

NEW FACTS on Christmas

Here are NEW facts proving that early Catholics did NOT celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas—that Pope Liberius by 354 A. D. changed the day to December 25th.

by Herman L. Hoeh

NOW, FOR the first time, we are publishing newly discovered, astonishing facts about the introduction of the pagan Christmas celebration into the churches centuries after Christ.

Many of you are already familiar with the historically proved facts about the heathen origin of Christmas which Mr. Armstrong has written.

With more of us to do research, each passing year opens up new facts. These not only substantiate previous conclusions, but also add many more important details that you need to know.

By having the truth, we do not need to be afraid of new investigations. Every piece of new evidence proves more strongly than ever that Jesus was not born on December 25th—that the apostles, the early, true, spirit-filled and guided church did not observe Christmas.

It is a pagan holiday in honor of Sol, the sun-god, and was introduced by apostatizing churches. God calls it an abomination and commands us to quit observing this vain and foolish practice (Jer. 10:2-3).

Churches Fight the Truth!

Thousands of you people are learning for the first time that the holidays which the churches are observing came from paganism and are condemned in the Bible. This truth is becoming so widespread that clever and subtle attacks are being launched against the truth of God. Here is what is happening.

To maintain their sway over the people, popular denominations are publishing articles and books which admit that their pagan, idolatrous customs and holidays came from the sun-worship of ancient Babylon and Egypt! The truth is forcing them to confess it.

The Catholic Church has recently caused the publication of a series of books on each of its major holidays. The title of one book is *4000 Years of Christmas*, by Earl Wendel Count. The very name of this book proves that the Christmas holiday isn't Christian. It was celebrated 2000 years before the birth of Christ in honor of pagan gods! Therefore it was, and is, IDOLATRY!

Even though church leaders are being forced to confess the true origin of their holidays, they refuse to repent—refuse to give them up. They cleverly deceive

the people by saying that God approves these abominations.

But notice what God does say about these holidays and customs by which the heathen served their gods: "Take heed . . . that you do not enquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?'—that I also may do likewise." YOU SHALL NOT DO SO TO THE ETERNAL YOUR GOD; FOR EVERY ABOMINABLE THING WHICH THE ETERNAL HATES THEY HAVE DONE FOR THEIR GODS." (Deut. 12:30-31.)

Just like the Jews, the churches today reject the commandment of God so they can hold the traditions of men.

Jesus commands us not to worship him by holidays like Christmas, Easter and a host of others.

Heathen Customs Crept into Christianity

No one knows the exact date on which Jesus was born. It has been hidden because God didn't intend his church to celebrate the birthday of Christ. If you haven't already read the proof that Jesus was not born on December 25th, be sure to send for Mr. Armstrong's free booklet, "The Plain Truth About Christman." You will learn how the pagans, during the days of the early church, were celebrating this very day in honor of Sol, the sun-god. The Romans called December 25 the *Brumalia* or birthday of the new-sun after the winter solstice.

Since Christmas isn't the birthday of Jesus and was not observed by the early true Christians, how did it get into the churches?

Following the death of the apostle Paul, false teachers began to lead away many Christians from the truth. Paul knew this would happen. He wrote Timothy: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Notice it. Christians would reject the truth and begin to follow myths. Instead of continuing to observe the festivals of God as the first Christians did, the apostatizing majority began to invent their own traditions.

In 200 A. D., Clement of Alexandria wrote that many were speculating about

Christ's birthdate. In the western and especially the eastern parts of the Roman Empire, many sects were beginning to follow a false tradition that Jesus was baptized on January 6—one of the fables against which Paul warned (2 Timothy 4:4). They also taught that Jesus was born on January 6th—another fable.

Even the church at Rome for nearly two centuries observed the date of Christ's birth and baptism as January 6th. This festival was called Epiphany. (Bingham's *Antiquities*, Book xx, chapter iv.)

This tradition about the birth of Christ was not universally accepted. In 245 A. D., Origen, like numerous other Catholic leaders, still repudiated the idea of observing any day as Christ's birthday. The traditional date of January 6 did not gain a very strong foothold in the western parts of the Roman Empire because certain heretical sects were following the same tradition.

Then, how did December 25th finally become the traditional date of Christ's birth?

How Christmas Tradition Developed

Bishops in the West, and especially at Rome, saw that by allowing converts to retain their pagan holidays, they could induce thousands to enter the church and "embrace" Catholicism. The noted Catholic writer Tertullian lamented this trend when he said in 230 A. D.:

"By us who are strangers to Sabbaths, and new moons, and (GOD'S) festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the *Brumalia* (December 25), the Matronalia, are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year's day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar" (from *De Idolatria*, Ch. 14).

In less than two centuries after Christ's death, professing Christians were returning to their former pagan practices—to December 25, the birthday of Sol the sun-god. Here is one of the earliest indications that Christians were transforming the birthday of the physical Jesus into the birthday of the Son of God.

This idolatrous adoption of heathen festival proceeded very slowly UNTIL CATHOLICISM BECAME THE STATE RE-

LIGION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE UNDER EMPEROR CONSTANTINE.

Almost immediately, the pagans flocked to the churches *bringing their customs with them*. Within forty years the celebration of the 25th of December became so widespread that a *sudden* change took place in Rome.

The last record of Pope Liberius' celebration of the nativity on January 6 occurred in 353 A. D. In the very next year he celebrated it on December 25! This is fully explained in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, by James Hastings, article "Christmas." Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that Christmas celebrations *officially* began by this year—354 A. D.

