

DON'T KEEP



CHRISTMAS

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Author: Norbert Link

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Were you shocked when you read the title of this booklet? Was your first thought that the publishers of this booklet either embrace a *non*-Christian faith, or that they are atheists? Surely, a person calling himself Christian would not possibly suggest to NOT OBSERVE such an important Christian holiday, you might say. After all, it celebrates the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! Or, does it? Have you ever questioned the validity of Christmas?

Is Christmas a biblically commanded festival? Does the Bible even mention Christmas? Where did Christmas and its customs originate? How did Christmas become a Christian festival? What do Christmas customs have to do with the birth of Jesus Christ? And finally, what does God have to say about the celebration of Christmas? Does it matter to *Him* whether we keep Christmas? Does He approve of it? Or does He condemn it? The answers may astound you!

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS BEFORE CHRIST

Actually, the *origins* of Christmas and its customs are no secret at all. Every good encyclopedia, as well as many other publications, contain

information about the origins and customs of Christmas.

In 1994, *Reader's Digest* published a book, entitled, "*Why in the World?*" Beginning on page 190, the question is asked, "Why do we celebrate Christmas?" The authors continue: "If the question offends or the answer seems obvious, read on... A feast with the semblance of Christmas, Sacaea, was celebrated thousands of years before Christ's birth. In 2000 BC, in what is now Iraq, a five-day festival **with exchanges of gifts, the performance of plays, accompanied by processions and merrymaking, marked the death of winter and heralded the New Year...** It is likely that those beliefs from the East spread into central Europe... In the depths of winter, for example, **people lit bonfires** in the hope of reviving the dying Sun and bringing warmth to the ground. Also, **they decorated their homes with evergreens—holly and firs**—to show dormant seeds and lifeless plants that all was not dead. When the Sun eventually shone again, they rejoiced in their success and no doubt vowed to repeat the magic forever after.

"Further north, along the Baltic and in Scandinavia, a winter festival known as Yule honored the gods

Odin and Thor. *Great logs blazed, minstrels sang, famous legends were recounted, and villagers drank lustily from horns of mead.*”

In this context, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910-11), 11th edition, Vol. 6, points out on p. 294 that “in Britain the 25th of December was a festival long before the conversion to Christianity... The ancient peoples of the Angli began the year on the 25th of December...”

Reader’s Digest’s “Why in the World?” continues on page 190: “In the Roman Empire, a week-long orgy of feasting and wild revelry, the Saturnalia, was held in mid-December, when the sun was approaching its lowest. The winter solstice—the turning point of the year, when the length of the day began to increase—was marked by a sacred day called *Dies Natalis Invicti Solis* (“Birthday of the Unconquered Sun”). During the Saturnalia, *the Romans decked their houses with laurels and greenery; friends exchanged presents... It was a season of general rejoicing, with good will to all men.*

“The Persians, too, *burned fires at the winter solstice.* Their feast revered Mithras, the god of light and guardian against evil. Soldiers and traders spread the worship of Mithras to Europe, where for a time the belief rivaled Christianity. [Later in this booklet, we will discuss the worship

of this Persian god Mithras, as well as other pagan gods, in more detail.]

DIFFERENT DATES FOR CHRISTMAS PROPOSED

“No precise date is known for the birth of Christ, but it is certain that He was born late in the reign of Herod the Great, king of Judea until his death in what we now call 4 BC. For centuries after His death, several different dates, from April to December, were proposed for the celebration of Christmas. January 6, believed to mark Christ’s baptism, was widely observed as Christmas Day, and still is in some countries by Orthodox Christians...”

“In time, Christians almost everywhere accepted December 25 as Christmas Day, *a date coinciding roughly with celebrations for the winter solstice, Yule and Saturnalia...*”

EARLY CHRISTIANS DID NOT CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910-11), 11th edition, Vol. 6, adds on page 293: “As late as 245 Origen... repudiates as **sinful the very idea of keeping the birthday of Christ** ‘as if he were a king Pharaoh.’”

Other early Christian writers likewise objected to Christmas celebrations. As the *Protestant Church Lexicon*, 1959, Vol. 3, points out on page 1742: “The church of the time

of the martyrs rejected with disgust such a birthday celebration, pointing at the **pagan birthday celebrations and their cults.**”

Tom Flynn writes on page 42 in “*The Trouble with Christmas*”: “[I]f you wanted to search the New Testament world for peoples who attached significance to birthdays, **your search would quickly narrow to pagans. The Romans celebrated the birthdays of the Caesars,** and most non-Christian Mediterranean religions attached importance to the natal feasts of a pantheon of supernatural figures.”

Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Vol. 3, concurs: “The celebration of Christmas on December 25 in the church **begins only in the middle of the 4th century.** Until then, the opposition against it was in some cases very severe (Origen, Arnobius, Clemens Alexandria, Epiphanius), **since it was considered a pagan custom to celebrate with festivities the birthdays of kings.**”

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1914), Vol. 3, p. 724, adds the following: “Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts; Origen... asserts... that **in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthdays.**”

A more recent article entitled, “In Search of Christmas,” published

in the *U.S. News & World Report*, December 23, 1996, p. 56, explains: “The earliest celebrations of the Nativity were surprisingly late. There is no record of official observance of Christ’s birth until the fourth century... The third-century church father Origen had declared it a sin to *even think of keeping Christ’s birthday...*” **There is no mention in the New Testament of Christians gathering to commemorate the birth of Jesus...**”

Continuing with the quote from *Reader’s Digest’s* “*Why in the World?*” on page 190: “In England after the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans outlawed Christmas celebrations **as heathen...** The same situation had prevailed in the New World since 1621, when a law passed by Governor Bradford of the Plymouth Colony **prohibited Christmas observance...**”

In a television interview in 1991, British scientist and Professor J.M.Golby, co-author of the book, “*The Making of the Modern Christmas*,” commented as well on the fact that certain Protestant reformers condemned the celebration of Christmas, and why they did so. He pointed out that “*Calvin and Knox* were very much against Christmas for a variety of reasons, one of them being that... **it’s not mentioned in the gospels, so why celebrate Christmas?** Secondly, by the 17th

century and the Reformation, the whole association of Christmas with the Roman Catholic Church—of the pomp and ceremony and feasts and so on—were *anathema*. And so that's another reason why Christmas was condemned by men like Knox...

In the United States, Christmas celebrations became "as varied as the peoples who had come to the New Land. In general, Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans and the Dutch settlers rejoiced, both in church and out, while Baptists, Presbyterians and Quakers tended to *shun all observance of the holiday*." (Editors of *Life*, "The Pageantry of Christmas," p. 60).

