

The Holidays We Keep

What Needs to Be Understood

Each year on New Year's Day, a whole new round of holidays begins. The Christmas holiday season completed the round for the previous year, and the cycle starts all over again. Billboards advertise financial help in getting over "the nightmare after Christmas"—paying off credit card debts accrued during the Christmas season. Following New Year's Day, we celebrate Valentine's Day, Easter, Independence Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Year after year, we celebrate these holidays — holidays so tied to the national economy that to stop observing them would lead to serious financial repercussions. Retailers make most of their profits during these holiday seasons—particularly during Halloween and Christmas—which account for the majority of the sales in a given year. Independence Day is strictly an American celebration, while Thanksgiving is both an American and Canadian custom. The rest of the holidays listed above are also celebrated in various other parts of the world, as well as in the United States.

Some of these holidays go back to antiquity. Others are reasonably modern. However, one fact is certain: Not one of the above-mentioned holidays is biblical in origin, or has Bible sanction for its observance. Does this mean these holidays are altogether wrong? Not necessarily. It depends on the reason they were originally established, and whether or not they are condemned in the Bible. The Scriptures tell us that God was concerned about the heathen practices in the land of Canaan. Ancient Israel was warned not to follow these ways.

When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 12:29–32).

After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances (Lev. 18:3).

The question that needs to be asked is: Is it possible that some of the holidays and celebrations we observe today have their origin in the practices God condemns in the Old Testament? Let us take a look at the historical record.

Christmas and New Year's

Since Christmas and the New Year celebration are linked inseparably, they can be lumped together. Christmas is regarded as the festival which honors the birth of Christ, but the question seldom asked is: Why is it held on December 25th? Notice what Alexander Hislop tells us in his work entitled, *The Two Babylons*. Hislop tells us:

Nothing in the Scripture indicates the day or the time of the year Jesus was born. In fact, what is clearly implied in the Scriptures is that Jesus' birth could not have taken place in December. At the time the angels announced His birth, shepherds were feeding their flocks by night in open fields. Coldness sets in from December to February, and it was the custom to bring the flocks in before this time, no later than the end of October. Also, at the time of Jesus' birth, a Roman census was taking place for the purpose of taxation. People from all over Palestine were required to go to the city to which they belonged. Some, no doubt had long distances to travel. Winter would have been a most inappropriate time for such a journey.

Hislop tells us that it is admitted by most learned and candid writers of all parties that the day of our Lord's birth cannot be determined, and that within the Christian Church *no such festival of Christmas was ever heard until the third century, and not until the fourth century did it gain much observance* (Hislop, 92–93).

How, then, did Christmas become accepted as a festival in honor of Christ's birthday? Hislop tells us:

Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era itself, a festival was celebrated among the heathen, at the precise time of the year, in honour of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen, and to swell the number of the nominal adherents to Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ. . . . That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival, is beyond all doubt. That time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin. . . . The very name by which Christmas is popularly known among ourselves—Yule-day—proves at once its Pagan and Babylonian origin. 'Yule' is the Chaldee name for an 'infant' or 'little child;' and as the 25th of December was called by our Pagan Anglo-Saxon ancestors, 'Yule-day' or the 'Child's day,' and the night that preceded it, 'Mother Night,' long before they came in contact with Christianity, that sufficiently proves its real character (Hislop, 93–94).

Hislop goes on in the next few pages to describe the pagan origin of the Christmas tree, why the Yule log is burned on Christmas Eve, and kissing under the mistletoe bough. Then on page 102, he states: "There can be no doubt, then, that the Pagan festival at the winter solstice—in other words, Christmas—was held in honor of the birth of the Babylonian Messiah."

Tertullian, about AD 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency, criticized the Christians of his day for adopting Pagan customs. He said:

By us who are strangers to Sabbaths [i.e., Jewish Sabbaths], and the new moon, and festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the *Brumalia*, and *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; oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians (quoted by Hislop, 93).

