

## **Christ-Mass: Catholic-Paganism**

**"Learn not the way of the heathen ... for the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest ... they deck it with silver and gold"—Jeremiah 10:2-4.**

THE teachings of Scripture are directed toward developing an intense desire for that which is better, more powerful, stronger, holier, closer to divine principle and standard; toward the arousing of godly and spiritual yearnings that find their satisfaction and peace only in a constant upward effort toward conformity with the Perfect Example: off with the Old Man, on with the New.

The glorious struggle of life must not be viewed as an unhappy, burdensome, stoical battle against what we really desire. The secret is rather a gradual, joyful education and training of the inclinations toward BETTER things; an opening up of our natural, dark, ignorant minds to divine Love and Light and Holiness —

“Yet show I unto you a MORE EXCELLENT WAY” (1 Cor. 12:31).

“Overcome evil WITH GOOD” (Rom. 12:21).

God says to us, ‘Here is a BETTER, a more excellent Way.’ The life in the Truth is a GROWTH: a movement ever forward and upward; a progressive advancement toward greater light and fuller understanding. God desires us to want to get as close as possible to Him, and as far as possible away from the customs of the world: especially the superstitious and ‘religious’ customs. If we are not deeply moved with this desire, there is little hope for us attaining the Kingdom.

Baptism is only the first step of a long journey, a bare beginning: to STOP at that point is suicide. We can all surely call to mind passages which emphasize this essential divine principle of growth and development and transformation—

"Be ye TRANSFORMED by the RENEWING of your mind" (Rm. 12:2).

"GROW in grace and knowledge" (2 Peter 3:18).

"Put on the New Man which is renewed in KNOWLEDGE" (Col.3:10).

"GROW UP unto him in ALL things" (Eph.4:15).

"Every man that hath this Hope in him PURIFIETH himself (1 John 3:3).

And so the man of God, through constant application to the enlightening Word, is gradually molded from weakness and ignorance to greater and greater strength of purpose, character and spiritual perception. We dare not remain simple ‘babes.’

Let us approach this subject from this point of view: eager to learn, to ascertain the true FACTS, to consider the holy spiritual principles which bear upon those facts, to put away anything unclean or even doubtful—that we may in all things better pursue the good, acceptable, perfect will of our holy God.

### **MOST HOLIDAYS ARE PAGAN-CATHOLIC**

ONE thing immediately strikes us forcibly, which perhaps we may have never noticed before. That is, that most of the present historical anniversaries that the world keeps are ghostly hangovers from the time when the Mother of Harlots held undisputed sway over ‘times and seasons,’ and the ‘bodies and souls of men,’ AND that many of them were borrowed by the Catholic Church from paganism.

Many, of course, are now only unfamiliar names to most of us: Candlemass, Epiphany, St. Stephen's, Michaelmass, All Saints, Whitsuntide, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Plough Monday, Twelfth Night, and scores of others. But some still remain prominent, as grim relics of an age of gross and incredible superstition.

'SAINT' VALENTINE, for instance, was a romantically-minded bishop of the 3rd century, martyred (at least according to legend) for performing 'christian' marriages against the laws of the Emperor.

'SAINT' PATRICK converted Ireland to Catholicism, and immortalized the shamrock by using it to demonstrate the superstition of the triple unity of the 'Trinity.'

EASTER is named from a pagan Saxon goddess of spring. Many ancient heathen nations revered the egg as the symbol of the beginning of life: it is from Teuton mythology that rabbit-laid eggs appear among Easter superstitions. Dressing up in new clothes for Easter goes back to Constantine's time. The Encyclopedia Britannica says—

"The name Easter is a survival from the old Teutonic mythology. It is derived from Eostre or Ostara, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring ... There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers. The sanctity of special times was an idea absent from the minds of the first Christians."

HALLOWE'EN: Of this, the Encyclopedia Britannica says—

"Hallowe'en long antedates Christianity. History shows that the main celebrations of Hallowe'en were purely Druidical [ancient Britain]. The Druids believed in the calling together of certain wicked souls on Hallowe'en by Saman, lord of death. Upon the Druidic ceremonies were grafted some of the characteristics of the Roman festival in honor of Pomona [pagan Italian goddess of fruits and gardens] held about Nov. 1, in which nuts and apples, representing the winter store of fruits, played an important part."