An account in the *New York Times* of December 26, 1855, reads: "The churches of the Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists were not open on Dec. 25 except where some mission schools had a celebration. *They do not accept the day as a Holy One*, but the Episcopalian, Catholic and German churches were all open."

PAGAN ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

As we know, Christmas is closely associated with a variety of customs. Let's look in detail at the origins of some of the most popular Christmas customs.

Christmas Carols

Regarding Christmas carols, the

Reader's Digest publication "Why in the World?" says on page 192: "The first Christmas songs, written in Latin and solemn in tone, were probably composed in the fourth century, **when the Roman Church made the festival a holiday. But carols date back to pagan times.** The Greeks used them in plays, and Romans sang them during the Saturnalia... *For centuries, the Church banned carols because of their heathen associations.*"

Christmas Gifts

Another very popular custom associated with Christmas is the *exchange of presents*. It is claimed that this custom originated with the biblical example of the Magi or wise men, giving presents to the Christ Child. However, *Reader's Digest* points out the following in "Why in the World?", on page 194: "The Romans gave gifts at their Saturnalia... *Like so many other seasonal traditions, it is difficult to say whether that of Christmas gifts has pagan or Christian origin.*"

But it is *not* really that difficult to see that this custom is pagan in origin. For instance, the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987 ed., article "Christmas," shows the association of exchanging gifts with pagan customs, when it states: "Giving gifts at Christmas probably originated with the **pagan Roman custom of exchanging gifts**

(*strenae*) at the New Year.”

The *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 12, pp. 153-155, concurs: “The interchange of presents between friends is a like characteristic of Christmas and the Saturnalia, and **must have been adopted by Christians from the Pagans, as the admonition of Tertullian plainly shows.**”

But what about the idea that the custom of exchanging presents at Christmas derived from the Biblical fact that the Magi gave presents to Christ? Frankly, there is no association or connection whatsoever. The Magi or wise men sought the “king of the Jews.” And in approaching Christ as King, they followed the Oriental custom of bringing *Him* presents. They did not exchange presents amongst themselves. It is also interesting to analyze the *kind* of presents that they gave to Jesus.

Das Beste, a *Reader's Digest* publication, brought out a book in 1990 entitled, “*Wunder und Rätsel der Heiligen Schrift.*” They point out on page 278: “In one of his sermons, the monk Elfric wrote in the 10th century, ‘The gold belongs to a king; frankincense belongs to services; and myrrh is used for the bodies of the dead, so that they can be preserved longer. **The... wise men worshipped Christ and brought Him symbolic presents.** The gold represented Him to be a true king [cp. Rev. 19:16];

frankincense represented Him to be the true God [and our High Priest, cp. Hebr. 4:14-15]; and myrrh represented the fact that He could die then, but that He is now immortal for all eternity.”

We should also note that the Magi did not visit Christ along with the shepherds on the same night Christ was born. Rather, they visited Joseph, Mary and the Christ Child a considerable time *after* the birth of Jesus. They only appeared *in Jerusalem after Jesus was born in Bethlehem* (Matt. 2:1). When the Magi arrived *in Bethlehem*, the family was staying in a *house* (Matt. 2:11)—no longer in a *stable* (Luke 2:6-7). At that time, Jesus was not a newborn baby or “Babe” (Luke 2:12, 16), but a “young Child.” (Matt. 9, 11, 13-15). Herod ordered the death of all male children, “*from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.*” (Matt. 2: 16).

As an aside, the Magi, or wise men, are misrepresented in the “Christmas story” in other respects as well. The *P.M.* magazine published an article some time ago, entitled, “What do we know about the Three Holy Kings?” It pointed out:

“That they [the Magi] became *kings*, can be accredited to the theologian Tertullian (160 until 220). He wrote, ‘in the east, Magi

were normally kings.’ So we see how quickly the wise men of the Bible had become kings... According to Persian tradition, these Magi were descendants of the ancient *Median* priesthood... In the gospel, we are not told how many they were. The oriental churches speak of **twelve** Magi.

“Jacob of Edessa (640-708), one of the most important ancient writers of the Church of the Jacobites, writes: ‘The Magi were from Persia, but they were not three, as portrayed by artists for the people, as derived from the threeness of the gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense, but rather **twelve**, as can be seen in many traditions. Those who came were princes and well-respected persons from the country of Persia. Many people, more than a thousand men, accompanied them, so that Jerusalem became very excited when they arrived.’”

The article also speculates that the number of the Magi was reduced to “three,” not because of the three types of gifts mentioned, but because another argument for the Trinity was searched for. Allegedly, the remains of the “three kings” rest today in the dome of Cologne in Germany. However, *PM* notes that “the garments, in which the bones are wrapped, were made in the second or third century after Christ in Syria.”

The Christian Church “adopted”

the pagan custom of exchanging gifts on December 25 and incorporated it into its own “faith,” by giving it a “Christian” mantle. This custom was not taken from the Bible or the visit of the Magi in Bethlehem, and it had nothing to do with the fact that the Magi had given presents to Christ.

Santa Claus

Closely associated with the giving of presents at Christmas time is the *figure of Santa Claus*, also called *St. Nicholas*. Countless parents have explained to their surprised children that it was “that old man with a white beard and a red suit” who secretly placed presents under the Christmas tree while they were asleep. And the innocent children believed their parents, of course, until they learned the truth. Was it a “harmless” lie? Children have been raised with the implicit teaching that not every lie is bad. So they, in turn, adopt that thought process in their own lives. Or else, they began to mistrust their parents in other areas of life as well.

According to legend, there was a Catholic priest who allegedly gave gifts to children in December. This priest was supposedly the Bishop of Myra, and he was called “Nicholas.” He reportedly died on December 6, 326 AD. This is the “official” explanation, as to why the “day of St.

Nicholas” is celebrated today on December 6. Many historians doubt, however, that there is any legitimacy to this legend. They even question whether such a priest ever existed.

One record that was published under Pope Paul VI in 1969 raises doubts whether Nicholas was a saint or whether he was only a “legendary” hero, *if he even lived at all*. Since 1969, the Catholic Church has left it to its followers to decide for themselves whether or not to worship Nicholas as a saint.

On the other hand, it is a historical fact that pagans did worship a pagan god that shows great similarities with the modern Santa Claus. This pagan deity was the old Germanic god “Wodan.” He was called “Odin” in Scandinavia. Wodan or Odin was a sun god. According to pagan belief, he gave his life for the world by “*hanging on a tree*” or a cross for nine nights, after which he was “pierced by a spear.”