Here Tertullian shows us the link between Christmas and the New Year's celebration. Tad Tuleja tells us in his book, *Fabulous Fallacies*, that for centuries non-Christians had celebrated the winter solstice in December as the death and resurrection of the sun (Tuleja, 90). But this was not the origin of the custom. It began with the worship of a mother and son. The mother was Semiramis, the Babylonian queen of heaven, and the son was Tammuz, the "resurrected" Nimrod under the name of Tammuz. From Babylon the worship of mother and son spread to the whole world (Hislop, 20–21). In Egypt, the son of Isis, which was the Egyptian title for the queen of heaven, was born about the time of the winter solstice (Hislop, 93). It should not be difficult to see why the mother and child are so much a part of the Christmas season. In the Roman calendar December 25th was the "birthday of the unconquerable sun." Each year as the sun sank lower and

lower toward the south, pagans awaited its return, and as it started northward they celebrated its rebirth with bonfires and celebrations. This pagan observance was taken over by the Church, and Jesus became the "Sun of Righteousness." Early Christian observances owe much to the feast of *Saturnalia*, which was celebrated with merrymaking and permissiveness. *Saturnalia* made much of the idea that the child was divine (Tuleja, 90–91). *Saturnalia* and *Brumalia* are the pagan Roman celebrations that have been carried over today as Christmas and New Years, but the fact is, they originated in Babylon.

Is there any hint that these practices are denounced in the Bible? Notice Jeremiah 7:18:

The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to *the queen of heaven*, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

So obstinate were these people that when corrected by Jeremiah for their idolatry, they replied:

But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto *the queen of heaven*, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to *the queen of heaven*, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine (Jer. 44:17–18).

Is there any evidence that a decorated tree was in vogue in ancient times? Notice what we read in Jeremiah 10:

Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They [beautify] it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good (Jer. 10:2–5).

Some may argue this Scripture refers to an idol rather than a tree, but no one would argue that a tree is used here in idolatrous worship.

Valentine's Day

Florists find Valentine's day to be one of their best business days. How many realize that centuries before the time of Christ, pagans in Rome kept an idolatrous festival on the 15th of February beginning with the previous evening, in honor of Lupercus—"the hunter of wolves"? We all know Cupid is associated with Valentine's Day, but most of us are unaware of Cupid's background. In *The Two Babylons* we read that Cupid—the boy god—was regarded as the god of the heart, but in addition, he is equipped with bow and arrows (Hislop, 189). Who was Lupercus, the hunter? The Greeks called Lupercus "Pan." The Semites called Pan "Baal." Baal was the Semitic name for Nimrod—the first man to rebel against God in the post-Flood period. He was the mighty hunter before the Lord (Gen. 10:8–9). The symbol of Cupid was a heart. The Babylonian word for "heart" was "bal." Cupid represents Nimrod with the symbols of a heart and a bow and arrow. Another name for Nimrod was Cupid, which means "desire." The man who was first called Valentine in antiquity was Nimrod. Thus, Valentine's Day is a day in honor of

Nimrod. For the interested reader, the above information can be confirmed in classical reference works, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and concordances.

Pope Gelasius outlawed the pagan festival, but replaced it with a similar one that could not blatantly be labeled as pagan. A martyred Christian priest named Valentine was now honored in place of Lupercus. While the pagan festival ceased as such, the romantic aspects of the original celebration did not. While the feast day of St. Valentine was dropped off the Roman Church calendar in 1969, Valentine's Day itself is still celebrated with cards, flowers, and parties.

Easter

Certainly, Easter is one of the most important observances of the Christian calendar. The term Easter, however, is not a Christian name. Hislop tells us in *The Two Babylons* that it is one of the names of Astarte, the queen of heaven. In the Assyrian monuments, she was known as *Ishtar*, and the name was pronounced at Nineveh the same way we pronounce the word Easter today. The Druids brought Baal worship to England and along with Baal came his consort Astarte. The religious solemnities of April, which we call Easter, along with the 40-day Lent period, were directly borrowed from this Babylonian goddess—Astarte (i.e., Ishtar). Early church writers comment that the original festival held by the Church during this season was the Passover, and this was the case as long as the perfection of the "primitive Church" remained inviolate. The Passover was not idolatrous, and it was not preceded by Lent. Early writers admit that the celebration of Easter began as a custom, not by any command from Christ or the apostles (Hislop, 104).

In the pagan tradition, Lent was an essential preliminary to the festival in honor of the death and resurrection of Tammuz. In order to conciliate the pagans, the church amalgamated the pagan festival into a Christian celebration. Originally, the fasting period for the church did not exceed three weeks, but it was later expanded to the six weeks or forty days, the same as the Chaldean Lent. About AD 519, Hormisdas, bishop of Rome, decreed Lent should be solemnly kept before Easter. There was much violence and bloodshed in England before the festival was finally accepted (Hislop, 105–107). The name Easter is also associated with the *Oster* of the Teutons. This most joyous festival of the Teutons was held in the spring in honor of the death of winter, and the birth of the new year. The egg, which was a symbol of fertility and renewed life, associated with the Easter season, goes back to the Egyptians and Persians. Their custom was to color eggs and eat them during their spring festival (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Easter").