And this became the Roman Catholic 'All Hallows,' or 'Festival of All Saints,' and was so passed on to a besotted world. The Encyclopedia Americana says—

"Hallowe'en is associated in the popular imagination with the prevalence of supernatural influences, and is clearly a RELIC OF PAGAN TIMES"

CHRIST-MASS, too, we find is fundamentally of 'religious' origin (if superstitious paganism can be called 'religion'), but it is FAR from exclusively, or even principally, 'Christian.' Most of its innumerable customs, traditions and superstitions are of pagan origin. But the mystery-working of the Catholic Church has greatly complicated them by the addition of priests and madonnas and holy waters, and signs of the cross.

We must recognize the whole corrupt Babylonian system as a total unit, all equally part of the same Apostasy. The better we perceive, the less we will desire to have any part in heathen customs. When, by study, we come to perceive fully, we shall be shocked and revolted at the idea of having anything to do with it. We shall find it repulsive. We shall want to get as far away from it as we possibly can. Anyone who GROWS in the Truth must inevitably come to this conviction. The tragedy is that many never grow.

WE FIND, ABOVE ALL THINGS, THAT 'CHRIST-MASS' HAS COME TO US IN ITS PRESENT FORM AS BASICALLY AND PRIMARILY A ROMAN CATHOLIC INSTITUTION. To this great system of iniquity it owes its consolidation, establishment, permanence and popularity.

## THE TIME OF THE YEAR

For the period of the year in which it is held, it is indebted to pagan sources. This time of the year—following the harvest, and centering about the winter solstice (shortest day of year), when the days again began to lengthen—has almost universally been a period of festivity and religious significance in the northern hemisphere ages before the spread of Christianity.

Regarding the date, most commentators agree that from many points of view, no date could be more unlikely to be that of Christ's birth. There is no month in the year in which respectable ecclesiastical authorities have not confidently placed the birth of Jesus. The date is undeniably pagan: even Catholic authorities admit that. The Encyclopedia Britannica (1949, article 'Christmas') says—

"CHRISTMAS (the 'Mass of Christ') ... Clement of Alexandria (about 200 AD) mentions several speculations on the date of Christ's birth, and condemns them as superstitious ... The exact day and year of Christ's birth have never been satisfactorily settled. When the Fathers of the Church in AD 340 decided upon a date to celebrate the event, they wisely (!) chose the day of the Winter Solstice, which was firmly fixed in the minds of the people, and which was their MOST IMPORTANT FESTIVAL."

The Encyclopedia Americana (1946, article 'Christmas') says the same—

"CHRISTMAS, the 'Mass of Christ'... In the 5th century the Western Church ordered it to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the Birth of Sol (the Sun)... Among the German and Celtic tribes, the Winter Solstice was considered an important point of the year, and they held their chief festival of Yule to commemorate the return of the burning-wheel (the sun)." Webster derives 'Yule' from Old Norse Jol, meaning 'Winter Feast.' Schaff-Herzog says: 'The Scandinavian Juul, and the Anglo-Saxon Geol, mean 'wheel,' and refer to the Winter Solstice.'

And Everyman's Encyclopedia says—

"CHRISTMAS (the Mass of Christ) ... It is certain that the time now fixed could not by any possibility have been the period of Jesus' birth. The choice of this season was probably due to the general recognition that the Winter Solstice was the turning point of the year."

## THE PAGAN FOUNDATIONS

It was during the period of the ascendancy of the Roman Empire that Christ-Mass originated. Consequently we find that pagan Roman customs played the major part in fixing its date and characteristics. Its general season, however, was later found to coincide with important religious superstitions of the north European barbarians (who also worshiped the Sun and marked the Solstice), and this too played a large part in its development.

Alfred Hottes, Christmas Fact and Fancy\*—

"The roots of Christmas observance go deeply into the folklore of the Druids, Scandinavians, Egyptians and Romans."

The Chambers Encyclopedia records—

"Many of the beliefs and usages of the Old Germans, and also of the Romans, relating to this period, passed over from heathenism to Christianity."

R. J. Campbell, in The Story of Christmas\*, declares—

"There are not a few popular observances associated with the Christmas season which have NOTHING TO DO with the Christian religion and the birth of Jesus. Most of these

observances are older than Christianity, and some of them—it must be confessed—are NOT OF VERY ELEVATED ORIGIN."

