

EXCERPTS FROM

JAN - MARCH 1991

THE LINK

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

Internet Edition

AFTER THIS MANNER....PRAY YE
(A Study In the Lord's Prayer)
PART 13

Part 13 brings us to the 7th petition of this wonderful pattern prayer, "DELIVER US FROM EVIL" (Matt. 6:13).

When we utter this petition it is that God might deliver us from the evil of sin. However none must draw the conclusion that Christ would have us to seek and to plead for a monastic existence: praying for a situation in which we should be completely isolated from temptation and sin, for that CANNOT be in this life; God did not intend it to be so. If this had been the case, then every elect soul would have been transported to glory at regeneration. But no! when we were born of the Holy Spirit we were immediately brought into a MILITARY situation; to fight the good fight of faith; to wrestle AGAINST principalities and powers, spiritual wickedness in high places.

Our Lord's prayer for His people was "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).

We are in a world of sin; God has purposely placed us in it. "As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world"(John 17:18). Just as the Father sent His own Son into this world, so at regeneration, as new creatures in Christ Jesus are we sent into this world, sent as His ambassadors. Being in the world in a very real sense we mb shoulders with sinners every day, God intended that we should; nevertheless we are to pray without ceasing that we may be DELIVERED from the EVIL of such a situation. 'Keep yourselves unspotted from the world' is the instruction given to us (cf. James 1:27). Indeed there is much teaching given to us in the Scriptures; teaching both POSITIVE and NEGATIVE - such is the balance of the Word of God.

In this perfect pattern of prayer Christ is not suggesting that we be so screened from evil that we can live and laze in a CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT. His Word States

"Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," (Titus 2:12) "DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS" that is the NEGATIVE; but then immediately is the POSITIVE "TO LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY IN THIS PRESENT WORLD." God gives a positive reason WHY we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, it is that we should live soberly, righteously and godly IN this present world.

The Christian life is not a LABORATORY EXISTENCE, indeed not! The believer is exposed to every sin, and all evil infections which the Devil has invented. There is no MINIMAL DISEASE compound for Christians in this world; therefore says Christ "pray after this manner...DELIVER US FROM EVIL," that is the EVIL of sin. The germs of sin surrounding us are rampant, we are all exposed to the contamination. We cannot alter the presence of sin in the world neither can we reduce its virility. What is more God is not going to remove us from this situation until our allotted time has run its course, but He has made ample provision for our safeguard.

Of OURSELVES we can never escape falling victim to many of these SPIRITUAL VIRUSES, it is only the Almighty who by His grace and power can KEEP us in this present world. So from the EVIL which can result from the sin which surrounds us we are to pray for DELIVERANCE, because the EVIL is to become CONTAMINATED by UNGODLINESS or WORLDLY LUSTS.

That which lies at the heart of our subject of course is SIN and the evil which flows from this source.

In the Bible sin is described as being "EXCEEDING SINFUL" (Rom. 7:13). It is an "ACCURSED THING" (Josh. 7:13). Sin originated with Satan. As to its nature it is likened to "THE PLAGUE" (1 Kings 8:38). "A CANKER" (2 Tim. 2:17). "THE VOMIT OF DOGS" (2 Pet. 2:22). Such descriptions should of themselves cause us to loathe sin, and instinctively divert us from becoming closely associated with sinners. But more important; sin is TRANSGRESSION AGAINST GOD. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). It is HIGH TREASON against Heaven.

It is walking CONTRARY to God (cf. Lev 26:40). It is an AFFRONT to the Most High. The Hebrew word signifies REBELLION - to fly in the face of the Almighty. This is adequately summed up by Job "He" (that is the sinner) "stretcheth out his hand against God" (Job 15:25).

Sin is polluting, it is called "The filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7.1). It gets into the conscience (cf Titus 1.15). It affects both body and mind. It degrades and turns a man's glory into shame. The Psalmist says it makes man like the beasts that perish (cf. Psa.49:20).

The world in which we live, is infected with sin, it is foul, it is loathsome, and because of this there is unrest and trouble. There is no peace or tranquillity, sorrow and bereavement are everywhere.

