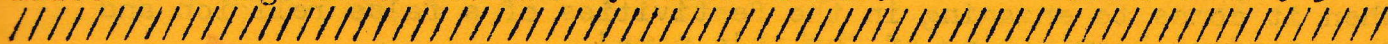


THE CONTENDER

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THE OBSERVING OF CHRISTMAS (PART I)

"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." (Gal. 4:9-11)

We are nearing that time of year when people will enter into a frenzy of buying and selling and merrymaking and getting into the spirit of "Christ-mas". As usual too, brethren may make a study of the pagan Catholic origin of this day and the Catholic-Protestant doctrine of its celebration. But near the end of many of these articles you may find the usual line telling us that "we" do not attach any religious significance to it. In other words "we" do not want to miss out on the fun so "we" go ahead and do it while keeping a strick mental reservation that it is not Christ's birthday. The rest of the world will not know that "we" are a peculiar people (Tit. 2:14) when "we" trim a tree, decorate the house, send cards, exchange gifts, and play Santa Claus.

But just wait until "we" get into the pulpit on Lord's day morning. "We" will tell "them" how terrible it is to cause a little one to stumble (Matt. 18:6) and how that "we" would even abstain from meat to avoid such a dread possibility (I Cor. 8:12-13). "We" will denounce the Catholic mass; "we" will decry the Protestant practices; and "we" will feel sorry for the poor ignorant heathen. But "we" will go home and join all of them in their celebrations. The Psalmist declared:

"Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." (Ps. 119:128)

Many brethren will quote this scripture and claim that they feel the same way. Yet they will defend and practice (or give all the appearance of practicing) a way that is admittedly false. However, a person does not indulge in, cleave to, nor defend that which he hates. Anyone who hates the false doctrine unalterably affixed to Dec. 25th will make sure nobody confuses him with those who teach and practice that doctrine. He will shun every appearance of evil. (I Thess. 5:22)

Of course, many brethren have discovered a new way by which they can engage in this pagan-Catholic festival without too much damage to their conscience. They simply call it a "national holiday" or "civil holiday". This is supposed to make it harmless and wholesome. But all national and civil holidays are in observance of something. Wonder what this "civil holiday" is in observance of? This must be the only national holiday ever heard of which celebrates nothing!

We marvel at the naivete of brethren who can be so perceptive and penetrating in studies of subjects like: instrumental music, weekly communion, benevolence, and evangelism, but think that a patently religious holiday can be made non-religious by just calling it something else. Or by calling it what it is while pretending it is something else.

Table with 2 columns: Service Name and Time. Includes 'ORDER OF SERVICES', 'Lord's Day: 10:00 a.m. Worship', '7:30 p.m. Worship', and 'Thursday: 7:30 p.m. Bible Study'.

Ask most of our brethren why they do not have a crap table in their living room...not for gambling but just for fun. Why would they not have a bar with seltzer water and whiskey bottles containing soda pop and syrup. Why would a gospel preacher refuse to wear the clerical garb of a Catholic priest in a "non-religious way"? Doubtless, they would soon be saying, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph. 5:11) "See then that ye

walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." (Eph. 5:11) "He that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds." (II Jn. 11) Yet brethren who would shun to give the appearance of a gambler, drunkard, or a catholic priest, have no compunction of conscience when it comes to engaging in the festivities of a false religion and the attendant besmirching of Christ's name!

Any member of the Lord's body who is able to recognize that Christ is glorified in the name Christian (I Pet. 4:16) should also be able to recognize that Christ's name is defiled and debased in the use of the term "Christmas". "Christ-mas" is only another in a long line of celebrations of the abominable Catholic mass at certain times and for certain persons, such as "Candle-mass", "Martinmass", "Michaelmass" etc. The very term "Christmas" should be distasteful and abhorrant to those who love Christ. The Lord pleadingly calls, "Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." (Rev. 18:4)

When early Christians observed religiously holy days, Paul admonished them. (Gal. 4:10-11) He further told the Colossians, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day... Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not, taste not, handle not, which are all to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2)

At this time of year all Christians might well soberly read again the words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians when he instructs them that they were not to be tied up with heathen and idolators nor with their ordinances and practices; but were to be separate from them. (II Cor. 6:14-18)

"Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." (Is. 52:11)

--Opening The Scriptures--

THE CHANGING IMAGE: Not many years ago gospel preachers acknowledged the Pagan-Catholic origin of "Christmas". All felt repugnance to the mockery of honoring Christ by the traditions of men. "Christmas" was mentioned in bulletins and sermons for the sole purpose of exposing it as a religious farce and warning people not to have anything to do with it. Then the change began. As in most digressive changes it was a gradual one. At first preachers just omitted their customary expose, then some started hinting at the "true spirit of Christmas" and now some go as far as reproving us for "taking Christ out of Christmas". How does your preacher stand? Note below:

1. "Several hundred years ago there lived a patron saint, Saint Nicholas who in his lifetime was bishop of Myra in Asia Minor. An old legend tells us that the kindly St. Nicholas unintentionally originated the custom of hanging stockings by the fire at Christmas. From that kindly deed of the good bishop has grown the custom of hanging up stockings at Christmas time." (Dallas Texas bulletin)

2. "THE ELDERS": "MAY THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS BE DEEPER, AS IT COMES TO YOU THIS YEAR--A BERRY CHRISTMAS AND A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR." (Big Springs, Texas bulletin)

3. "Christmas, the birth of the Saviour, is the greatest event, the most joyful sound, the most perfect gift ever conceived." (Teenage Christian p. 9) Page 44 continues: "If Santa has become commercial, it's not because either St. Nicholas or Father Christmas took Christ out of Christmas. No, we can't blame anybody but ourselves for that, and since it's up to you and I who re-enact the ancient role, it's up to us to make Jesus the central figure"

So you see brethren its not really a big step from cessation of opposition...to silence...to open promotion of doctrines of devils. What will you be doing around the 25th of December?