture, but nothing is said about him. It has been stated in earlier pages that the details and finer points of Babylonish worship are not given to us in Holy Writ, neither would we expect it, for it is not the object of the Scriptures of truth to educate us in idolatry. So in all probability, when we have read of Tammuz in our Bibles, we have simply passed the name over as being just another Old Testament character which meant nothing to us. However, he is mentioned, which is Biblical proof that these heathen deities were recognized, celebrated and worshipped hundreds of years before Christ was born. It is only when we have a little insight into Babylonish idolatry that these obscure names and figures mentioned in the Bible begin to mean something. The name Tammuz means 'true son'. *Encyclopaedia Britannica 1969* gives a detailed description of him, as it does all these gods and goddesses. Alexander Hislop's work on this is also invaluable. Tammuz was a very prominent idolatrous figure in the whole

Babylonish system. His name is often used as the equivalent to Nimrod, Bacchus, Osiris and others. The reason for these variations being, that as Babylonish worship spread ultimately to cover the whole earth, so did it vary considerably in its forms, terms and symbols as it was fitted into the many cultures; but it all started with Nimrod. The beginning of this religious kingdom of false worship was Babel (cf Genesis 10:10).

That which equates most closely to Babylonish worship today is Romanism, although relics of it are to be found in every religion under heaven.

To come back to this mystery god Tammuz; he was supposedly the son of the mother god, Ashtaroth, begotten by Baal, the male or the father god. Very significant is his name 'true son'. We must not forget that which has already been stated – names and terms showed variation in different lands, for example the Osiris of Egypt was equivalent to Nimrod in Babylon.

No record is given us in the Bible as to how Nimrod died, but tradition has it that he died a violent death. However, what we do know is that the Osiris of Egypt did come to a most untimely and violent end, and Osiris is but the Egyptian equivalent name for Nimrod. Plato in his writings states that: "Osiris and Tammuz are to be regarded as identical, and is the same as Adonis and the mighty hunter". Hislop says: "As Egypt wept over Osiris, the Phoenicians and Assyrians wept over Tammuz, whereas in Greece and Rome they lamented over Bacchus".

‘What has all this to do with Easter?’, the reader may well be asking. The fact is that this has all to do with this spring festival which in its original was Astarte, and into it has been cunningly slotted fundamental aspects of the Christian faith.

This ‘true son’ of alleged deity, Tammuz, was violently slain at the age of forty years. In the calendar of Babylonish worship, a period of forty days was set aside prior to the celebration of Astarte or Easter, in which the people would afflict themselves by fasting in sympathy for Ashtaroth the mother, over the death of Tammuz. The reason for forty days was one day for each year of her son’s life, also they would join with her in prayers for the rebirth of Tammuz. By doing this they also expected that she in turn would give them a good spring. Forty days fasting to them was a meritorious exercise to gain favour.

Today there are certain sections of christendom that celebrate a season which they call ‘Lent’. This season will be found on most calendars and diaries. There are six Sundays in Lent; forty days are set aside. To imply that this is a time of fasting and affliction today would be gross exaggeration. Nevertheless, recognition is still given to a forty-day period, and some slight restriction may be in evidence on the part of a few; but where, we must ask, did this practice of Lent come from? The Book of Common Prayer will be the immediate answer! Yes, there in the Prayer Book it will be discovered. In fact, some eighteen to twenty pages will be found which are taken up with rites and lessons for Holy Days. Saints and Bishops listed in large numbers for various days of the year, including St Valentine on the fourteenth of February and St Nicholas in December. Benedictine Abbots, Tables and Charts, Sundays

in Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Trinity, Ash Wednesday, St John the Baptist, All Saints; Holy Days in profusion as well as Christmas, Easter and Whitsun. True it is all in the Prayer Book, but where did the Prayer Book get this great list from, and the appropriate days and dates to so formulate a calendar and bring it in as the official order for worship?

The Bible will be searched in vain for such warrant. The only Holy Day contained in the Prayer Book which is authorized by the Word of God is the Sabbath, a creation principle of one day in seven to be set aside for God; this the Creator Himself instituted to be observed for all time. For us in the New Testament age it is the first day of the week; nevertheless, it is still a Sabbath. This day we are to remember and keep holy. Not one Sabbath in the fifty-two of any year is different to another. Each one is equally holy unto the Lord our God, and any other day set aside as being especially holy is an invention of man; and this is totally unacceptable to God because it is adding to His Law which He Himself has pronounced as perfect (cf Psalm 19:7).