William Auld, in Christmas Traditions\*, notes—

"There are the green garlands, the marvelous trees, the mystic fire and lights, and customs many ... still clustering about the great midwinter feast—all of which descend to us from the PAGAN CHILDHOOD OF THE RACE."

T. G. Crippen, in Christmas and Christmas Lore\*, confesses—

"The Feast of the Nativity rather incorporated than supplanted various heathen festivals. It was therefore only natural that RELICS OF HEATHEN PRACTICE should survive as traditional customs."

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics\* confirms this—

"MOST of the Christian customs [related to Christmas] now prevailing in Europe, or recorded from former times, are HEATHEN customs which have been absorbed or tolerated by the Church. The Christian feast has inherited these customs from two sources: Roman and Teutonic PAGANISM."

And the Catholic Encyclopedia\* (note the source) admits—

"There is NO DOUBT that the original Christian nuclei attracted PAGAN accretions."

The Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia similarly says—

"There were non-Christian elements present in the origin of Christmas. The giving of presents was a Roman custom. The Yule-tree [modern 'Christmas Tree'] and the Yule-log are remnants of old Teutonic NATURE-WORSHIP."

All these sources, be it noted, are friends of Christmas. They are not exposing its corrupt background: they are rather glorying in it. They regard its heathen-Catholic origin as a delightful and intriguing asset. We find exactly the same picture in standard, independent reference books. The Encyclopedia Britannica says—

"Many current customs date back to pre-Christian origins: among them are Christmas decorations. The Romans ornamented their temples and homes with green boughs and flowers for the Saturnalia [Dec. 17-23] ... The Druids gathered mistletoe and hung it in their homes; the Saxons used holly and ivy."

And Everyman's Encyclopedia declares—

"The practice of decorating churches is pagan in its origin."

And this is from the Encyclopedia Americana—

"The holly, the mistletoe, the Yule log and the wassail bowl are relics of pre-Christian times ... The Christmas tree has been traced back to the Romans."

\*All asterisked books were obtained from the Public Library.

#### ORIGINALLY BABYLONIAN

Alexander Hislop, in his monumental Two Babylons, goes even further back—

"The Christmas-tree, now so common among us, was equally common in pagan Rome and pagan Egypt ... The festivals of the Roman Church are innumerable, but five of the most important may be singled out for elucidation, viz: CHRISTMAS, Lady-day, Easter, the Nativity of St. John, and the Feast of the Assumption. Each and all of these can be proved to be Babylonian.

"It is admitted by the most learned and candid writers of all parties that, within the Christian Church, no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of till the 3rd century, and that not till the 4th century was far advanced did it gain much observance ...

"This tendency on the part of Christians to meet Paganism half-way was very early developed. We find Tertullian, even in his day, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the pagans to their own superstitions. 'By us,' he says, 'the feasts of January, the Brumalia, and the Matronalia are now frequented, gifts are carried to and fro, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar. Oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians.'

"Upright men (continues Hislop) strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts the Apostacy went on till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under pagan superstition ... **THAT CHRISTMAS WAS ORIGINALLY A PAGAN FESTIVAL IS BEYOND ALL DOUBT.**"

#### SATURNALIA: CLIMAX OF ROME'S YEAR

THIS period of the year was one of great festivity for the pagan Romans. First came the celebrated Saturnalia, beginning Dec. 17. This feast of the god Saturn, the Roman deity of seed and sowing, finds much mention in all commentaries on Christ-Mass. One says—

"The Roman Saturnalia was characterized by processions, singing, lighting candles, adorning houses with laurels and green trees, giving presents."

Again from the Religious Encyclopedia—

"The Saturnalia provided the model for most of the merry customs of Christmas. The time was one of general mirth. All classes exchanged gifts, the commonest being candles and dolls. Christmas inherited the general merriment: games, giving of gifts, abundance of sweetmeats, and—as to the more ceremonious elements—the burning of candles."

The Encyclopedia Britannica relates similarly—

"Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedated the Christian period: a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious, and national practices ... The god Saturn's great festival was the Saturnalia. Business, public and private, was at a standstill, schools closed, presents were exchanged, the traditional ones being candles and dolls."