Nations can become so defiled that at length the forbearance of God is no longer exercised, and the governmental sword of justice is drawn and wielded against that people. Wars arise, distress and pestilences befall; all these things are common to man because of SIN, and Christians are right in the midst of it.

If the hand of God is upon a nation in governmental judgment, then the Christians in that nation also suffer. This is a fact of history. Those who have been 'called to the kingdom' for such times have known terrible affliction, and still do in many places; this will always be so as long as the world remains.

If the arm of God is put forth in Britain in judgment because of the appalling drift in standards, the moral decline, and gross iniquity (this might well happen) then we who are Christians will not escape the troubles which will ensue. The important word to mark here is TROUBLES.

When God dealt in judgment upon Judah that nation was carried off into Babylon, but a few of the people were left behind - among them Jeremiah. Those were terrible days. The sadness and troubles were overwhelming. Jeremiah was in no way responsible for the great sins of Judah which occasioned Divine judgment; in fact the faithful prophet stood out against the nation. Then why should God judge him? God did not! The EVIL of Judah's sin

was never attributable to Jeremiah, nevertheless AFFLICTION came upon him; herein lies the difference at a time of Divine judgment. Of times the believer has to share TROUBLE with the unbeliever, but in the ultimate the EVIL of sin in the UNBELIEVER is judgment, whereas to the Christian it is but AFFLICTION, and this God brings upon His people according to His secret will. God is not the author of sin, but He is the author of judgment. The EVIL of sin is seen in the consequent judgment, and whilst the sin does not issue from God the judgment does.

The governmental hand of the Almighty falling upon a nation causes AFFLICTION to come upon the righteous within that nation: but it must be stated that such affliction to His own is carefully weighed. It is not a chance happening; it is inevitable - a necessary consequence of God's moral dealings.

The eye of God is EVER upon His people. They are the apple of His eye, and in His Divine sovereignty and overruling providence His design is not only judgment upon the unrighteous of the nation, but also affliction upon the righteous for their GOOD and for their PURIFYING. The truth of that familiar verse Romans 8:28 being most pertinent even in these circumstances "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

'Afflictions though they seem severe, are oft in mercy sent.' "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psa.119:71). Many a believer has learnt far more in adversity, than ever they did in prosperity, and they bless God for those days of adversity.

Jeremiah in days of tragic sorrow and bitter loneliness wrote "Remembering mine affliction, and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me" (Lam.3:19). The prophet would never have learnt the grace of humility to the degree which he did, but for the FURNACE OF AFFLICTION - which came his way through the faithful proclamation, to an apostate nation, of God's impending judgment - nevertheless geared to Jeremiah for his good. True he

suffered, but he was delivered from the EVIL of the sin; the trouble which was his in consequence of judgment upon the nation was sanctified to him; he greatly profited by it spiritually. We see the truth of sanctified trouble in the words of The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:8-11: "We are TROUBLED on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made MANIFEST in OUR body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." "For which cause we FAINT NOT; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (v16-17).

If the Lord calls us as Christians to suffer in consequence of God's governmental dealings with a godless society, let us never fall into the temptation of thinking that the EVIL OF SIN is charged upon us at such a time. The Psalmist wrote: "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil" (Psa.49:5). We may suffer great AFFLICTION in this world because of sin and godless men, but - "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psa.91:8-11). Therefore pray after this manner "DELIVER US FROM EVIL."

To be continued

W.H. Molland

Disobedience to God's voice is not only when man does wickedly contrary to the precepts of God, but also when of good zeal, or good intent (as we commonly speak), man does anything to the honour or service of God not commanded by the express Word of God.

"True and False Worship" by John Knox

PRACTICAL NOTES ON PREACHING

Whilst true preaching is entirely spiritual, yet there are certain practical matters to be observed, indeed are they not a part of the spiritual?