In Scandinavian legend, Odin [or Wodan] was called “All-Father.” He was viewed as “the chief god in a pagan trinity... and this trinity became the creator of man.” (cp. Earl W. Count, “*4000 Years of Christmas*,” 1948, p. 52). In Germanic legends, **Wodan [or Odin] had a holy tree, and when someone came close to that tree on December 25, he found presents under it.** In addition,

Wodan’s day on which he was worshipped was *December 6*. Wodan or Odin is portrayed as an old man with a big hat, a wide coat, and a long gray beard, who is riding a horse. Although the modern Santa Claus rides a sleigh pulled by reindeer, this was not always the case. According to tradition, Santa Claus originally rode a horse.

Earl W. Count, B.D., Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology, states in “*4000 Years of Christmas*,” on pp. 11 and 54: “We do not really know when the Christ Child... was born; or the time and place when Christmas was first celebrated; or exactly how it was that, over the centuries, a bishop-saint of Asia Minor and a **pagan god of the Germans merged to become Santa Claus...** Of most interest to us, however, is the **fact that Wodan [or Odin] has become—Santa Claus, or, as he is better called, St. Nicholas.**”

Other pagan gods might have been responsible too for shaping the modern picture of Santa Claus. In ancient times, a fireplace served as the natural entrance and exit of the gods of fire and solar gods when they visited homes. Each year, dressed in a pointed fiery red cap and red jacket, fire-gods traveled from the distant heavens to visit homes and distribute favors or punishments. It should not be hard to see the connection

between the ancient superstitions about hearth spirits and the modern figure of Santa Claus using the chimney, with the shoes and the stockings hung by the fireplace.

Where did the name “Santa Claus,” or “Nicholas,” come from? In Revelation 2:6, we are introduced to the sect of *Nicolaitans* which taught and practiced wrong concepts and doctrines. [They especially preached the heresy of “grace without works.” The Bible, on the other hand, makes it very clear that, although “eternal life” is offered to us by grace, as a gift from God, our reward is going to be given to us “according to our works.” (Rev. 22:12).] Nicolaus, the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitans, was a Gentile convert, but he later turned away from his conversion. This “Nicolaus” is none other than “Nicholas” or “Santa Claus.” In German, for instance, the similarities of these two names are even more striking. “Nicolaus,” the founder of the “Nicolaitans,” is rendered in German as “*Nikolaus*”—and “Santa Claus” in German is “*Nikolaus*” as well.

In pagan legends, spirits or gods of the water were worshipped as “*Nick*” or “*Nickel*.” All of them were worshipped on December 6. Female gods of the water were called “*Nixen*” (the German expression for “mermaids”). In these legends, Santa

Claus or St. Nicholas is accompanied by a servant, called “*Knecht Ruprecht*.” In “*The Pageantry of Christmas*,” published by the editors of *Life* magazine, we are told on page 62: “*Knecht Ruprecht*, the assistant to St. Nicholas, . . . was as capable of punishing as he was of rewarding, and the horns on his head **reveal his demonic origin**. . . He was also known as *Black Peter*.”

Christmas Candles & Christmas Cakes

Christmas candles play an extremely important role in the celebration of Christmas. But why do people light candles at Christmas? *Reader's Digest's* “*Why in the World?*” explains on page 195: “Ancient peoples, aware of the changing seasons, lit fires to encourage the return of spring. *Romans, during their Saturnalia, decked their homes with lighted candles and greenery. . .* ***When we put candles or fairy lights on a Christmas tree today, we are following traditions of ancient Rome.***”

It is also “customary” to *bake cakes around Christmas time*. But this, too, is a pagan custom that the Roman Church adopted and incorporated into its belief system. The *Kalifornische Staatszeitung* published an article in its December 21, 1984, edition, entitled, “*Older Than Christmas*,” stating on page 25:

“The custom to bake at this time of year [at Christmas time] specially formed cakes is **older than Christmas itself**. The Egyptians and Romans *sacrificed to their gods* at the end of the year **loaf-shaped cakes, as well as animals and men made out of paste or baking soda**. Almost the same symbolic figures can be found amongst Germanic tribes which asked the *fertility goddess*, at that time, with bread sacrifices for her blessings of home and farmland. **For centuries, the superstition was preserved among the peoples that Christmas cakes, fantastically formed, had power to bring about luck and fortune.**”

The Christmas Tree

Perhaps the most cherished Christmas custom of all is the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree, an evergreen tree, was a pagan object of worship. It exemplifies on a large scale its pagan and demonic origins and the incorporation of pagan customs into orthodox Christianity.

First, consider this quote from the *Reader's Digest*, “Why in the World?” On page 210 they discuss the question as to why people touch wood or knock on wood for so-called “good luck.” “The belief that touching wood *will placate the evil spirits* goes back to pagan times, when **trees were held sacred as the abode of**

gods. These gods... chose some trees to be *ever green*, a sign of immortality. Touching a tree was a mark of respect to the gods, a request for favor to be granted or thanks for one already given.”

One of those pagan gods who lived in sacred trees was Attis of Phrygia (discussed more fully later in this booklet). He was a god of vegetation and a “tree spirit.” James G. Frazer points out in his book, “*The Golden Bough*,” on pp. 298, 297: “The original character of *Attis as a tree-spirit* is brought out plainly by the part which the **pine tree** plays in his legend and ritual... **After his death Attis is said to have changed into a pine tree**... At the spring equinox (22nd March) a pine-tree was cut in the woods and brought into the sanctuary of [Phrygian goddess] Cybele, **where it was treated as a divinity**. *It was adorned with woolen bands and wreaths of violets, for violets were said to have sprung from the blood of Attis.*”

Attis was not the only “tree spirit.” The god of Egypt, Osiris, was also a tree-spirit. He was a pagan god “whose annual death and resurrection have been celebrated in so many lands.” (James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 301). Frazer also points out, on page 309, that “in inscriptions, Osiris is referred to as the ‘**one in the tree.**’”

Then, Frazer introduces us to the Greek god Dionysus or Bacchus, the bull-shaped god of the vine. “Like the other gods of vegetation..., Dionysus was believed to have died a violent death, but to have been brought to life again; *and his sufferings, death, and resurrection were enacted in sacred rites.*” (Frazer, p. 322). In addition to being the god of the vine, Dionysus was “also a god of trees in general. Thus we are told that almost all the Greeks sacrificed to ‘Dionysus of the tree.’ In Boeotia one of his titles was ‘*Dionysus in the tree.*’... Amongst the trees particularly sacred to him, in addition to the vine, was **the pine-tree**. The Delphic oracle commanded the Corinthians **to worship a particular pine-tree ‘equally with the god.’**” (Frazer, pp. 321-322).

