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THE LINK

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FESTAL DAYS AND THE LAW OF GOD
PART 7

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

In this part 7 we are 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 the way of His commandments THEN the difficulties will largely disappear. When we come to the position of 2 Cor.13:8: "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth", 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 Psalm 19:11 He states that "In keeping of them there is great reward." No one will ever suffer loss by obeying the Almighty, "Them that honour Me I will honour" is His infallible promise (1 Sam.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

In the previous section numerous references were given to green trees in Holy Scripture - Deut. 12:1-2, 1 Kings 14:23, 2 Kings 17:10, 2 Chron.28:1-4, Jer.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.Zech.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 symbolising Nimrod come to life again and now deified.

The fir tree was literally worshipped by these 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 ever-green tree which they would bedeck and adorn. This was symbolic to them of a god who could never die again.

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, "THE 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 token 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 fables? 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.

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. twelve centuries BEFORE Christ was born. These practices and festivals which we are now considering were common place in those far off days, indeed as set out in previous articles they all commenced with NIMROD well over two millenniums 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.

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 workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not" (Jer.10:2-4). From this reference we see how the practice had been perpetuated.

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 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 25th 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, 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 amount 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 but shows how misguided we were, and for Christians to now 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 line up with the humble scene in Bethlehem's stable, and a more UNBIBLICAL NOTION or UNSCRIPTURAL 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 recognise such as being days for 'religious' celebration, or that we should give any credence whatsoever to the pagan festival day of 25th December as 'Christ-mas Day' with its idolatrous trappings. We are not to "learn the way of the heathen" (Jer.10:2).

SANTA CLAUS

What is the origin of Santa Claus? He is not as historic as other matters which have been examined. He certainly does not figure B.C.

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 adaptation to

Christianity. So Rome CHRISTIANIZED THESE PAGAN PRACTICES and by so doing 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 4th - 5th 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 religious 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 4th-5th century A.D. to perpetuate the memory of good St Nicholas that there were 25 Churches dedicated to him in Constantinople alone, and no less than 45 in Rome. His supposed miracles became a favourite subject for medieval 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 medieval 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, 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 which grew up strange legends accentuated by medieval 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. Deut. 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 Ashtoreth 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 described in any other way, such evidences therefore of Baal all around us should cause deep sorrow - not be a means of happiness to us.

The writer is well aware that many who read these articles will say, "This is how you see it, and obviously you feel strongly about it"; but others see nothing wrong in these celebrations, therefore it is a matter of Christian liberty whether we 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. They judge their thoughts to be final. 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. Rom. 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 the law means, or how WE THINK it ought to be worded. Sin is a transgression of the law as God has plainly STATED IT.

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

To be continued

W.H.Molland

"Scripture is the rule of all truth. All other sayings and writings are to be tried by this touchstone. It is not what sense saith, or what reason saith, or what the Fathers say, or what customs say, but what Scripture saith, that is to be the rule of faith and life. Whatsoever is contrary to Scripture, or beside Scripture, is to be rejected as spurious and adulterate."

George Swinnoek

"It is not a question of what I think, or of what anyone else thinks, it is, What saith the Scriptures? It is not a matter of what any Church or creed teaches, it is what the Bible teaches Because the Bible is God's Word, it is the final court of appeal in all things pertaining to doctrine, duty, and deportment."

A.W.Pink

Extract from THE DUTIES OF PARENTS by J.C.Ryle

"I know that you cannot convert your child. I know well that they who are born again are born, not of the will of man, but of God. But I know also that God says expressly, "Train up a child in the way he should go," and that He never laid a command on man which He would not give man grace to perform. And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey...(this) is the way in which He gives the blessing.He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than for earth, - for God, rather than for man, - he is the parent that will be called wise at last."

THE PURE GOSPEL

Wherever the pure gospel has sounded gainsayers have been found. Satan could never allow the Church to possess its heavenly treasures in peace. The Church has therefore continually used the Word of God not only as its soul's pasture but also as a weapon with which to battle unceasingly against false teachers. If the Church ceases struggling, it can no longer remain a Church, for as the spring sun awakens the noxious insects at the same time as the sprouting seed, so is Satan ever awakened at the blessed preaching of the Word of God. He tries to sow his tares among the wheat to smother the wheat.

Do we ask: "Why does God permit His flock not only to be pastured by His shepherds but also attacked by wolves, who disguise themselves as shepherds in order to seize the sheep on the sly and tear them? God could prevent this; why doesn't He do it? God's Word mentions two reasons particularly. God permits it partly to test His children, partly to punish unthankful hearers. Paul says to the Corinthians: "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among

you" (1 Cor.11:19). If the treasure of the pure doctrine would not be attacked, it never would become really clear to what one should hold fast. But if false teachers appear, it will become clear who is faithful to the pure Word; the faith of the upright is then tested and proven. If the pure doctrine would never be attacked, Christians would soon become lazy, lax, and indifferent; but the more apparent the deviations of others from God's Word are, the more Christians are driven to search it earnestly and note every word attentively. The more false teachers attack an honest teacher, the more exactly he must search everything; the more he grows in divine knowledge and certainty. Heretics are nothing else than the whetstone of the Church, whereby she learns to use the sword of the Spirit with increasing expertness. God's hand knows how to turn the evil into good.

Then, too, God often executes His severest judgments through false teachers. He may give a land or a Church faithful servants for a long time. If they think little of their pure preaching, if they don't thank God for it, if they think more highly of earthly treasures than the pure Word and Sacrament, if they are ashamed of the pure doctrine, if they want to do nothing to maintain the office of the pure ministry, if they hear God's Word with a sleepy heart and finally learn to despise it completely, God then allows such thankless scholars to lose the heavenly treasurer. They who had despised the bread of the divine Word should now be fed with the stone of the powerless doctrine of men. Thus Paul says of the Christians of the last times: "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess.2:10-11).

From 'Focus' by kind permission

C.F.W.Walther

EDITORIAL

One of the sad marks to be seen in the Church of Jesus Christ today is the lack of authority which the Scriptures have on the believer. There is an ever growing disregard for the Holy Mandate. It is not so much that Christians do not read their Bibles or know its content, for many are acquainted with its doctrine and precepts, yet in life and conduct, be it in daily experience or in the Church and its practice, it is as if the Word of God has lost its credibility, much of it being considered irrelevant to this day and age. Many think and act that to try and live by all that which was laid down in Holy Writ thousands of years ago, in middle eastern countries, is just not feasible in our society in Britain in the late 20th century. So Christians and Churches select from the Scriptures that which is agreeable to them and leave the rest. This is a sore evil, and accounts for the terrible declension and apostacy which is sweeping upon the Church.

The Word of God is 'ONE BODY OF TRUTH', it is 'THE DOCTRINE', 'THE FAITH', 'THE LAW'. It is not a compendium of truths, rather is it a complete and exhaustive treatise of the doctrine and law of God. "THE FAITH" (singular) once delivered unto the saints. For this every Christian is to earnestly contend (cf. Jude 3). He is to strive to maintain "all the counsel of God" both in his private life and in the life and practice of the local Church of which he is in membership.

No true believer in Jesus Christ should say that one aspect of doctrine is true and must be accepted, whereas another aspect can be set on one side. Or that some practices laid down in Holy Scripture are good and should be carried out, whilst there are others which are far better ignored because they are totally unacceptable in this age, and would serve to hinder rather than help.

God's law is perfect, complete and eternal; its precepts binding upon everyone in every place and age. "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (Deut.12:8).