Likewise the Encyclopedia Americana—

"At the commencement of this festival, a great number of candles were lighted in the temple of Saturn ... no business was transacted, schools kept holiday, law courts were closed. Jests and freedom everywhere prevailed, and all ceased from their various occupations."

Campbell, in The Story of Christmas\*, further says—

"The Romans adopted from earlier folk-customs the rituals which appear in their Saturnalia, and which have been **CARRIED OVER INTO THE OBSERVANCE OF MODERN CHRISTMAS**. There was giving of presents, feasting, drinking, and decorating with evergreens."

Auld says again, in his Christmas Traditions\*—

"Much of the spirit of this old Roman festival of the Saturnalia passed into Christmas celebration. The early Puritans, witnessing the jolly antics of grotesque fools (the 'Lords of Merry Disport'), never had any doubt in the matter ... That transient [that is, shallow

and passing] feeling which blossoms at Christmastime OWES AS MUCH TO THE KIND GOD SATURN as to the loving Son of Man ... This is the Christmas, which mixed with a LITTLE, sentimental Christianity, lies so pleasantly in the genial pages of Dickens."

### BUFFOONERY AND BLASPHEMY

A major feature of the pagan Saturnalia festival was the reversal of all order and dignities: a mock turning everything upsidedown. This was carried to great lengths at Christmastime in the Church of the Middle Ages. In England it was customary to appoint a 'Lord of Misrule' or 'Abbot of Unreason' who presided over the blasphemous foolery. The Encyclopedia Britannica says—

"Merrymaking came to have a share in Christmas observance, even while emphasis was on the religious phase ... A Lord of Misrule and his jester directed the revels, and kept them uproarious."

The Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia adds this—

"In England an 'Abbot of Misrule' was chosen in every large household; in Scotland, an 'Abbot of Unreason.' During the term of the festival he was the master of the house."

We discover, with shock and surprise that it was quite customary for even the clergy to let down all barriers of restraint within the Church itself at the Christmas season. Crippen relates (which seems almost unbelievable)—

"At Vespers [the evening prayers], at the end of the Magnificat [hymn of praise to God], the whole service was turned into burlesque. Dice were cast, and black puddings [blood sausage] were eaten, on the altar, ludicrous songs were sung, and old leather was burned as mock incense. In some places an ass was led into the Church, in whose honor a mock hymn was chanted, with a bray for a refrain."

The Encyclopedia Americana confirms this, saying—

"On St. Nicholas' Day, a 'Boy Bishop' was elected, who exercised a burlesque episcopal jurisdiction, and parodied ecclesiastical functions and ceremonies."

Such is the height and stability and value of a religion grounded on sentiment and superstition. Auld adds—

"All through the Middle Ages the two rivers of RIOT and RELIGION flowed together."

### SIGALLARIA AND BRUMALIA

Following the Saturnalia in Rome was the Sigallaria, or Doll Festival, another obvious link with modern Christmas. Then on the great day, Dec. 25 itself, came the Brumalia (from bruma: Shortest day') — the religious observance of the sun-worshippers. This was known also as Natalis Solus Invicti: the 'Birth of the Unconquerable Sun'—the date when the days began again to lengthen. It is significant that the Catholic Encyclopedia itself says—

"The well-known solar feast of Natalis Invicti, celebrated on Dec. 25, has a strong claim for the responsibility of our Christmas date."

On this point, the Encyclopedia America says—

"In the 5th century the Western Church ordered Christmas to be celebrated forever on the day of the old Roman feast of the birth of Sol."

And Everyman's Encyclopedia declares—

"The observance which especially influenced the Christian Church was probably the Roman festival of the Winter Solstice, celebrated on Dec. 25."

Then came the Kalends of January, and finally the Juvenalia (Children's Festival), both of which have contributed their share to the modern Christ-mass. With very odd logic, but typical of the thinking of the flesh, Crippen remarks—

"Surely it was well that all these should be COMBINED IN ONE GREAT CHRISTIAN FEAST, and their ancient significance transferred in the light of the Gospel. Many customs obtained a new lease of life.

"In Egypt, as in Rome, the new festival would coincide with the birthday of the Sun-God. And the northern barbarians would find it practically coincident with their own Yule. It seems to have been the festival of the god Thor."