1. A preacher is a herald. One who makes a public proclamation.
2. No person can fulfil this office who is not thoroughly versed in the message which he is to proclaim.
3. Diligent and prayerful study must precede any attempt to preach.
4. Sermon preparation entails not only the study of a particular passage which may well be the public Scripture reading, but things spiritual must be compared with things spiritual. Cross references must be looked up and checked. In order to get a fully comprehensive view of any particular subject the minister must be prepared to dig deeply into the Word of God. No preacher should be content with surface skimming. On the other hand he must not dig so deep as to not only bury himself, but his hearers also: this is fatal.
5. No preacher must try to impart something which he himself does not fully understand.
6. In study and preparation a preacher needs his Bible, a good concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicons, a Bible dictionary, and an English dictionary. These are very essential, for a sermon is made up of words; the whole content of his message is by this means. Therefore the preacher must seek to find acceptable words (cf. Eccles.12:10) and to fail in this is to fail in the proclamation, for it is by acceptable words (at the human level) that he communicates his message. Biblical and theological terms also need to be explained and broken down. Many in the pew would not understand what is meant

7by propitiation, justification, mortification, vicarious, Pelagianism, Gnosticism, antinomianism. When a preacher has to refer to such terms, then he must be sure that his congregation understands what is meant by them. The correct pronunciation of words is also very important. Any man in public speaking should check the dictionary if in doubt, e.g. how often do we hear the word 'sovereignty'. pronounced 'sover-en-ity' when it is 'sovereign-ty'. Even in such matters as these a preacher should be marked by thoroughness.

7. Commentaries are also necessary. Expositions by other sound men can be invaluable. A preacher is to give attendance to reading (cf. 1 Tim.4:13). He should read widely. The reason for this is to broaden his scope of thought. The studies of others can often help on difficult sections of Scripture, and so bring together that which before appeared somewhat disjointed.

8. In the use of commentaries an occasional quote may be incorporated in a sermon, but young preachers need to be warned against taking various statements from the writings of others, and putting them together to form a so-called sermon. This is not preaching, and it is all too obvious to a discerning listener in the pew. The words do not flow, the thoughts often do not harmonise, it comes over as big lumps of truth which are indigestible to the hearer. This is an abuse of the pulpit. A preacher having studied the relevant Scriptures, and read the comments of others, prayerfully ponders and contemplates until he has a grasp of his subject and is fully persuaded as to what he wants to say. He then carefully words his own thoughts, preferably putting it into writing, together with all the Scriptural references. Having it in written form he can constantly go over it, adding or subtracting as is deemed necessary, until he is fully satisfied that he will be conveying to the people, in an acceptable and understandable manner, the particular portion of Scripture being considered.

9. Having now prepared and polished his sermon, the preacher's task is to deliver it; and no less care is required in this. The servant of God should always be suitably attired in the pulpit, modest in dress, neat and tidy in his person. He may have his sermon written out, or he may have reduced it to brief notes: this is irrelevant, but what is all important - he must face the people. He is not in the pulpit to read off a paper which he has written - he is there to preach. He has a congregation facing him, and he must face them. He has been called to address them. In the doing of this he must be expressive. Preaching is not delivering an educational lecture. Politicians feel strongly in what they say, so they express it with great fervency. Such should be the case with the preacher. Has he not a message of far greater import than they? If this is fully realised it will be manifest in the delivery. Having said this, bawling, ranting, and yelling in the pulpit is to be deplored, and is always counterproductive. The other extreme, however, is the man who speaks in monotone, or drops his voice at the end of every sentence. He soon becomes wearisome to the hearers, and however good his subject matter may be he fails in getting it riveted upon the minds of the people. Whether in the public reading of the Scriptures, prayer or the sermon a preacher's voice should undulate. He should be most observant of punctuation; commas, full stops, question marks, exclamations; and his voice should be raised and lowered and toned accordingly. In this way, and this way only, can he truly communicate and give the sense. He should speak distinctly, not too fast, and with sufficient volume that all can hear (cf. Neh. 8:8). The man in the pulpit is not a reader, he is not a lecturer, he is not there to give a talk - he is there to preach. He is a herald, and if he is truly called of God, then with a little experience, all these things will be evident, and such will gain the confidence of his hearers, for in this most solemn of vocations, it is not how the preacher assesses his preaching, it is how the local Church guided by its elders assess it.