The pine tree was believed to be the abode of pagan gods. Actually, pagan gods supposedly changed into pine trees. As such, the pine tree was adorned with violets and treated as a divinity or deity—in fact, it was worshipped as a god. The similarities with the modern custom of decorating an evergreen or pine tree as a Christmas tree, and singing carols in front of it, are striking. And to think that those practices derived from the worship of pagan gods or demons is frightening!

Ralph Woodrow wrote in

“Babylon, Mystery Religion,” ed. 1981, on page 152: “**The Christmas tree... recapitulates the idea of tree worship...**, gilded nuts and balls symbolizing the sun... All of the festivities of the winter solstice have been absorbed into Christmas day... The Christmas tree [was absorbed] from the honors paid to Odin’s sacred fir.”

HOW PAGAN CUSTOMS BECAME “CHRISTIANIZED”

Professor Golby made additional comments on television regarding the incorporation of *the pagan origins of Christmas and its customs into the “Christian” religion*: “Christmas trees are evergreen... Obviously they are part of the old pagan festivals... What I think is the amazing thing about the Christian church is the way it’s been able to *absorb things* and accept them, in fact, **accept pagan figures, and incorporate them into the church.**”

Francis Owen agrees. He stated in his work, “*The Germanic People*,” on page 209: “Many of the beliefs of this ancient Germanic religion... *were only superficially modified by the teachings of the Christian church.* Old beliefs and customs are hard to eradicate.”

It is a historical fact that the Christian church did not eradicate pagan Christmas customs, but it

rather embraced and incorporated the practices by giving them a “Christian” meaning. Listen to this quote from the publishers of *Life*, in “*The Paganry of Christmas*,” on page 10: “*The followers of Mithras, a Persian sun-god whose cult was brought to Rome by returning legionnaires and became the chief rival of Christianity, celebrated December 25 as Dies Solis Invicti Nati* (“Birthday of the Unconquered Sun”). The Romans themselves had long celebrated the solstice season as the Saturnalia, honoring Saturn, the god of agriculture... *The exchange of gifts became an important part of the festivities [of Saturnalia]. They were simple at first—wax candles or clay dolls—but they slowly grew more elaborate. Christians began absorbing these old customs and infusing them with Christian meaning in order to help spread the faith.* Many Church fathers considered the method dangerous...

“But most of the Christian missionaries who moved into Central and Western Europe as the Roman Empire crumbled, followed the advice of [pope] Gregory the Great. **He wrote in 597 that they should not try to put down pagan customs ‘upon the sudden,’ but adapt them ‘to the praise of God.’**

“In the North, at the Christmas season, the missionaries found the

pagan adherents of the gods Woden and Thor battling the winter’s evil darkness with *huge bonfires*. In Central Europe, they found the belief that at the death of the old sun, *witches and fiery demons came to earth to destroy the fertility of the New Year, and could be dissuaded by presents*. In Britain, they found Druids paying tribute to the *victory of evergreens over winter’s darkness. The missionaries, heeding Gregory the Great’s advice, made no effort to ‘cut off’ the ‘evil customs.’ As a result, many of them survive as cherished Christmas traditions of today.*”

Many other researchers and authors have come to the same conclusions. Arthur Weigall wrote in “*The Paganism in our Christianity*,” on page 209: “The policy of the Church is to adapt old pagan holy days to Christian ideas, and not to suppress them... **The festivals which we call Christmas and Easter are pagan, not Christian, in origin.**”

Earl W. Count comments in “*4000 Years of Christmas*,” on pp. 25-27: “[During the Saturnalia,] the halls of the Romans were decked with boughs of laurel and of green trees, with lighted candles and with lamps—for the hovering spirits of darkness were afraid of light... To the Christians, the Saturnalia were an abomination, in homage to a

disreputable god [Saturn] who had no existence anyway... The Church Fathers discovered to their alarm that they were... **facing an invasion of pagan customs.** The habit of Saturnalia was too strong to be left behind. At first the Church forbade it, but in vain.... If the Saturnalia would not be forbidden, let it be tamed. The Church Fathers now sought to point the festival toward the Christian Sun of Righteousness.... **The Church finally succeeded in taking the merriment, the greenery, the lights, and the gifts from Saturn and giving them to the Babe of Bethlehem.**"

U.S. News & World Report, December 23, 1996, concurs on p. 59: "Most widely held is the view that the holiday was an intentional 'Christianization' of Saturnalia and other pagan festivals... As one historian put it: 'The pagan Romans became Christians—but the Saturnalia remained.'"

The *Reader's Digest* article, "Why in the World?", points out on p. 191: "Worldwide, the Church in general took a pragmatic stance. *Unable to ban the pagan excesses that had become part of the celebration, it endeavored to rid them of their undesirable features, and welcomed the refurbished rites into Christmas rejoicing as if they were sacred. The old-time Christmas customs survived, and new ones were*

added. Christmas became, as we know it today, a magical mixture of Christian devotion and pagan pleasures, a festival that survives through popular demand."

Yes, Christmas and its customs are pagan, not Christian, in origin. The Roman Catholic Church, rather than eradicating them, gave them a "Christian" meaning. But that did not make them Christian. The December 1981 edition of the *U.S. Catholic* admits on page 32: "It is impossible to separate Christmas from its pagan origins."

The *U.S. News and World Report* stated in its December 23, 1996 edition, on page 60, that the Puritans "were correct when they pointed out... that Christmas was nothing but a pagan festival covered with a Christian veneer."

CHURCH OF ROME ORDERED CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

As we have seen, when the Church was unable to forbid Christmas celebrations, the customs were given a superficial "Christian" meaning and, as such, were then *permitted*. Later on, though, they were actually *commanded*.

Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart writes in its third edition: "The origin of [Christian celebrations of] Christmas is to be seen in the Church of Rome."

The *Encyclopedia Americana* (1944), concurs: “A feast was established in memory of this event [the birth of Jesus] in the fourth century. In the fifth century the **Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol**, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ’s birth existed.”

It was the Roman Catholic Church that **ordered** its followers to keep the pagan customs of Christmas to demonstrate the “victory of Christ, the true sun, over the pagan cult” of sun worship. (*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*).

As the *San Diego Union Tribune* points out on page 7 of its *TV Week* supplement for December 17-23, 2000, Christmas “went from being the feast day of the risen *sun* to the feast day of the risen *son*.” And those non-Catholic denominations that observe Christmas today as a Christian festival do not do so in compliance with biblical commands, but in obedience to the lead of the Catholic Church.