Conveniently, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus occurred during this same time of year. The church capitalized upon the similarity of the pagan tradition—the death and resurrection of Tammuz—and applied it to the resurrection and crucifixion of Christ. But who was Tammuz? After Nimrod came to a violent end, his wife Semiramis claimed to have given birth to the reincarnated Nimrod under the name of Tammuz. The lamenting for Tammuz, and the joy expressed at his "resurrection," were a part of the mystery religion Semiramis initiated in order to maintain power. Tammuz was simply another name for Nimrod. Tammuz was the same as Adonis—the famous huntsman so bitterly lamented by Venus, who was none other than Semiramis (Hislop, 55).

As far as the resurrection of Christ is concerned, the question people fail to ask is: If Christ said He would be in the grave (the heart of the earth) for *three days and three nights* (Matt.12:40), how could He have been crucified on Friday and resurrected on Sunday? This is a period of 36 hours, not 72 hours, as Jesus promised.

Is there any censure in the Bible regarding this pagan festival? Notice what we read in the Scriptures. "He [God] said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house

which was toward the north; and, behold, *there sat women weeping for Tammuz*" (Ezek. 8:13–14).

Halloween

We are all familiar with Halloween—the time of the year when there is frolicking fun, parties, gaudy costumes, trick or treating, stores full of black and orange masks, pumpkins, and garish decorations. Next to the Christmas season, Halloween is the second biggest commercial time of the year. The following information can be found in any number of reference works and encyclopedias.

That Halloween is pagan is admitted by many modern witches. Most people, however, do not know what was really behind the seemingly harmless practices associated with Halloween today. Around AD 800, the church appointed November 1 as All Saint's Day. The reason: to allow people to continue to celebrate a festival which they had enjoyed as pagans before embracing Christianity. This festival was celebrated by pagans centuries before the founding of the New Testament Church. It was held on November 1 in honor of Samhain (pronounced Sow-en), "the Lord of the dead." On the eve of the festival (October 31), the Driuds, who were the priests of the Celts, ordered bonfires. During this time they burned animals, crops, and sometimes human sacrifices. When the Romans conquered the Celts, they amalgamated this festival with one of their own. Pagans, who later became Christian, retained many of the old pagan customs as part of All Saint's Day.

The Celtic festival was based on the belief that the spirits of the dead were thought to visit their homes on October 31. Also, all kinds of ghosts, goblins, and demons were thought to be roaming about. On the last night of the old year (October 31), Samhain gathered the souls of those who had died the previous year, but who had been condemned to live in the bodies of animals. During this gathering, it would be decreed what bodily form these souls should take for the coming year. By gifts and prayers, Samhain could be persuaded to give lighter sentences to these souls. The word "Halloween" means the eve of Allhallows. This evening celebration anticipated the great day of November 1—the day dedicated to the Lord of the dead.

How did the church orchestrate the acceptance of this former pagan festival into its worship? It was decided to fill up any deficiency that might have existed in the celebration of saints' feasts during the year. Formerly, every martyr had been honored on the day of his or her martyrdom. It was now decided to appoint a common day for all. So, what had once been a memorial day for each martyr now became a general day in honor of the dead, who were now supposedly alive in heaven. Gregory IV (AD 827–844) appointed November 1 as a celebration for the entire church. The church policy was that the incorporation of harmless pagan folk ideas could do it no damage. Thus, the pagan day, in honor of the spirits of the dead, became the day to honor the martyrs of Christ. To appease the "Lord of the dead," so that the souls of the unrighteous would not have to suffer the fires of purgatory, November 2 was generally kept as All Souls' Day. Most Protestants have not continued to observe All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day but continue to observe the foolish pagan ceremonies of Halloween.

The trick or treat custom originated in the Celtic practice of requiring contributions from farmers. If farmers did not comply, the "trick" was the threat of a curse on the crops the following year. The church also copied the ancient Greek and Roman practice of religious processions during this season by parading the relics of patron saints. Poorer churches could not afford to purchase relics, so they used caricatures of the patron saints. Those not involved in the religious aspect of this procession dressed up like angels or devils. Eventually the Allhallows procession around the church yard became more gay and colorful.

Some Christians are quite concerned about the sinister side of Halloween. According to a newspaper account, anecdotal testimony relates how modern witches dance around bonfires. One man, a former Satanist, claims that children are losing their lives on Halloween night as a result of human sacrifice (*Register Guard*, October 31, 1994, 1A).

