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THE Monarch

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I greatly appreciate all the nice letters of encouragement from all my friends. May the Christmas season and always find you saying as Mary did, "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit doth rejoice in God my savior."

Merry Christmas
David Ebaugh

HAVE A MERRY MERRY CHRISTMAS!

We're planning to enjoy Christmas thoroughly this year. You may be aware there are many Christians who, for a variety of reasons, refuse to celebrate the holiday. We respect their decision to do so but after studying its origins and its meaning we have decided it is good and wholesome to observe the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25th and to have great joy doing it.

SOME CHRISTIANS ARE MAD AT CHRISTMAS

MAD AT CHRISTMAS?



We've enjoyed tracing its celebration from the beginning to present day and we think that anyone who does so will find himself (or herself) even more impressed by the day and what it represents. Actually the birth of Christ wasn't officially celebrated by the church until the middle of the fourth century and the holiday was not lawful in Massachusetts until as recently as 1856. One of the biggest complaints about Christmas is its supposed pagan origin, another is that Jesus was not born on December 25th. If we give it up because we believed it to be pagan in or-



PROPHETS AT CHRISTMAS ..

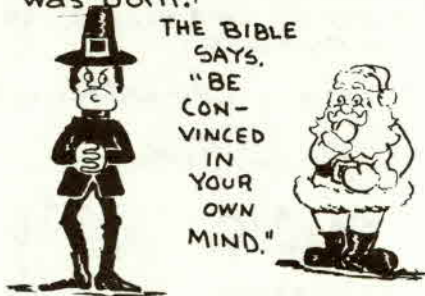
"This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against." The old prophet Simeon made this prophecy during the Christmas season in regard to our infant savior Jesus. On the same line of falling and rising, the prophet Jeremiah was told to "root out, pull down, destroy and throw down" before planting and building.

Luther was in a position of "throwing down" when he wrote his 95 thesis.

In my own ministry I have discovered a similar pattern. Naturally, as a result of this, I have been spoken against. In a sense the ministry of the Monarch paper has been to build and plant. I enjoy it most because it builds not destroys. On January 1st I will start my tenth year of full time ministry, living by faith. It may be that this next year our God will have me do more planting and building.

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igen we would have to give up everything from democracy to throwing rice at weddings. And it seems there is no real way to tell what day Jesus was born.



THE BIBLE SAYS, "BE CONVINCED IN YOUR OWN MIND."

Romans 14:5 reads, "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in HIS OWN MIND. 'He who observes the day observes it for the Lord...' Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this - not to put an obstacle or stumbling block in a brother's way."

Now this passage was written long before the observance of Christmas but the principle holds true for any day. If you want to celebrate - do; if you don't - don't. But be fully convinced in your own mind and don't judge others for their inner convictions.

While we're talking about celebrating and having a joyous time remember that at the wedding feast in Cana Jesus added to the joy of the occasion by providing wine for the guests after that provided by the host had run out.

So much for our aside. We personally regard Christmas as the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and celebrate it as such, with the effort to bring peace and good will to all men. Of course this should be an every day occurrence but a season of special rejoicing is not necessarily a bad thing.



Winter is a dark and dreary time and men have had winter festivals since the beginning of recorded history. December 25th is about the date of the winter solstice. It is a time when we begin to look forward to spring. The sun is just beginning its "rebirth." Man realized this early in history and celebrated it accordingly.



HOW DID CHRISTMAS START?

As we said earlier the Church did not celebrate Jesus' birthday until the middle of the fourth century. Christianity was made the state religion of the Roman Empire at this time. Persecution was over; the tables were turning. There were many Romans who were loyal to the Persian God Mithras. Mithraism was a cult that had many parallels to Christianity and was quite popular at this time. The birth of Mithras was celebrated on December 25th. This was also the day the birth of the Unconquered Sun was observed. Added to this the Jews had one of their most popular feasts, the Feast of Dedication of the Temple, commemorating its cleansing after its profanation in the second century B.C. Also the Roman Saturnalia, a feast to the God of Agriculture was celebrated from December 17th through January 1st.

CHURCH COUNCIL 350 A.D.?

BROTHERS, INSTEAD OF DENYING THOSE OF OTHER RELIGIOUS PERSUASIONS THEIR WINTER FESTIVALS LETS START ONE OF OUR OWN, THAT THEY CAN UNDERSTAND AND ENJOY WITH US.