Again from Auld—

"After the barbarians were Christianized, all the customs and SUPERSTITIONS which had belonged from time immemorable to their own Yuletide began to CLUSTER ABOUT CHRISTMAS. When the season calls up in the mind crackling fires on the hearth, lighted candles, rooms adorned with evergreens, bright berries and flowers, feast and frolic—these are the GENUINE PAGAN ELEMENTS."

#### WHEN THE CATHOLICS INVENTED CHRISTMAS

Regarding the period when Catholicism originated Christmas, the Catholic Encyclopedia says it was NOT among the early festivals of the Church, because Ireneus and Tertullian, at the end of the 2nd century, omit it from their list of feasts. The first evidence of any observance of the birth of Christ (says this same authority) appears about 200 AD in Egypt. It was not earlier than 330 AD that Dec. 25 was chosen by any 'Pope,' and it was not universally accepted till long after that, for the position and authority of the 'Pope' was then still far from established. In the Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, we are told—

"From the beginning of the 4th century, when the restless searchings of the nature and person of Christ drove men's minds into many singular errors, the Eastern Church began to feel the importance of emphasizing the actual birth of Christ by a separate festival ... The date once fixed, Christmas gradually became one of the three great annual festivals of the Church."

And from the Abbott-Conant Dictionary of Religious Knowledge—

"Christmas seems to have first appeared in the Roman Church after the middle of the 4th century. At a somewhat later period it spread into Eastern Asia. It was not received with equal readiness by all the churches. Some denounced it as an innovation ... It was not till the 6th century that anything like unanimity prevailed as to the day to be observed.

"The manner in which this festival came to be observed in the Romish Church, and through it to the other churches, is as follows: In this season of the year, a series of heathen festivals occurred, the celebration of which was in many ways closely interwoven with the whole civil and social life of the Romans.

"These festivals had an import which easily admitted of being spiritualized, and transformed into a Christian sense. First came the Saturnalia, which represented the Golden Age, and abolished for a while the distinction of ranks.

"Then came the custom, peculiar to this season, of making presents, afterwards transferred to the Christmas festival.

"After the Saturnalia came the Festival of Infants [Juvenalia], at which the children were presented with images.

"Next came a festival still more analogous to Christmas, that of the shortest day [Brumalia], the Winter Solstice, the Birthday of the New Sun, about to return once more toward the earth ... Hence the celebration of the Nativity of Christ was transferred to December 25.

"In the Romish Church, Christmas is a very high festival."

The SOLSTICE means (Latin) 'sun standing still': the two points in the year (longest and shortest days) when the sun seems to stop and reverse its inclination (actually due to earth's 22½° inclination).

### HOW THE EARLY CHRISTIANS FELT

Regarding the attitude of early Christians toward such things, Auld says—

"As for the first believers, they had NOT THE SLIGHTEST INTEREST IN ANYTHING OF THE KIND. Hope in the Lord's imminent return from heaven in great power and glory was the flame that fired their devotion."

In the book, The Customs of Mankind\*, we read—

"Christmas was originally a festival of the Winter Solstice. It was customary to hold great feasts in honor of the HEATHEN GODS. The early teachers of Christianity PROHIBITED THESE FESTIVALS as unsuited to the character of Christ. Yet the symbols and customs of the old festivals are adapted to the new, and so we find Christmas patterned with many customs of pagan origin.

"To the mind of the Puritans, Christmas smelled to heaven of idolatry ... The Puritans abolished Christmas as a hateful relic of Popery."

Tertullian—who wrote (says Encyclopedia Britannica) 'in a period when a LAX SPIRIT OF CONFORMITY had seized the churches': about 200 AD—says regarding decorating with evergreens and ceremonial candles—

"Let those who have no Light, light their lamps, let them affix to their posts laurels. YOU [Christians] are the Light of the World, a tree ever green. If you have renounced temples, make not your own gate a temple [by heathen wreaths].

Crippen says—

"At the time of persecution, Christians were detected by NOT decorating their houses at the Saturnalia."

Some conformed to the heathen customs to avoid suspicion, and to appear like their neighbors, so they would not be looked on as odd and different. This practice was strongly condemned by the early church. And Campbell relates—

"There can be no doubt that [some of] the early Christians also frequently shared in the frolics of their heathen neighbors; and the fathers of the Church had considerable difficulty in prevailing on their members to refrain from such unedifying pastimes.