Worship of the Pagan God Mithra Today

We have already touched on the Persian god Mithra or Mithras on several occasions, and we saw that Christianity did not eradicate Mithraic teachings and customs, but

rather absorbed them. We want to focus our attention now on the pagan worship of this Persian god Mithra, as it is fascinating to see to *what extent* Mithraic teachings and customs survived in modern so-called Christianity. The truth is quite amazing!

The German “P.M.” magazine published a few years ago an article, entitled, “*Can You Imagine to Believe on Mithras?*” It began this way: “An early day in the year 180 A.D. A usual Sunday in the harbor town of Ostia in front of the gates of Rome. Commotion in the different parts of town. Everywhere we see groups of men moving through the narrow village quarters... But no one takes note of them... Everyone knows where the men go to: **It is Sunday, the day of the Sun—the men are going to services.**

“Are they Christians? Do we experience here a typical scene from the early days of this religion? No—the men worship another god. **Mithras** is the name of that transcendent being from whom they expect salvation. **And each year in the winter they celebrate his birthday: in the night of December 25 with a sort of service which we could call today midnight mass...**

“The Mithras cult still influences our lives today... Mithras was the main god of the Roman legions.

In Germany alone, forty Mithras relics were unearthed—twelve of them in or close to Frankfurt... It was Emperor Constantine who was pushing in the Council of Nice (which is in Turkey today) in 325 to unite his subjects under one faith... Although the emperor himself belonged to the cult of the sun worship (he was only baptized on his deathbed), he decided on Christianity as the common confession for all the Romans. **In order to make the new religion acceptable for the followers of Mithras, he declared Sunday as the common day of rest for all of his empire...**

“Still another decision was supposed to bring Christians and Mithraites closer together: The birthday of Jesus was declared to be on the same day on which Mithras was supposedly born (In the year of 354, the 25th of December is mentioned for the first time). Until then, Christians had not celebrated Christmas.”

The article also published numerous pictures and photographs. Under one of them, the following is stated: **“In the late Mithras cult, the three-fold God appears... What relationship exists with the Christian Trinity is obvious.”**

What is even more striking is the fact that the Bible nowhere teaches the Trinity. God is identified as

consisting of *two* beings—the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is *not* a person or the third being within the God Family, but rather the emanating power of God. But here we see how this unbiblical concept of the Trinity found its way into Christianity—through pagan belief systems such as the belief system of Mithras, a cult which was both absorbed and, at the same time, “Christianized” by the Roman Church.

The great influence and impact that pagan concepts, as taught in the Mithras cult, had on orthodox Christianity cannot be underestimated and overemphasized. Listen to this additional explanation from Esme Wynne-Tyson’s *“Mithras, The Fellow in the Cap,”* as stated on pp. 22 and 24: “From the first, Mithras was equated with the Sun and with light... In brief, he is a pagan Christ... Mithras was not only the Sun-God, but the Mediator between mankind and the Supreme Being... **His birthday was celebrated in the Mithraic calendar on the 25th [of] December. Sunday... was consecrated to him, and known as the Lord’s Day long before the Christian era. His rebirth was commemorated at Easter.”**

Edward Carpenter pointed out in *“Pagan & Christian Creeds: Their Origin and Meaning,”* 1921, p. 21: **“Mithra was born in a cave, and on the 25th [of] December. He was**

born of a Virgin... **His great festivals** were the winter solstice and the Spring equinox (**Christmas and Easter**). He had *twelve* companions or disciples (the twelve months). He was buried in a tomb, from which however he rose again; and his resurrection was celebrated yearly with great rejoicings. He was called Savior and Mediator; and sometimes *figured as a Lamb*.”

John M. Robertson wrote in *“Pagan Christs, Studies in Comparative Hierology,”* on pp. 305, 306, 327: **“The first day of the week, Sunday, was apparently from time immemorial consecrated to Mithra... We have some exact information as to the two chief Mithraic ceremonies or festivals, those of Christmas and Easter..., the birthday of the Sun-God and the period of his sacrifice and his triumph.** That Christmas is a solar festival of unknown antiquity which the early Christians appropriated to their Christ... is no longer denied by competent Christian scholars... The truth is... that **Mithraism was not overthrown; it was merely transformed. It had gone too far to be overthrown; the question was whether it should continue to rival Christianity or be absorbed by it.**”

As we have seen, it was *absorbed*. And many, if not most of its pagan elements, customs, and teachings

were absorbed as well—given a “Christian” mantle. This is why the Orthodox Christian world celebrates Sunday, even though God tells us to keep the Sabbath holy—the time from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset (cp. Ex. 20:8-11). (For more information on this topic, please request a free copy of the booklet, *“Europe in Prophecy”*).

Listen to this remarkable quote from H.G. Well’s, author of fictitious novels such as *“The Time Machine,”* and *“The Invisible Man.”* He also wrote, *“The Outline of History,”* pointing out on page 543: “It would seem the Christians adopted Sunday as their chief day of worship instead of the... Sabbath, from the Mithraic cult.”

And indeed they did. And due to the Mithraic cult and other pagan teachings, pagan annual holidays such as Christmas or Easter are observed today. At the same time, orthodox Christianity does not keep those annual days *holy* that God has *made* holy—such as Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, or Feast of Tabernacles (cp. Lev. 23). The adaptation of Mithraic and other pagan teachings is the reason why non-Christian customs are embraced and believed in as “Christian” doctrines.

Listen to this quote from *Funk and Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia*, Vol.

17, on “Mithraism”: “...the cult of Mithra, the ancient Persian god of light and wisdom... Mithra became the god of the sun, which was worshipped in his name... It was a great rival to Christianity in the Roman world... *Mithraism was similar to [so-called] Christianity in many respects, for example, in ... the adoration of the shepherds at Mithra’s birth, the adoption of Sundays and of December 25 (Mithra’s birthday) as holy days, and in the belief in the immortality of the soul.*”

Nowhere does the Bible tell us to “adore” shepherds. Those who do that today while re-enacting the nativity scene, actually follow the pagan worshippers of Mithra. Neither does the Bible teach that we have an immortal soul. Quite to the contrary, we are told by God that the “soul that sins will die.” (Ezek 18:4, 20). If we repent, then our souls will be “saved from death” (James 5:20). Rather than *having* a soul, immortal or not, man *is* a soul (cp. Gen. 2:7: “man became a living soul”). And if man sins and does not repent of it, then man, the soul, will die the eternal death. The concept, then, that we have an immortal soul does not come from the Bible, but from paganism and the cultic teachings of Mithra and other pagan gods.