10. No man in the pulpit should be artificial. The aping of popular preachers (which is not uncommon) is deplorable, as is the putting on and developing of a special ultra-pious voice when praying or preaching. The preacher should be perfectly natural in the pulpit. According to the content of his message so will differing aspects of his personality be in evidence, but in no way is this to be cultivated, or the preacher will become dramatic and sensational. However, when, from the Scriptures, grim and severe warnings are issued, a preacher's countenance may well appear stern. When speaking of death, an air of solemnity will come over him. It is right that this should be so, for it is indicative of the fact that the man in the pulpit is speaking from the very depths of his soul. Then there is another aspect, when sounding forth the glad tidings of salvation his face will light up with joy if he is really entering into that which he is saying. When issuing the general call of the gospel his very manner will be appealing and persuasive, it cannot be otherwise if the man is truly sent of God, he will have a zeal, and an earnestness, which will be obvious. Occasional repetition can be helpful, but not too often - only if a very important statement has been made. A slight pause can also sometimes contribute to emphasising a point. Most important is the application of the truth whenever such truth is pertinent - to the local Church (always including oneself), to believers in general, to unbelievers, or to the society in which we live. Never must such opportunities to apply relevant truth be missed.

11. In conducting a service, a preacher should ever be aware of time. Within a congregation there are differing age groups, therefore varying degrees of concentration. Long sermons make great demands upon the listeners and can be very tiring. From a human point of view the success of preaching is not how much the preacher can say; rather, how much can the congregation register and take away. Thirty to forty minutes should be the range, but the inexperienced should aim at the former. It was said by a

great preacher with a life time of experience: - "Better for the people to go away longing than loathing."

12. In somewhat lighter vein, nevertheless equally telling, a housewife may have all the necessary ingredients for cooking - flour, sugar, fruit, peel, margarine, cooking oil etc, but only in careful blending, preparation, and cooking, will an appetising, digestible cake be produced. The very best brands of cooking commodities can result in a heavy, or perhaps over-cooked inedible cake if not handled proficiently by the cook. So it is with preaching.

"STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH." (2 Tim.2:15).

13. In conclusion it must be stated again that TRUE preaching is entirely spiritual. ALL the points mentioned should be carefully observed, but unless there is the ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT upon the preacher, all his study and care in preparation and delivery will be of no avail. The Lord Himself was anointed of the Spirit to preach (cf Luke 4:18). Hence men wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth (cf. Luke 4:22). "He taught as One having authority" (Matt.7:29). Of Samuel it was said that all Israel KNEW that he was "established to be a prophet of the Lord" (1 Sam.3:20).

If a man be TRULY raised up of God to publicly herald forth Divine Truth then that anointing of the Holy Spirit will be upon him. He will not just be speaking FROM the authoritative Word of God but the words which HE SPEAKS will COME OVER with authority and power. The spiritually minded in the congregation, although not able to explain it will be verily aware of it. In preaching, the truth must not only be in WORD but also in POWER (cf 1 Thess.1:5).

If this vital anointing is not clearly seen to be upon the preacher, then it is self-evident that his place is in the pew not in the pulpit.

W.H.Molland

FESTAL DAYS AND THE LAW OF GOD
PART 4

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

These articles are designed to answer this question. The festive seasons are to be brought to the DIVINE STATUTE BOOK, but before they can be actually placed on trial, one has to be fully conversant with the law itself. One must be 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.

In previous sections 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.

At this point we go back to Eden again because here is the main spring, indeed the SOURCE of ALL vain imaginations.

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" (Eccles.7:29).

God made the first man (Adam) upright even in His own image (cf Gen 1.26) but THEY (Adam and all his progeny) have sought out many inventions, - EXTRAS, adding to that which God had 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 Gen. 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.Gen.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 which 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" (Col.3:5), to "cast down imaginations" (2 Cor.10:5). Man-made inventions, or traditions of man, 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" (Col.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" saith the Scripture. 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 Almighty God.

It is little wonder that the Bible states that "the imaginations of man's heart is evil" (Gen.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 Cor.13:5).

Sufficient must surely now have been said in these articles 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 all. So having established the Divine yard stick 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, it's origin, it's wording, and its requirements,

so must we 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 (which covers over 2,000 years of human history) to the observance of any special day other than the Sabbath (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 ANNUAL 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 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, but there is no reference to these festivals. We now turn to the Poetical Books, such as 'ROMANTIC¹ 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 nothing which 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.