"The early Christians discouraged the use of evergreen decorations in Christian homes and assemblies, because their display had long been associated with heathen festivals. Bishop Martin of Braga forbade the use of all greenery and 'other dangerous Kalend customs'."

Crippen remarks—

"So long as heathenism was in full vigor, the ancient Christians were puritanically jealous of anything that might seem like coquetting with idolatry. But when heathenism was

declining, there was a disposition to adopt its customs. What had been heathenish became rich with Christian (!) symbol."

Note that last statement. Auld too betrays the same perverted outlook—

"The use of evergreens is one of the happy (!) contributions which PAGANISM made to the Christian festival. At first the Church frowned upon this intrusion of paganism into the sacred season. But altogether, the ancient Church was wisely tolerant (!) in her attitude to heathen IDEAS and customs ... hence the curious and interesting MIXTURES of IDEAS—pagan and Christian—which became charmingly (!) entwisted."

After unsuccessfully fighting the adoption of pagan customs, says Campbell—

"The clergy endeavored to transform the heathen revels into amusements which—if not really more spiritual in character—had at least the merit of recognizing the authority of the Church."

The Encyclopedia Britannica confirms this—

"As Christianity spread among the peoples of pagan lands, many of the practices of the Winter Solstice were blended with those of Christianity, because of the liberal ruling of Pope Gregory I and the cooperation of the missionaries."

That is, instead of teaching the converts to abandon their old superstitions, and to start a clean new life solely according to the Way of God, the Church found it more practical and profitable to give the old superstitions new names, and mix Christianity with paganism.

And such was the slow but deadly course by which what was originally the faithful and holy Ecclesia of Christ exchanged purity for pleasure, and the friendship and Way of God for the friendship and ways of the world.

#### REFORMATION . . . THEN DECLENSION

In times of reformation, and attempted return to Bible ways, there have been periodic revulsions against these heathen corruptions, but they have not endured. In 529 AD, the Emperor Justinian decreed that no one should work on the Catholic festival of Christmas. At the Reformation, 1000 years later, the revulsion against the Catholic superstitions was such that laws were made against not working on Christ-mass. Crippen says—

"The leaders of the Reformation in Scotland thought the Roman Church was too bad to be mended. In their view, it must be ended, and a new beginning made strictly on the model of the New Testament.

"Now certainly the New Testament MADE NO MENTION OF ECCLESIASTICAL FESTIVALS. So the new beginning included the sweeping of them all away. On Dec. 26, 1583, the Glasgow Kirk Session put five persons to public penance for keeping the 'superstitious day called YULE'."

The early Puritan settlers of America were of the same mind. Christmas, they declared, 'smelt to heaven of idolatry,' and they abolished it as a 'relic of Popery' [and it certainly is]. In Massachusetts in 1659, a law was passed that—

"Whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas, either by forbearing of labor, feasting, or in any other way, shall be fined five shillings."

In their earlier, sounder days, when they valued the Bible as the Word of God, and were trying to be guided by it, the Presbyterians and Baptists were similarly opposed to these superstitious observances, on the same grounds, but they have long since drifted back to the 'ways of the heathen.' In England in 1644, at a time of respect for the Word, and of revulsion against Catholicism, the observance of Christmas was forbidden by an act of Parliament.

## SANTA CLAUS - CHRISTMAS TREE

THE name 'Santa Claus' is clearly recognizable as derived from the good Bishop 'Saint Nicholas,' patron saint of beggars and thieves. In the Middle Ages, thieves were known as 'clerks of St. Nicholas.' In Europe he travels about in all his bishop's regalia riding a white horse (which he inherited through amalgamation with Scandanavian mythology from the god Wodin, who was engaged in exactly the same activities at that period of the year). His descent down the chimney is traceable to similar habits of the Norse goddess Hertha. Auld writes about St. Nicholas—

"The names and attributes of the mysterious purveyors of gifts disclose a most **CONFUSED MIXTURE OF PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN NOTIONS**. All kinds of bugbears and bogies figure in the European Christmas. By their names they suggest a loose connection with St. Nicholas, but by their activities they betray unmistakable relationship with the weird beings of pagan mythology."