Returning to the forty days again; from whence did it come? The Romanists adopted it in the sixth century A.D. but again, where did they get it? It came from Babylon, and it all revolves around the death of Tammuz. We might well ask 'how did this come to figure in a so-called Protestant book of worship? What about the Reformation? What about the so-called evangelical wing of Anglicanism?' Yes, and what about Protestant societies who claim to be contending for Biblical Christianity, yet are so often seen to be in defence of a state church which has so much of the relics of Baal in her midst? Why do not Protestants come clean on the whole issue? If they are really striving

against error, then they must get at the root of it all which is Babylon; then Rome would not be their sole target. Such must deal with infant sprinkling, clerical garb, ecclesiastical titles, altars, candles, festal days and many other inventions of man which have invaded the courts of our God; then would such be seen to be witnesses indeed in the land.

There is still more concerning Tammuz which is of very great significance. This 'true son' of heathen deities was supposed to have met his violent death on a Friday, and to have risen two days later at sunrise. This is where our term 'Sun-day' comes from, the second day after Friday. Sunday is actually a heathen term. It is far better for Christians to use the term 'Sabbath' or 'Lord's Day' than that of Sunday.

Also associated with Babylonish mysticism was the worship of the sun and planets, and the word 'Sun-day' carries these connotations. Likewise, these early morning sunrise services stem from this same source.

9. EASTER SYMBOLS

Hot Cross Buns. ‘Quite harmless’, we might say. Yes, but what of their origin? They were baked and used in the worship of the Queen of Heaven by the Chaldeans as early as the days of Cecrops, the founder of Athens, 1500 years before the Christian era. Jeremiah the prophet, refers to such activity. “*The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven*” (Jeremiah 7:18).

Easter Eggs. That which formed a part of the mysteries of Bacchus as celebrated in ancient Athens, was the consecration of an egg. In China, painted eggs are still used in their sacred festivals. In ancient times both the Egyptians and the Greeks used eggs in their religious rites. One named Augustus who was reputed to be skilled in all wisdom of his native country, wrote, “An egg of wondrous size is said to have fallen from heaven into the river Euphrates. The fishes rolled it to the bank, where the doves, having settled upon it, hatched it and out came Venus, who afterwards was called the Syrian goddess” – that is Astarte. Hence the egg became one of the symbols of Astarte or Easter (*Hyginus Fabulae* p.148,149).

Rabbits. The pretty little rabbits which are so common on Easter cards also have heathen significance, such as could not be mentioned in these pages, for Ashtaroth and the fertility rites associated with Astarte was a most immoral thing. Is not the ‘bunny’ the symbol of seduction in much of today’s advertising?

Forty Days (Lent). As has been before stated, a complete picture of heathen religions and practices is not given in the Bible; there are but scant references, but if we have just a working knowledge of Babylonish worship and customs, then the Biblical allusions which we have will light up and become significant, whereas if we are in no way historically informed, such references will mean nothing to us.

With the background already set we now consult our Bibles again. *“He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abomination that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord’s house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz”* (Ezekiel 8:13,14). This is the only mention of Tammuz in Holy Scripture and in order to know who he was we have had to consult Babylonish history. These women were reported as weeping for the supposed ‘true son’ of Baal and Ashtaroth – Tammuz. History states that this was a forty-day period of affliction. But the Bible would have us note where it was observed; it was in the Lord’s house. This forty-day heathen fast had become a part of the worship of God’s people.

Sunrise Services. *“Turn again,”* says the Holy Spirit in this same chapter, for there are even greater abominations, *“Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east”* (Ezekiel 8:15,16). Worshipping

towards the east where the sun rises; but look closer, their backs are to the Lord! Let the question be asked, ‘where did these men of Judah who professed the name of the Lord, get all this?’ Was any of it in harmony with the Law of God? *“Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose”* (Ezekiel 8:17). *“Hast thou seen this?”* said Almighty God; *“Is it a light thing?”* What were they doing? Nothing less than celebrating Astarte. It was an Easter festival in the house of God; ‘it is an abomination which they commit’, said Jehovah.

In view of all the evidence, how can any man or woman justify these festal days?

God has commanded a day to commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ. It is not annual, it is weekly. The order is clearly set out in His Word. He has not left it to man’s imagination, and in no way does God’s pattern resemble that which takes place in so many churches and chapels in the spring of the year.

Easter, like Christmas, is an invention of ancient Babylon, which by the subtlety of Satan and the imaginative craft of man has been incorporated into Christianity. By doing this, Christ has been forced into the very framework of heathen religion. *“Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God”* states His holy Law. It is an abomination unto Him. *“Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them”*

(Ezekiel 8:18). The New Testament counterpart to that verse in Ezekiel is found in the Apocalypse, where the context is still Babylon. *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues”* (Revelation 18:4).