Does the Bible give any indication as to how God feels about a celebration in honor of the dead? He instructs and expects His people to say: "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, *nor given ought thereof for the dead*: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me" (Deut. 26:14).

Thanksgiving

We should have noticed by now that *all* the celebrations discussed above have a long pagan history. They go directly back to pagan worship and to the exact time of year, even to the day, on which these pagan festivals were held. They are a continuation of these pagan days, somewhat modified, but with the names changed. Some, however, make much ado over the notion that Thanksgiving is also pagan. But, can this really be substantiated? This notion is based on the idea that since ancient pagans kept fall feasts in honor of their gods, if we keep a fall festival today, we are practicing paganism. As we shall see, there is a vast difference between the history of our modern Thanksgiving and the pagan holidays previously covered in this article.

The fact is: There is a vast historical gap between Thanksgiving and any fall pagan feast of the past. To assert there is a historical connection is a pure fabrication. Our Thanksgiving is quite modern in origin. The American Thanksgiving Day does *not* have a pagan origin in spite of what some fringe sects or cults say. Consider this: If it is wrong to keep a day of thanksgiving to honor God just because pagans kept feasts for their gods, *then to be consistent, it is wrong to do anything else pagans did*. If pagans worshiped gods, then it would also be wrong for Christians to worship God. To be ridiculous, we could even say it would be wrong to eat, drink, breath, or even live. But some will say that God issues commands we must obey, even if heathen do the same. If this is the argument, it contradicts the previous argument that we should not keep days because pagans kept similar days in the past. The Bible clearly shows the difference between what God commands or approves, and what pagans practiced. What the Bible expressly forbids is the observance of pagan festivals which were invented as a deliberate substitute for God's Plan and Purpose. Pagans kept all kinds of fall festivals in honor of their gods, yet God commanded His people Israel to keep the Feast of Tabernacles—a fall festival. This command clearly shows that with respect to His commanded feasts, God does not concern Himself with pagan practices.

While Thanksgiving is not commanded in the Bible, but is a relatively modern day set aside to thank God for His goodness, does the Bible give any indication that such days, not appointed by God, are wrong? There are two Bible examples that indicate such man-made days in and of themselves are not wrong. Notice John 10:22–23: "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch." Here was Jesus at the Feast of Dedication. What was the Feast of Dedication? It was a religious festival established by the Jews in the second century BC to commemorate their victory over the Greeks. It celebrated the purification of the Temple which had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes. The Feast of Dedication was regarded as a minor Feast of Tabernacles and was observed for eight days. It has come down today in the Jewish community as Hanukkah. Was it ordained by God or commanded by Him? Not at all. Was it condemned? Not at all. Jesus showed by His presence that it was certainly permissible to honor God in this manner. Had it been wrong, He certainly would not have attended and would most likely have censured it. Some say the Feast of Dedication is evil in the sight of God because the Jews tried to kill Christ at that time (John

10:39). The fact is: The Jews tried to kill Christ for what He said, not because He attended the feast. At times the date for the Feast of Dedication coincides with Christmas. Obviously Christ was not concerned about that, or He would not have attended.

The other example is the Feast of Purim, found in the book of Esther, chapter nine. It was a feast dedicated to God for the deliverance of the Jews out of the hand of Haman, the Agagite. It was not ordained or commanded by God, yet not one word of condemnation is ever found in the Bible regarding this celebration.

Much of the following information has been gleaned from a book entitled, *The Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England*, by W. DeLoss Love, Jr., PhD, 1895). Thanksgiving in America is associated with the Puritans. The Puritans left England because of religious differences with the established church. They abhorred many of the practices of the Church of England, which they considered sacrilegious. The idea of expressing thanks to God did not, however, begin with the Puritans. Depending upon the circumstances, it was a common practice in England to set aside both public fast days and feast days. In America, the Puritans followed this same practice. They called for a fast because of a severe drought. The following day a soft rain set in for the next two weeks and the entire crop was saved. Governor Bradford appointed July 30, 1623, as a day of thanksgiving and prayer in deep appreciation for answered prayer. Over a period of time other days for thanksgiving were set aside in America by various groups of Pilgrims. One on August 9, 1607, one on December 4, 1619, and one that lasted a week during the middle of October in 1621. The Pilgrims never did set aside a regular day but held observances as the circumstances dictated. In 1668, a harvest festival was kept on November 25. In 1679, February 25 was set aside as a thanksgiving day. In 1680 the date was October 20, in 1682, December 1 was kept. The colony in Connecticut adopted Thanksgiving as a custom in 1640, and it appears to have been a regular celebration in the Massachusetts Bay Colony after 1660. What does this indicate? It tells us that no thanksgiving occasion in the United States gets its paternity from any ancient pagan day.