We have seen how the Christmas tree is traced clearly to ancient paganism. Virgil, the Roman poet, speaks of decorating pine trees in honor of Bacchus, the god of drinking and revelry. Hislop connects similar customs with Egyptian cults.

And—in a strange, latter day reversal—pagan Russia has borrowed back the pagan 'Christmas' tree. The Moscow News reports that Moscow alone has 10,000 of such trees. Colored pictures show these 'New Year' trees, with all their tinsel and bright baubles and lights, to be indistinguishable from 'Christmas' trees, except there are no 'Christian' symbols, and the crowning Star at the top is red. And Russia's genial 'Grandfather Frost' associated with these trees, with his jolly face, and bushy white beard, and suit of red: who can distinguish him from St. Nick? He is St. Nick, stripped of his adopted Catholicism, and returned to his pagan origin.

Mistletoe, of course, is well-known as inherited—and introduced into Christmas—from the Druid priesthood of ancient heathen Britain. For centuries the Church forbade its use because of the superstitions attached to it. It was so sacred a talisman that enemies meeting beneath it laid down their arms. (The world still has a relic of this heathen superstition.)

Miscellaneous Christmas superstitions are far too numerous to mention. Campbell, in summing up, comes surprising close to the truth—

"There is really **NOTHING IN COMMON** between the mystery of the Word made flesh for man's salvation, and the orgies of eating and drinking and horseplay associated with the paganism of pre-Christian times, and **PERPETUATED AT THE CHRISTMAS SEASON** in our own as well as earlier generations.

"There's goodwill in both, but one is **CARNAL**, and the other **SPIRITUAL**."

## THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Brethren and sisters, how do we—called out to be holy sons and daughters of the Lord—stand in relation to these confused and corrupt Catholic-Pagan things of the world? Admittedly, it all appeals powerfully to the flesh. It is 'pretty,' it is exciting, it is the popular way of the crowd, it is pleasant to the senses. It is all tinsel, and hoopla, and music, and glistening stars, and twinkling lights. It has everything that attracts the shallow, juvenile, fleshly mind. The Christmas songs and Christmas stories are concocted and executed by consummate actors for the fullest emotional effect.

Doubtless the children of Israel, indulging in the 'pretty' Canaanite religious customs, said to themselves (or in self-excuse to others), 'There really isn't any harm. Of course I do not really mean it in a religious way. It really means nothing to me, and it is all so pretty and pleasant. I

really serve the Lord, but I just like a little fun and relaxation. Why do we have to be so different?'

There is absolutely nothing scriptural about Christ-mass. Nothing like it, or leading to it, or justifying it, is ever mentioned in the Bible, or even in early 'Christian' records. We have seen that it is a 'religious,' blasphemous Catholic-Pagan abomination. Why should holy brethren and sisters of Christ ever want to have anything to do with such things of the Apostacy? Surely we desire holiness!

We cannot really say what part of this fleshly mixture—the Pagan part or the Catholic part—is the more objectionable to God, but either one alone should be enough to keep a child of God from having anything to do with it. In the Revelation, two eternally antagonistic classes appear—

#### BRANDED WITH THE MARK OF THE BEAST

"ALL NATIONS drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication ... By her sorceries were ALL NATIONS deceived" (Rev. 17:2; 18:3, 23).

#### SANCTIFIED WITH THE SEAL OF GOD

"Lo, a Lamb stood on Mt. Sion, and with him 144,000. THESE are they which were NOT defiled with the (apostate) women. These were redeemed from among men, being the Firstfruits unto God, for they are without fault before the throne of God"—Rev. 14:1-4.

To which class will we be found to belong? Let us bear the following verse in mind constantly. This is what we must be continually striving toward in all we do, with all our heart and strength, or we are not of the true People of God. Can we rise to it? We can—anyone can—if they will totally give themselves to love of God—

"God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love ... to the praise of the glory of His grace"—Eph. 1:4-6.

It's a very, very high calling: but there's no peace, joy or satisfaction in anything else.

—Bro.G.V.Growcott,

The Berean Christadelphian, October 1980.

(A similar article was published in 12/60, 12/71, and 12/88, under the title of "The Origins of Christ-Mass: Touch Not the Unclean Thing." This article, as printed above, encompasses all of the information contained in the other with additions added.)