10. SUMMARY

Historical facts and supporting Scriptures have presented a most sobering picture concerning the matter of festal days, and this chapter will summarize the evidence.

It was said earlier that many true believers have a suspicion that these festivals are not basically Christian, yet they argue from a pragmatic point of view. They speak of advantages to be gained, for example, 'it affords a special opportunity to get outsiders into churches', 'it is greatly beneficial to family life' and 'it brings out a spirit of goodwill in people'. Such viewpoints have not been considered, for within the context of the subtitle they are not valid; for these festal days have been put on trial, the Law of God being the Statute Book, the basis of the examination being the regulative principle; that is, a practice which is alien to the Holy Scriptures is to have no place in our church or home life.

There are churches who would claim to adhere to the Holy Scriptures yet their publications and adverts reveal special carol services, Christmas Day services, church parties, Good Friday and Easter Day celebrations, which makes a nonsense of their claim. Other assemblies of God's people would not go as far as this, and would give no recognition to festal days in the church building, or the gathering for corporate worship, yet as members they would claim to be at liberty to do as they liked in their homes and families; so are found all the trappings and paraphernalia of pagan festivals in their dwellings. In this case the question must be asked, 'who and what is the church – the building or the members?' How can any corporate company of the

Lord's people claim to be governed by Holy Writ if the members are indifferent to it in private life? They are the Church. The corporate body of a local church can only be seen to be governed by the Word of God to the extent that each member conforms to it. Those who fail mar the testimony; the witness is no longer a corporate one and that is a most serious matter.

To be a member of a church which is truly governed by Holy Scripture is going to be ever-more demanding in this age of compromise, carnal living and loose church practice. It will bring increasing isolation, division and reproach. It requires that the cost be counted, and the heart challenged as to whether or not we are prepared to endure the reproach of Christ. Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward (cf Hebrews 11:25,26). *“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you”* (1 Peter 4:14). *“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets”* (Luke 6:22,23).

In examining the Law of God in previous chapters, it was seen that the Ten Commandments had broad and far reaching principles which were expanded upon throughout Scripture. In the main, the section of the Law most concerned by these festal days is the first and second

commandments; although not exclusively so, for the fourth commandment which concerns the Sabbath is also affected.

Regarding the first commandment “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*” (Exodus 20:3), the principle is God only. His will is to be supreme, His Law authoritative to the exclusion of all else. Anything which intrudes, which conflicts, or is not found in the Divine Mandate, if accepted by us, in the eyes of the Almighty constitutes another god, and our God will not be the chief god among others, He is the only God.

By referring to Eden and our first parents, we have a prime example of ‘another god’ being introduced. Adam and Eve knew God’s Law, but when tempted with the thought of being ‘as gods’, and so knowing the difference between good and evil (cf Genesis 3:5), thus being in a position to make their own laws, this made them think; it appeared a good proposal, and at that point they chose another course other than God’s Law. Self took precedence over the Creator: a breaking of the first commandment, “*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*”. If ever Christians are heard to say ‘but I think’ or ‘it is a good idea’, pertaining to matters spiritual, or our minds begin to thus reason, and no Scriptural authority can be found for that thought or idea, then it should be banished immediately; for it is getting dangerously near to violating the first commandment and to having another god. It must ever be borne in mind that man’s thoughts or ideas taking precedence over the Law of God is a form of idolatry. This leads right into the second commandment: “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing...*” (Exodus 20:4). The first commandment binds

men to the worship of the true God, the second commandment binds men to the worship of the true God in the true manner.

As to what a graven image is, has already been explained. It goes far beyond a statue or a crucifix; it can of course be that, but it is a broad principle; it is any device, innovation, gimmick or idea which man has carved out of his own mind, which he thinks will be an aid or in some way a help in worship. The Romanists have their images and idol statues, but they would not claim to worship these. In their use of the crucifix and the other symbols, they would say that they were assisted in their worship, such means help to channel their thoughts.

This principle of aids in worship is not confined to Rome, it is widespread even in Evangelicalism, albeit in a different form. This common practice of leaning to one's own thoughts and notions is nothing less than making oneself a god. This is the most popular religion of the day - Humanism – a looking to one's own self, one's own reasoning, the putting of confidence in the wisdom of man and making this the ruling. This constitutes a man-centred worship; it is a most prevalent form of idolatry in our part of the world in this day and age, and it is to be found in churches and chapels where one would never expect it to exist. To suggest to such a fellowship that idolatry was in their midst would bring forth words of indignation, yet it is so; they have aids, extras, devices and programmes which they have thought to be a good idea, but their innovations are outside of the Divine Mandate. It is vain imagination carved out of men's minds and in consequence it is not worshipping the true God in a true manner. *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their*

heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:8,9).