Some say that the Puritans were following the Harvest Home festival in England, which has pagan trappings. The Puritans certainly knew the background of the Harvest Home festival, which had begun in England during the reign of James I. Puritans would roll over in their graves to hear this accusation leveled against them. The Puritans summarily rejected the Harvest Home festival because of the taint of idol worship and licentiousness attached to it. They recoiled at the remnants of pagan customs that predated Christianity in England. Let us repeat: Thanksgiving in America does not go back to any pagan celebration. It was not assigned any particular date for many years, nor was it a national celebration in America until 1941. The big weakness of the argument that Thanksgiving comes from paganism is that there is no historical link to prove it. The argument against the observance of Thanksgiving, mentioned earlier in this article, is that since pagans kept days of thanksgiving, it is wrong to do so today. We have already dispelled that notion. Pagans often dedicated their temples to pagan deities, yet Christ showed by His example that God did not censure the Jews for the Feast of Dedication, even though pagans carried out the same kind of dedication practices.

How did Thanksgiving become a national holiday? For one thing, the practice of setting aside feast and fast days was continued by the Continental Congress. After Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga, Congress appointed December 18, 1777, as a day of thanksgiving. Another day was set aside in 1784, when the King of France entered into an alliance with the Americans. October 9, 1784, was appointed because of the peace treaty with Great Britain. After the adoption of the Constitution, November 26, 1781, was set aside by George Washington. The practice of setting aside fast days and feast days was continued by various Presidents. John Adams proclaimed two national fasts. James Madison appointed a day of thanksgiving when the peace treaty of 1815 was signed. He called for a day of fasting in 1832 because of a cholera epidemic. Zachary Taylor did the same thing during a cholera epidemic. A national fast was proclaimed when Benjamin Harrison died. So, little by little, the idea of a national day of thanksgiving was catching on,

though this was not the case with fast days. During the Civil war two national fasts were called, but no day of thanksgiving until the victory at Gettysburg. A fast day was called when Lincoln was assassinated. Grant called for a national day of thanksgiving on July 4, with religious services for our national blessings. The establishment of a national day of thanksgiving was due largely to the efforts of Sarah Josepha Hale, whose editorials had a profound effect on President Lincoln. It was not until the year 1941 that Congress finally set aside the fourth Thursday in November as a national thanksgiving day.

The above summary should quickly tell anyone with an open mind that the notion our Thanksgiving goes back to paganism is bogus. The idea that under the murky depths of Thanksgiving exists a veritable lake of paganism is pure poppycock. There *must* be a direct link to paganism before this notion can be substantiated. There is not a single link to paganism. The truth is: Our Thanksgiving Day was derived from the custom of setting days aside for thanksgiving and appreciation to God. That Thanksgiving comes from the Harvest Home festival is a gross assumption disproved by the fact that the Puritans deplored this festival. All harvest festivals, whether biblical or pagan, are of the same essence. The idea of a harvest festival has been known to all men virtually from the beginning of time, and men have continually expressed joy for a bountiful harvest. As we have seen, God expressly forbids the observance of pagan festivals which were invented as a deliberate substitute for the Plan and Program of God. The reader should keep in mind that Thanksgiving is not a holy day, and there is no indication that some people would like to make it holy. There is nothing holy about it. It is a day set aside to honor God, though many Americans have lost the meaning of the day, and spend their time before the television set watching their favorite sport.

What does the Bible say to those who condemn Thanksgiving Day as pagan based on their own faulty reasoning—those who add to God's word by condemning things which God does not condemn? "*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you*" (Deut. 4:2). "*Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*" (Prov. 30:6). "*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book*" (Rev. 22:18).