That Mithraism did not die out,

but instead, survived in Christianity, can also be seen from this quote taken from *Funk and Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia*, Vol. 24, under “Sun Worship”: “... In ancient Persia worship of the sun was an integral part of the elaborate cult of Mithras... Sun worship persisted in Europe even after the introduction of Christianity, as is evidenced by its **disguised survival** in such traditional Christian practices *as the Easter bonfire and the burning of the Yule Log on Christmas.*”

That Mithraism was the national religion of Persia and a dominant force in ancient times is alluded to in the Bible as well. In Ezra 1:8 and 4:7 we read about the Persian treasurer “Mithredath.” This word means literally, “gift of Mithra.” Prominent people were actually named after that Persian god.

Worship of the Pagan God Attis Today

While the cult of Mithras had a great influence on Christianity, the worship of Mithras was by no means the *only* pagan religion that found its way into Christianity. As we already saw, pagan worship of other gods such as Saturn, Thor, Wodan or Odin was absorbed as well. And so were elements from the cult of Attis, a god in Phrygia. We read in the *Woman’s Encyclopedia of Myths and*

Secrets about Attis:

“*The cult of Attis strongly influenced early Christianity...* Attis was a son of the Goddess’s earthly incarnation, the virgin Nana, who miraculously conceived him by eating an almond or a pomegranate... He grew up to become a sacrificial victim and Savior, slain to bring salvation to mankind. His body was eaten by his worshippers in the form of bread. He was resurrected as the ‘Most High God...’ Attis’ passion was celebrated on the 25th of March [other sources have 22nd of March], exactly nine months before the **festival of his birth, the 25th of December...** **The day of Attis’ death was Black Friday...** The god died and was buried. He descended into the underworld. **On the third day he arose again from the dead...** This was the **Sunday**; the god arose in glory... Christians ever afterward kept Easter Sunday with carnival processions derived from the **mysterries of Attis.**”

Michael Jordan writes about Attis in “*Encyclopedia of God.*” He points out: “In Christian times the Easter festival took over the **date** of the Attis rites.” Have you ever wondered why the Christian world keeps Easter, claiming that Christ was crucified on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday? The Bible *nowhere* mentions Easter. The Bible nowhere

states that Christ was killed on a Friday and that He was resurrected on a Sunday. In fact, He could not have been, as He was to be dead in the grave for three days and three nights, as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster (Matt. 12:40). You *cannot* count three days and three nights from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. Both history and the Bible prove that Christ was actually crucified Wednesday afternoon and that He was resurrected Saturday before sunset. But as we just read, *pagan* gods such as Attis were allegedly killed on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday. And so those pagan customs were incorporated into the doctrines and practices of the Roman Church by replacing pagan gods like Attis with Christ and giving them a “Christian” mantle.

SATAN—THE AUTHOR OF A UNIVERSAL MYTH

It should be obvious that all of these similar legends involving different pagan gods and customs and rites, are part of a “universal myth,” as John M. Robertson put it (“*Pagan Christs,*” p. 307).

Also, Edward Carpenter wrote in “*Pagan & Christian Creeds,*” beginning on page 25: “The similarity of these ancient pagan legends and beliefs with Christian traditions was indeed so great that it excited the

attention and the undisguised wrath of the early Church fathers. They felt no doubt about the similarity [and concluded]... that the Devil—in order to confound the Christians—had, centuries before, caused the pagans to adopt certain beliefs and practices... Justin Martyr for instance describes the institution of the [so-called] Lord's Supper as narrated in the Gospels, and then goes on to say, 'Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithra [and we might add Attis as well], commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated you either know or can learn.' Tertullian also says that 'the devil by the mysteries of his idols imitates even the main part of the divine mysteries.'"

The Bible refers in numerous places to such demonic pagan imitations of what Christ would do, or did do. For instance, Ezek. 8:13-15 describes the worship of "Tammuz" as an abomination. According to legend, Tammuz, or Adonis, was born of a virgin at the time of the winter solstice and was killed by a boar. Every year the maidens wept for him. In the spring a festival of his resurrection was held. (Carpenter, p. 22). This pagan god Tammuz was a Summerian or Syrian god of vegetation,

a pagan counterfeit of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Cor. 10:14-22, Paul refers to pagan rites such as those of Mithra or Attis. Paul identifies them with idolatry and admonishes Christians not to have anything to do with them: "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry... The cup of blessing which we bless [during the annual memorial of Christ's death at Passover], is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break [at Passover], is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ... What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? **Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.**"

Worship of pagan gods and participation in its customs are described in the Bible as demon worship. And to introduce pagan rites, which might in some cases *look similar* to Christian practices, into the true worship of God, is identified with idolatry. Satan knew that God would send Jesus Christ to die for mankind. Many Old Testament scriptures foretell in great detail Christ's first coming.

Satan's strategy to oppose God

was twofold. First, he influenced people to create a universal myth of a pagan Savior who would be worshipped under different names, and who would have *some* similarities with Jesus Christ and what He would accomplish, so that people could later view Christ as only “another” Deliverer. Many historians believe that Satan’s universal myth began with the Nimrod of the Bible in Gen. 10:8-12. Legend has it that this “mighty hunter” married his own mother Semiramis. When he died, Satan inspired Semiramis to invent and spread the idea that Nimrod was still alive as a spirit being. She claimed that a full-grown evergreen tree sprang up overnight from a dead tree stump, and that Nimrod would visit the tree and leave gifts there on each anniversary of his birth, December 25. A slightly different version of this account is that the evergreen tree allegedly symbolized Nimrod’s son Tammuz, and that Nimrod came back to life as Tammuz. Later, Semiramis became known and was worshipped under different names as the “Queen of Heaven.”

The second part of Satan’s strategy to oppose God was to see to it that those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be bombarded with the [already existing] aspects of pagan religions, inducing them to absorb

those “in the honor and glory of Christ.” Sadly, over the centuries, *many* who claimed to be Christian, *did* fall for Satan’s evil tactics and schemes by incorporating into their worship of God certain pagan doctrines, customs and rites.

COUNTER ARGUMENTS OF THE CARNAL MIND

Some may respond by saying, “So what? Why not keep Christmas anyway? Even though Christmas is a pagan festival and its customs are pagan in origin, I do it to honor Christ. And even though the Bible doesn’t command us to keep it, doesn’t God give us the freedom to celebrate the birthday of His Son whenever we want? And further, if we don’t like the ‘paganism’ associated with Christmas, why not just keep Christmas solely to honor Christ, while leaving all the pagan customs behind?”