The God of heaven is a “*jealous God*” says the second commandment (Exodus 20:5). The gravity of this statement ‘jealous God’ was seen in a previous chapter when reference was made to the marriage union. Jealousy is an inbuilt protection for that relationship; this, God ordained. The word means ‘requiring exclusive devotion’ or ‘anxiously watchful of one’s rights’. God has given His Law, His name and honour is at stake; of this He is jealous, He requires exclusive devotion and anxiously watches over His rights. He will not be chief among others; He is the only God. “*Prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only*” (1 Samuel 7:3). This is what God’s Law requires; it involves broad and all-embracing principles as to who is to be worshipped, and how God is to be worshipped, and it is against this background that festal days have been set in this book.

Not a mention is made in the whole of Scripture of a festival to celebrate the birth of Christ, neither is there any Biblical warrant for the annual celebration of Easter. The incorporating of these days into the worship of the church is an adding to the Word of God. Men have thought it to be a good idea, for it is an advantageous means of interesting people and getting them to understand certain aspects of the Christian religion; this is forbidden by Holy Scripture. To the religious leaders of His day, our Lord said, “*For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men ... making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition*” (Mark 7:8,13). The apostle Paul, writing under Divine inspiration to the Church at Galatia said, “*Ye observe days, and months, and times and*

years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Galatians 4:10,11).

Not only are the first and second commandments grossly transgressed by these festal days, but as already mentioned the fourth commandment is also involved, which states: “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*” (Exodus 20:8).

In the celebration of Christmas almost every man, woman and child is involved in some way or another, but in no way does this bring the masses into a closer alignment with God’s requirements to keep holy the Sabbath; yet this is the only day which He has sanctified to be observed. In the punctilious observance of Christmas and Easter, with an almost total disregard for the Lord’s Day, society has shown that they “*lay aside the commandment of God ... making the Word of God of none effect*”, and hold a tradition by observing days which are outside of the mandate of Holy Writ. The tragedy is that by far the majority of Christians participate in this with the world. By standing entirely apart from such festivities, the Christian would be demonstrating that he ‘goes not the way of the heathen’, rather does he seek to honour God in the appointed way, by observing the Sabbath and that day only as being set apart, not identifying in any way with pagan festivals.

This Babylonish worship founded by Nimrod has in many and varied forms gone into every part of the world. All nations have drunk of her fornication (cf Revelation 18:3). Differing countries speaking different languages and have different names and terms, but Babylonish worship in some form or another is found everywhere. The Romanist church

with its mass, veneration of Mary, etc., is the one most closely resembling form of Babylonish idolatry in the world today. Rome incorporated the practices of Babylon into the church in the fourth century A.D. The mysteries of Baal, Ashtaroth, Astarte and Osiris, although not named as such, all find their place of link up in the Romish system, and the festivals of Christmas and Easter with their respective dates in December and spring, all stem from ancient Babylon; accepted first by Rome, then infiltrating over the years into almost every section of christendom. It is true that it was withstood by many of the Puritans, but their stand soon faded with future generations.

It was a sad day when Rome accepted this Babylonish idolatry and cunningly slid it into her so-called worship in the early centuries A.D. It was even sadder when the Anglican church, supposedly Protestant, and coming into greater light at the Reformation, still maintained so much of the trappings of Rome and of Babylon. But most tragic of all is to see places of worship, once truly non-conformist, established at great cost by godly men and women who dissented from the state church with its ritual and unbiblical set-up, dissenting no longer, but acting in full conformity, not only with a state church but in so many respects with Romanism – yea, with Babylon the great. The situation is now so desperate that we should cease contending for so-called historical Protestantism, which seems to be the great aim of some societies, and strive in defence of true Biblical Christianity, and Bible-based churches which dissent from everything that is not based upon the Word of God.

11. CONCLUSION

The question now to be asked and faced is this: ‘is the Law of God really authoritative to us?’ ‘Is it actually, in very truth, our rule of life?’ As these matters have been thoroughly investigated and examined in the light of the Divine Mandate, has it not been proved conclusively that these festivals are heathen to the core? They are the vain imaginations of fallen man, carved out originally from his own corrupt reasoning; now incorporated into professed Christianity; an absolute disregard for the second commandment. Are we still going to follow the multitude to do evil? (cf Exodus 23:2). What is now going to govern us? Will it still be ‘I think’, ‘what others think’, or will it be, “*Thus saith the Lord*”? The dissenting Puritans in their *Directory for the Public Worship of God* stated: “There is no day commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord’s Day – the Christian Sabbath. Festival Days, vulgarly called Holy Days, having no warrant in the Word of God, are not to be continued”.

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)