Other Celebrations

We commented earlier that *Independence Day* is one of our national holidays. Everyone knows it was established at the time of the American Revolution, and does not have the slightest tie to paganism. We can, therefore, dispense with this celebration as a pagan consideration. But what about *Mother's Day* and *Father's Day*? Most cultures have always held mothers in esteem, as both mothers and motherhood are highly regarded. The argument that Mother's Day is pagan is the same one used to condemn the observance of Thanksgiving—that is, since pagans observed a day in honor of their mothers, it is wrong for us to do the same thing. We are told that the tradition that pays tribute to all mothers actually had its origin in ancient Greece. The Romans liked the idea so well, they made it into a three-day celebration. The holiday lost its popularity during the early and middle ages, but was revived in the United States in 1914. Mother's Day is popular in various countries throughout the world. Some try to link the English "Mothering Sunday" to Mother's Day but there is no relationship between the two. On Mothering Sunday apprentice youths who lived within traveling distance of their homes were allowed to go home for a family visit.

Is there any validity to the argument that since ancient pagans honored mothers, it is wrong for us to do so? It is claimed that the nature of Mother's Day makes it seem as if it had its roots in

primitive times. We could say the same thing about God's Holy Days. The Feast of Tabernacles coincides with the end of the fall harvest. From the beginning of time pagans have observed fall harvest festivals in honor of their gods. From God's viewpoint, the observance of a festival is not predicated on gods pagans worship, but whether or not we honor the true God on that day. The claim is made that Mother's Day is based on the worship of the feminine principle of life. The Romans spring festival, held for three days and known as *Hilaria*, basically followed the pagan custom of honoring mothers and making the celebration a religious holiday. Our modern Mother's Day, however, broke away from the worship of the feminine principle of life to that of honoring our immediate mothers. Our Mother's Day is *not* a religious day. The first person to suggest a Mother's Day was Julia Ward Howe, who wrote the words to the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." She wanted a day dedicated to peace.

Some may say, "but Anna Jarvis, the one person most instrumental in establishing Mother's Day in America, worked through the churches in order to bring it about, so the day must be religious in nature." Miss Jarvis was a minister's daughter and taught Sunday school for twenty years, eventually graduating from the Female Seminary in Wheeling, West Virginia. She was familiar with the domain of the church and carried out her campaign from there. Her interest was not to establish a religious day, but to show honor and appreciation to mothers throughout the land. Miss Jarvis recalled how often her mother complained that most people did not pay enough attention to their mothers. Miss Jarvis felt children often neglected a their mothers while they were alive and failed to appreciate them. She hoped a day in honor of mothers would increase respect for parents and strengthen family ties. She felt the relationship of child to mother is one of such basic love that a day of public recognition for one's mother could not fail to take root everywhere, not only in America but around the world. For the purpose of establishing a national Mother's Day, she and her friends began a fierce letter-writing campaign in order to gain the support of influential ministers, businessmen, and congressmen. On May 9, 1914, President Wilson issued a Mother's Day Proclamation which set aside the second Sunday in May. Mother's Day is not linked to any particular pagan day or festival, and it is decidedly not religious in nature.

As usual the business interests took over. Simply remembering Mother was not enough. This had to be done with cards, flowers, candy, perfume, etc. The nation's florists cashed in, and flower sales during this time of year now run into the millions of dollars. Mother's Day sales bring huge profits into the coffers of merchants, thanks to hefty advertising campaigns prior to the occasion. Many are made to feel guilty for neglecting their mothers and urged to purchase a gift. Cards are sent not only to mothers, but to grandmothers, aunts, mothers of wives and sweethearts, and for that matter, anyone who may seem to deserve the accolade. This commercialism of Mother's Day has left a bad taste in the mouths of many who are disgusted with the mercantile aspects of the day. In fact, it was so distasteful to Miss Jarvis that she became disillusioned with her own creation. She died in 1948, a bitter and disillusioned lady, unable to accept the inevitable commercialism.

From the biblical point of view, Mother's Day has no tie to paganism. It does not go back to a specific pagan observance or date. While pagans honored their mothers from time immemorial, so did ancient Israel, and later Christians. To say the day is wrong because pagans honored their mothers is akin to saying it is wrong to love someone because pagans loved someone. This stretch does not appeal to sound-minded thinking. What is wrong with Mother's Day is that it has lost its original aim and purpose, and is now mired down in commercialism and profit taking. To reject it for that reason is one thing, but to reject it because it is supposedly pagan has no historical validity. Father's Day was merely an afterthought. It caught on because many felt Fathers, who did so much to raise and support their families, were not being given recognition. It became a national holiday in 1972. Like Mother's Day, it too has been commercialized, but has no link to any pagan day.

What is clear from the information presented in this article, is that those days which relate directly back to paganism are the ones the Bible censures. This applies to New Years, Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, and Christmas. It does not apply to Mother's Day and Father's Day, or to Independence Day, or to Thanksgiving.