Yes, we humans can come up with all kinds of reasons to hang on to our traditions and beliefs. We somehow want to justify our actions rather than coming to terms with the truth of the matter, and it quickly becomes evident how strongly our beliefs entrench our customs. We don’t give up easily, even when shown to be wrong.

For example, we know that Christmas has become totally commercialized, and it is being kept

alive by commercialism. As U.S. *News & World Report* points out in its December 23, 1996 article, on page 64: “To turn Christmas into a purely religious celebration now might cheer those who want to ‘take back Christmas.’... But such an observance ‘would lack the cultural resonance and impact of a holiday deeply rooted in the marketplace.’ If Christmas came to that... ‘*we probably wouldn’t keep it as a society.*’”

And, while Christmas is widely touted as a time of “peace on earth and good will toward men,” it is a well-known fact that Christmas is the time of year in the Western world when more crimes are committed than at any other time. It is a time when alcoholism runs rampant. It is a time when commerce reaches its peak of illogical and irresponsible conduct and behavior, and people incur credit card debts that they can never repay, only to fulfill their “obligation” to give gifts to others. Parents lie to their children, telling them that Santa Claus will come through the chimney to bring Christmas presents, and that if they don’t behave, Santa Claus won’t bring them presents at all.

We **know** what the world says about Christmas, but what does **God** have to say about this celebration? Although the word “Christmas” is never used in the Bible, are there

guidelines and principles on how to look at this issue? Absolutely! Let’s see.

DON’T MIX PAGAN CUSTOMS WITH THE WORSHIP OF GOD!

Do you know that you can be sincere in your worship of God and Christ, and still worship in vain? Christ clearly said in Matt. 15:7-9: “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. *And in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*’” Who can doubt that the celebration of Christmas and the observance of its customs are pursuant to the commandments of men? Nowhere in the Bible are we told to do these things! And Christ said, this kind of religious worship which is based on men’s traditions is “in vain”—it is useless. Rather, *we are expressly told how to worship God.*

Note what God told Israel about *how to* and *how not to* worship Him as recorded in Deut. 12:29-32: “When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you *do not inquire after*

their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' **You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way;** for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods... *Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*"

The celebration of Christmas and of Christ's birth in general is in **clear violation** of the above-stated command. The very *date* and *festival* of Christmas were adopted from paganism, and so were its customs. Professing Christians celebrating Christmas today may think that they do it to honor and worship God—but they repeat exactly the rites that pagans used to serve their gods—and God **thunders** at us: "**You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way!!!!**" They *added* Christmas celebrations to their worship, while *taking away* the observance of God's true annual Holy Days.

Notice the comments of the *Ryrie Study Bible* regarding the passage in Deut. 12:30: "The Israelites *were not even to inquire* about the worship of the Canaanites, lest they be tempted to **incorporate aspects of it into their worship of God.**"

Who can honestly deny that this is exactly what happened in regard to Christmas celebrations? Orthodox Christianity adopted or incorporated

pagan holidays such as Christmas and Easter, rather than suppressing them. They appropriated pagan customs to the worship of Jesus Christ, rather than rejecting and overthrowing them. This practice is called "syncretism" and is strongly prohibited in Scripture. God tells us *not* to engage in it, but to rid ourselves from everything pagan.

Notice 2 Cor. 6:14-17: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?... **And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?** For you are the temple of the living God... Therefore, *come out from among them and be separate*, says the Lord. Do not touch what is [spiritually] unclean, and I will receive you."

Christmas Cakes Condemned in Scripture

For example, note God's condemnation of a religious custom that ancient Israel and Judah were engaged in, as recorded in Jer. 7:16-18: "Therefore, do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you. Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the

women knead dough, *to make cakes for the queen of heaven*; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger.”

The “Queen of Heaven” has been identified as the Assyro-Babylonian goddess Ishtar or Istar (*Ryrie Study Bible*; *Rienecker’s Lexikon zur Bibel*, both commenting on Jer. 7:18), from which the name “Easter” is derived. Actually, Ishtar is just another name of Semiramis, the mother/wife of Nimrod. Although primarily a reference to Easter customs, Jer. 7:18 does also include the baking of Christmas cakes. As we saw earlier, that custom was in place long before any “Christian” celebration of Christmas, and it was done to honor pagan deities.

Christmas Tree Condemned in Scripture

Let’s also notice Jer. 10:2-5: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not learn the way [Note in the Lamsa Bible: “Religion”] of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; *for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they*

must be carried, because they cannot go themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good.”

Here we find a description of the Christmas tree. Some have said, however, that Jer. 10 only talks about a wooden idol that was carved out of a tree, but that it does not refer to decorating a Christmas tree per se. Remember, though, that the pagans believed that their gods—Attis, Osiris, Dionysus—*lived as tree spirits in pine trees*. They believed that their gods actually *changed into those trees*, and they *carried* these sacred trees to a certain place of worship, *decorated* them, and *adored them as deities*.

Jer. 10 condemns any kind of religious worship that includes the decoration of a pine tree or a “green tree” (1 Kings 14:23), as well as the religious doctrines associated with such customs. Lamsa continues Jer. 10:8 as follows: “But altogether the vain doctrines of wooden image worship shall be utterly destroyed and consumed.”

Some say they don’t worship the Christmas tree, and that it’s, therefore, all right to decorate a pine tree at Christmas time. However, that is not the way God looks at it. When the Israelites made a golden calf, they argued in a similar fashion. Exodus 32:1-4 records: “Now when the people saw that Moses delayed

coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, ‘Come, make us gods [Margin: ‘Or a god’] that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, ‘*This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!*’ So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a *feast to the Lord.*’”

The Israelites used the pagan idol of an animal for the worship of God. They did not believe that God looked like a calf, but they used it as a cultic element in their worship of God, thinking that it somehow represented God. They thought they were worshipping God—after all, they were celebrating a *feast to the Lord*—and, that their use of a pagan cult object in that worship was acceptable to God. The same can be said about the Christmas tree as

described in Jeremiah 10. This tree with its gold, silver and blue and purple decorations (Jer. 10:9)—today, we could add “silver tinsel”—was used as a cultic means or object to worship God. But, that is exactly what God condemns.

When the Israelites, at the time of Moses, built the golden calf, they invented their own cultic objects and means of worship, as well as the time for their religious festival. They had obviously adopted these worship rites from their stay in pagan Egypt. But, God did not accept that kind of worship, nor does He do so today. In His eyes, they corrupted themselves (Ex. 32:7) and they worshipped *the calf*, not God (Ex. 32: 8). God is a jealous God. He insists that He be worshipped in the way that He has set before us. Otherwise, our worship will not be accepted—it will be useless and in vain (Mark 7:5-9, 13).