Christmas Celebration Spreads Rapidly

From Rome in the West, the celebration of Christmas quickly engulfed the whole empire. But many preachers in the East still clung to January 6 as the traditional nativity. As late as 373 Ephraim Syrus said: "On the tenth day (of March) was His Conception and on the sixth day (of January) was His Nativity" (*Assemani Bibl. Or.* ii. 169).

Here is what Chrysostom said about Christmas in his *Homily on the Birth of Christ*, written in Antioch about 380 A. D.: "It is *not yet ten years since this day was made known to us*."

Christmas didn't come from the apostles. It came to Antioch, the city where the Paul preached, *three hundred years after the apostle died!* It came from an apostate Rome, not from Jesus Christ. Christmas came from paganism, not from the Bible.

Notice what Chrysostom continues to say about Christmas: "I know well that many even yet dispute with one another about it, some finding fault with it and others defending it." He admitted it was "new, in that it has recently been made known to us . . ."

The bishops at Rome claimed to have accurate knowledge of Christ's birth because they possessed the census papers of Jesus' family. Just why they kept this hidden for over three centuries they never say.

They forged many records in an effort to show that preceding popes celebrated Christmas on December 25. If this were really true, they would not have needed to forge these spurious records.

The celebration of Christmas in Constantinople, near where Paul preached in Asia Minor, first took place between 378 and 381. And if this isn't enough evidence against the apostolic origin of Christmas, there is proof that December 25 was not celebrated in Jerusalem before 385. Yet Jerusalem was the site of

the mother church in the very beginning.

Origin of Mistletoe, Yulelog and Santa Claus

Christmas became a universal practice in all but the Armenian Church by the fifth century. Hundreds of traditions and customs began to develop about Christmas in every land. In the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, you can read this about Christmas: "Yet the festival rapidly gained acceptance and became at last so firmly established that *even the Protestant revolution of the sixteenth century* was not able to dislodge it."

Protestants didn't get Christmas from the Bible. They got it from their mother church—Rome; and Rome got it from pagan sun-worship!

And where do you suppose the story of Santa Claus originated? And what about hanging mistletoe in the doorway at Christmas time? Where did the holly-wreath, the Yulelog, and lighting of fires and candles come from?

And what about the Christmas tree? Is it mentioned in the Bible? Yes indeed. It is mentioned and *condemned*.

You can read the *truth* about these customs—what God says about them—if you write immediately for the FREE booklet "The Plain Truth About Christmas." Be sure to write your letters immediately after reading this article.

Even though Christmas observance does come from paganism, "Surely giving gifts is scriptural?" Didn't the wise men give gifts?

Does Bible Teach Exchanging Gifts?

Although most people admit Christmas came from paganism when confronted with the facts, they assume that giving gifts to relatives is in the Bible. Just where did the Christmas SHOPPING season really originate?

Here's a surprise! "The custom of giving presents was a feature of the Romans during their winter festival the Saturnalia," says John Then, in his book, *Christmas*, page 91. "... Christians made presents to their children on Christmas morning, *under the pretense* that they were the gift of the Christ child . . . this age-old custom can be traced to the dawn of history."

Did trading gifts at Christmas come from Scripture? No! It came from pagan tradition and was turned into a pretense—a deception to fool little children. And millions are practicing this *lie* today.

Millions of sincere, deceived people spend precious dollars to give gifts to *friends* on a day that doesn't honor Christ. How silly to claim to honor Christ, when honoring *one another* on a day that isn't His birthday at all.

The wise men didn't give gifts to one another! Notice what they did: "Then, opening their treasures, they offered HIM gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matt. 2:1-11).

WHY were the wise men giving gifts to the Christ child? Was this his birthday? No! Jesus had been born days before! Then why did they give gifts *to* HIM? Because Jesus was born "KING of the Jews."

"The people of the east never approach the presence of kings and great personages, without a *present* in their hands," says Adam Clarke about Matthew 2:11.

The wise men were not coming on Jesus' birthday as an example for us. Instead they came to worship Jesus and present Him gifts because he was KING.

HOW to Honor Christ

Most people are dishonoring—yes, *robbing* Christ at every Christmas season and they don't know it! While spending every available dime on gifts for friends and relatives in this *commercialized* season, they are forgetting Christ. They take—steal—the very money that belongs to Him.

Notice what Malachi says in his prophecy for today about modern Israel—the United States and the other democracies; "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How are we robbing thee?' *In your tithes and offerings*. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you" (Malachi 3:6-12).

Many of you have been robbing God of His tithes and offerings by spending *God's own money* in Christmas gifts instead of giving Him what is due. Our people have turned aside from Him, our hearts have gone after pagan festivals—Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter.

The way to return to God and give Him your heart is to *pay* your tithes and offerings. Why? "For where your treasure is, *there* will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). You are not truly converted until your *WHOLE* heart is yielded to God. The only way to give your *whole* heart to Him is to let Him rule your pocketbook—to pay Him the tithes and offerings that belong to Him.

Today, under the New Covenant, God commands that His tithes go to His work for the preaching of the true gospel to all the world. This year, instead of celebrating a pagan holiday, why not give your gifts to Christ for His work? That is how you can really honor Him.

And be sure to send for your free copy of "The Plain Truth About Christmas." Instead of trading gifts this year, give your money to Christ and send for free copies of this booklet for your friends so they will understand.