What is more because Christmas is such a family time, and especially for the children, the Scriptures are bound to say something, somewhere, about FATHER CHRISTMAS, THE TREE, and THE STOCKING, 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 syllable to support the observation of festal days.

NO - there is NOT A WORD in the whole of Scripture concerning the annual celebration of 'CHRISTMAS¹ or 'EASTER' with all the TRAPPINGS which accompany both days. 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 IMAGINATION 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 normally would not 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 previous articles. It is IDOLATRY, for idolatry is a PRINCIPLE - something which is established in the mind which is OUTSIDE of 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" (Gal.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 observed by Christians such as Christmas and Easter. It is completely OUTSIDE of the mandate of Holy Scripture. Therefore when brought to the statute book of the DIVINE LAW it is found to be totally at variance with it.

The question now to be asked is not what God has said, that is obvious to all who face the matter honestly, rather is the question "What are WE going to DO with WHAT GOD HAS SAID?" Dare any in the light of His Holy Law still say "BUT I THINK."

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 recognised 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 re-acted to such idolatry - WHO if any stood against it, and the LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES. All this is "written for our learning" (cf.Rom.15.4).

The Biblical record closed in the 1st century A.D. But we still have records albeit not inspired. Nonetheless

we have indisputable evidence, and authentic historical writings 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 head in the sand and to live in continued idolatry. The Lord grant grace to all to face up to these most serious matters.

To be continued

W.H.Molland

THE No 1 DRUG

While parents have been scared silly about their children getting caught up in the drug scene, they have conveniently ignored the Number One drug of our day, and some parents are even encouraging it! By the age of 12, four out of five children have drunk alcohol and one in ten drinks regularly with his parents. The most common place where teenagers are found drunk out of their minds is in their own homes and the average age of the consistent drinker is 13. Hardly surprising therefore that by 19 many are drinking enough to write off their livers by the time they are 40. A young man told me he was looking forward to going to a certain place overseas for his honeymoon because he had been there with his mates a few years previously but had spent the entire two weeks unconscious. He had taken over £500 with him for drink alone!

Drink affects personal health, family harmony, financial problems in the home and the gross national product of our country, and no-one does very much about it!

The sad truth is that many teenagers in our society didn't initially like alcohol. They drank because of peer pressure, because they were sneered at if they asked for ginger beer. That is the attitude that should be changed. Parents, even some Christian parents, thought there was no harm in letting their children have a glass of wine with their Sunday lunch, and what happened was that they got a taste for it.

Taken from 'Evangelism Today'

IS SICKNESS OF THE DEVIL?

Charismatic Evangelist Kenneth Copeland in his September 1989 paper said: "Sickness is of the devil" and, "God has never used sickness to discipline His children...". He even said it is not God's will for us to die sick. He said: "I don't care how old we are, it's His will to take us home healed, well, whole, and delivered."

His wife Gloria said: "Sickness and disease are not the will of God. They never have been....never will be." She said God originally intended believers to have the right to things like "fellowship with God, health, prosperity", and so many are sick because they have never exercised those rights!" This is unscriptural nonsense.

IS HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT?

Some today make healing the sick a part of fulfilling the Great Commission, or say, that healing is as much salvation as the new birth. Isaiah 53:4-5 and Matthew 8:17 are used to teach that Christians should never be sick, that healing was in the atonement. If this be true then Christians should never sin or die, since Christ also conquered sin and death in the atonement. The gospel concerns deliverance from sin, not from sickness. Christ's blood cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7), not disease. Christ was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), not sickness. He bore our sins (1 Peter 2:24). At the cross (atonement) Christ was victorious over sin, death, and disease, but we still sin, get sick, and die. Our final deliverance from these is yet future.

Two extracts from 'Calvary Contender'

It is interesting to note that those claiming the gift of healing today do not spend much time in funeral parlours, with funeral processions, or in cemeteries. The reason is obvious.

J F MacArthur, Jr

EDITORIAL

In this magazine attention is drawn to preaching, and the preacher. A number of practical points which are essential to observe have been set out, yet all within a spiritual context.

The preaching office carries the greatest responsibility which God has ever placed upon mortal man; yet few offices have been more greatly abused or misused.