COULD CHRIST HAVE BEEN BORN IN DECEMBER?

We have established many facts that show that the festival we call “Christmas” was actually being celebrated by various cultures for thousands of years before the birth of Jesus Christ. We have read quotes from various publications that boldly present the pagan roots of Christmas, along with related customs, which are totally *unrelated* to Christ. But,

even if it were acceptable to celebrate Christ's birthday [which it is not], do we know *when* He was born?

Again, we will quote from Professor J.M. Golby, the British historian who co-authored the book entitled, "*The Making of the Modern Christmas*." In the aforementioned television interview in 1991, he made the following insightful comments and observations regarding the origin of Christmas and its customs:

"The Christian church has always been very clever in incorporating other practices and going along with things and then turning them towards Christianity. And in pagan times you had midwinter festivals, and you had religious festivals which were pagan and very much associated with things like the going down of the sun. And during winter it was going down—would it ever return? And so you had a day in which you celebrated the sun. And the Mithraic religion, which was a very important religion in the later Roman Empire, had a particular day that celebrated this. And it so happens that it coincides with December 25th, which the Christian church then adopted as the day of Christ's birth... There is nothing in the gospels to show that Christ was born on the 25th of December. In fact, it's clear that he wouldn't have been. There wouldn't have

been shepherds out in the fields. It's just the wrong time of year..."

In addition to the fact that shepherds would not have been in the fields on December 25, there is another reason why Christ *could not have been born* around December 25. Dr. Cunningham Geikie discusses this additional reason in *Holy-Days and Holidays*, in the article, "*Christmas at Bethlehem*." He writes: "The twenty-fifth day of December... has little in its favor [for the date of the nativity of Christ] *beyond the fact that it was the day on which, in antiquity, the return of the sun from its winter absence was kept...* It could hardly have been at that season, however, for such a time would surely not have been chosen by the authorities **for a public enrollment**, which necessitated the population's traveling from all parts to their natal districts, storm and rain making journeys both unsafe and unpleasant in winter..."

The fact that shepherds were living out in the fields (cp. Luke 2:8) and that a public enrollment was conducted at the time of Christ's birth (cp. Luke 2:1-7) *clearly proves* that Christ could not have been born anywhere near December 25. Sheep were never in the field during the winter months. From the middle of October until the middle of March, the sheep would be kept

inside, in stables or barns. During that time, there was too much rain, wind and even frost and snow.

The newspaper *Wynne Progress* published an article on December 21, 1967, entitled, “*The Christmas Story*,” in which it pointed out numerous discrepancies between the biblical record and Christmas traditions. It stated, “**As for the date of December 25, that was chosen by the church during the fourth Century A.D....** The choice seems to have been dictated... by a desire to Christianize the Roman revel that marked the winter solstice. *The biblical evidence plainly indicates that Jesus was born during the late summer or early fall.* That is the time of year when Palestinian shepherds take their flocks into the field to graze at night.”

Check any chart of the Israelite year. It will show that the seventh month, the month of *Tishri*, in September/October, ends with the *beginning of the rainy season*. During the eighth month, the month of *Marcheshwan*, in October/November, the weather is “rainy.”

The ninth month, *Chislew*, in November/December, marks the *beginning of winter, with rain and snow*. Christ made it clear that a flight of His Church had better not take place “in winter,” Matt. 24: 20, as this would be very unpleasant, due to

the severe weather conditions. Song of Solomon 2:11 reads: “The winter is past, *the rain is gone.*” Note also Ezra 10:9, 13: “It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people [in Jerusalem were] trembling... because of the *heavy rain*... ‘But there are many people; *it is the season of the heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside.*’”

Finally, the tenth month, *Tebeth*, in December/January, is designated as the “**coldest month of the year, with hail and snow.**” There is no way that Christ could have been born at the end of December, while a public enrollment was going on, and while shepherds and sheep were staying over night in the field. Even if it did not snow at that time, the cold weather and the rain would have made it impossible for both shepherds and sheep to be in the field at night. Further, the Roman authorities would not have chosen that time of year for a public enrollment. Rather than having been born in the winter, it is most likely, as was pointed out before, that Christ was born in late summer or early autumn.

But then—Christ nowhere taught that we should even celebrate His birth—and most certainly not at Christmas time—and most emphatically not with pagan customs, rites and concepts.

DON'T ADD TO OR TAKE AWAY FROM GOD'S WORD!

Moses reminded ancient Israel of a timeless principle when it comes to true worship. We read in Deut. 4:1-2: "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving to you. **You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it**, that you may keep the *commandments of the Lord your God* which I command you." (Cp. Deut. 12:32, Rev. 22:18&19).

We find the same admonition in Proverbs 30:5-6: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. **Do not add to His words**, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."

The entire "Christmas story" is a lie and a deception, created by men under the influence of Satan, who is the father of lies (John 8:43-45). So if we contend that Christmas is a festival that honors God, then we *add* to God's Word, which has *nothing to say* about the celebration of Christmas. God will rebuke us, and we will be found "liars," since we have misrepresented God.

Let's also note how the apostle Paul approached the Christians in Corinth. Remember, that the Corinthians had been involved, prior

to their conversion, with all kinds of pagan practices, including worship of a special pine tree. Paul was undoubtedly aware of that. And so he tells them in 1 Cor. 4:6: "Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, '**Do not go beyond what is written.**'" (NIV)

A similar reminder is recorded in the second letter of John. He states in verse 9: "**For if you wander beyond the teaching of Christ, you will leave God behind**; while if you are loyal to Christ's teachings, you will have God too." (Living Bible).

Those who do celebrate Christmas "go **beyond** what is written," and "wander **beyond** the teaching of Christ," thereby leaving "God behind."

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

We have laid before you the *true* origins of Christmas and its customs, and we have shown from the Bible that *God* condemns Christmas celebrations. Knowing this, ask yourself, "Should I celebrate Christmas?" We feel the answer is obvious. The decision, however, is yours to make (Deut. 30:15-16, 19-20). You have heard the conclusion of the matter (Eccl. 12:13). We challenge you to act on it.

United States

Church of the Eternal God
PO Box 270519
San Diego, CA 92198

Canada

Church of God, ACF
Box 1480
Summerland B.C V0H 1Z0

United Kingdom

Global Church of God
PO Box 2111
Derby DE1 1ZR

Belgium

Le Siecle A Venir
Allee du Grand Cheniat, 30
B-6280 Loverval

Philippines

Church of the Eternal God
142 Nagimit St., Nova Tierra Village
Lanang
8000 Davao City