It is possible that the Church Fathers chose December 25th to be celebrated as the day of Jesus' birth in order not to cause undue stress on all the followers of pagan cults who now found themselves a part of the Christian religion. Rather than put a halt to the winter festivals they were replaced with Christmas. Now instead of celebrating the birth of the Unconquered Sun all could be taught to celebrate the birth of the true Son of Righteousness Jesus Christ (Mal. 4:3).

CHURCH COUNCIL 350 A.D.?

I OBJECT! THOSE FEASTS ARE TERRIBLE. WE DON'T WANT TO IDENTIFY THEM WITH OUR WAY OF TRUTH!



Many argue though that the leaders of the Church would not have been anxious to relate Christianity to much of what was considered worst in the pagan cults (the feasts at this time were very raucous and carried to excess). Also, birthdays were not celebrated by Christians or Jews at this time, rather the deaths of saints and martyrs were observed, the reasoning being that at birth no one knew what life would bring but at death a persons life was established. Until this time the death and resurrection of Jesus were the high points of the Christian year.

IS DECEMBER 25 JESUS' BIRTHDAY?

Is the 25th of December the correct day to celebrate the birth of Jesus? The Bible and history both shed very

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

little light on this question. It may be incorrect but it will most likely continue to be observed on this day by most of the world (save our Greek and Armenian friends who celebrate Jan. 6).

By the fourth century some had been observing the event on the following days: Jan. 6, Feb. 2, March 25, April 19, May 20 and Nov. 17 (at this time there were five different systems of reckoning time).

Finally after the matter was investigated by Julius I (Pope or Bishop of Rome from 337-352), December 25th was set as the most probable time. Later authorities set the date at Jan. 1, March 21, March 29, April 9, or Sept. 29. So you see there has never been total agreement as to what day Jesus was really born.

The 25th of December has been defended in a number of ways. Shortly after this date was established the following three reasons were presented in a sermon at Antioch by the archbishop of Constantinople

1. The festival spread so rapidly it must be true.
2. It was given to the world by those living in Rome who had access to the public books in which the census in Luke is mentioned (L. 2:1).
3. The date could be deduced from the day Zacharias, as High Priest made his annual entrance into the Holy of Holies.

(The trouble with this last line of reasoning is that Zacharias was not the High Priest and therefore the exact day of his entry into the temple cannot be known)

The birth of Christ was also tied to creation. Through a rational(?) line of reasoning it was decided that God created the

world during the month of December. The reasoning goes that if the physical light of the world was created at this time then at this time the spiritual light of the world must also have been brought to man

The stories of the origin of the Christmas Holiday itself and the origin of many of the traditions that go along with it are fascinating. Many of the customs, though claimed to be pagan in origin, can be traced to Jewish tradition, from the bringing in and decorating of goodly trees (Lev. 23:40) to the exchanging of gifts (Esther 9:22).

We haven't attempted in this article to prove or disprove that Jesus was born on the 25th of December, nor have we attempted to protect the day from pagan influence. We have tried to give you a little enlightenment about its origin and we hope we've encouraged you to feel free to rejoice with us this holiday season.

Because of the facts about Christmas and the many legitimate questions about its authenticity there have been times in history when the Holiday was outlawed by the Church. The results were disastrous. The Puritans did it in England in 1642, causing riots in the streets and imprisonment of pastors and whole congregations who decided they would celebrate anyhow.

We believe the day is here to stay and we hope you can all enter into the joy and enjoyment of it fully.

Unfortunately it is usually the Christians who are seeking the hardest to do what is right that find fault with Christmas. There are many questions about the holiday and we haven't covered them all. But because of the questions many look on December 25th with less than joy in their hearts.

The question is not one of truth and error but rather of law and grace. If we were still under law we would have to do everything exactly according to its dictates and of course there would be no Christmas at all. But we are no longer under law but under grace (Rom. 6:14-15, Gal. 5:18 and a myriad of other verses).

To know Jesus came in the flesh as a baby gives us a tremendous hope and we feel that Christmas is mainly a time of hope. If we celebrate his birthday on any other day but December 25th the world would wonder "what in the world" we were doing and it would no doubt be a very poor witness to them.

Rather we should enjoy the freedom Jesus has brought us and celebrate this Christmas to its fullest in a true spirit of love and with full understanding of what we are doing and why we are doing it.

We love you and wish you the merriest of Christmases and the most joyous of New Years.