From earliest days throughout the course of human history God has raised up and equipped men to declare His Truth. Noah in early civilisation was a "preacher of righteousness." (2 Pet.2:5). A long succession of prophets existed in Old Testament times. Twelve Apostles were called for specific foundational work in the New Testament Church. Then as local Churches were brought into being by the working of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles there was established a lasting pattern for Church order, with deacons and elders, and amongst the elders a teacher - one whom God had fitted for the ministry. So do we see the God ordained pattern of having watchmen, heralds, or preachers always in existence in every generation of mankind.

However just as this is true, so it is equally true that in each era men have usurped this office. In Old Testament times it is recorded that "The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer.5:31). The New Testament record is not any different. Jude writes of men creeping in unawares (cf Jude 4). "Beloved believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). It is not always easy to detect these men because they are wolves in sheep's clothing (cf. Matt.7:15). They practice in the LORD'S NAME "For they prophesy falsely unto you in MY name: I have not sent them saith the Lord" (Jer.29:9).

All this is very solemn, and probably some who read this magazine will be saying that this is applicable only to nominal Christendom, which, sad to say is marked by blind leaders of the blind. However, the matter cannot be dismissed in this way by those of us who are of the true evangelical or reformed wing of the professing Church. Do all preachers in such circles approach their task with the DIGNITY which the office most certainly demands? Is there not a casual shirt sleeve, sloppy Joe, shaggy hair, or other current worldly style, carried into the pulpit by some so-called evangelicals? This is equally as irregular and offensive as the robed and bedecked cleric. Are there not many local or itinerate men who patently have no true gift, yet have they been CO-OPTED by their particular denomination and styled as preachers; their role being to travel around to TAKE A SERVICE. Also there are those who ASSUME the office, they take it upon themselves; to such the pulpit holds a fascination, a certain amount of glamour is attached to it, like Diotrephes they love to have the pre-eminence (cf .3 John 9). Others CHOOSE preaching as a profession, they decide to make the ministry their career. Worse still, there are alas! some whose secular callings have not proved successful and so they turn to preaching as an ALTERNATIVE, perhaps as an answer to their problems - this is contemptible.

All these things and many others do but corrupt the holy and sacred office of preaching. It does despite to the cause of Christ, and brings dishonour upon the name of the Most High God.

It is an outrageous practice for any man to be in the pulpit who is not patently gifted by the Great Head for the task, and who has not the obvious anointing of the Holy Spirit upon him. How can the God of heaven be glorified through the preaching of a man who is not a CHOSEN VESSEL? Is the Body of Christ to be edified by men who are totally unable to expound God's Word in its fulness or by those who by misinterpreting handle the Word of God deceitfully? Even the Apostle Paul who in very

truth was a CHOSEN VESSEL unto the Lord (cf Acts 9:15) had a great fear of failing in his office, "Lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," he said in 1 Corinthians 9:27. His great passion was, that having been called to preach, and entrusted with the gospel of the grace of God, he might be faithful unto the end, and so finish his course with joy. (cf Acts 20:24).

Preaching is the most solemn charge ever entrusted to man. Let none ever presume to this work unless truly GIFTED and ANOINTED of the Holy Spirit for it.

To those who are CHOSEN of God and FITTED, let them ever discharge their holy and sacred responsibility with thoroughness, in the fear of God, and absolute dependence upon Him.

DANCING IN WORSHIP?

Dancing is mentioned ten times in the Bible. On some occasions the motive appears sincere. On other occasions the motive was definitely sensual. After each occasion, whether the dance was sincere or sensual, specific unfortunate consequences resulted. These included a broken marriage, divided homes, immorality, girls abducted against their will, God's people being judged, and a faithful preacher silenced.

Dancing did exist culturally in Bible times, but it was never incorporated into any divinely-appointed service. There is no New Testament evidence that those in the early church danced. Biblical instructions governing methods of worship and witness make no reference to the use of dance at all. Introducing it into Christian service is therefore following the world not the Word. If Jesus Christ is 'Lord of the Dance' (to quote an unfortunate phrase) then we can expect its culmination forthwith.

Taken from 'Evangelical Times'