

# Letter to Renae about "Christmas"

by Stanley C. Phillips

[Editor's note: Brother Stanley C. Phillips, a Predestinarian Baptist preacher, who spent his life teaching school (he was not a tentmaker, except in principle), shared this letter in answer to an inquirer about "Christmas." (Leon King, editor).]

"Dear Renae,

I enjoyed your email.

I recall many years ago your mother telling of her experience with your grandfather's arguments against Xmas, and how she struggled with it. So, I imagine you have access to the literature she came face to face with, which overwhelmed her then.

The email I sent to Brother Marc Jacobsson did not cover the 'wrongs,' nor the historical developments of that Americana. The best source relative to Christmas Trees in America is the American History Illustrated, 1982, Volume 17, Issue 8, beginning on page 15. I no longer have my copies of these, because when I retired I left my Resource Collection of American History Antidotes for the new teacher replacing me. You might acquire it from your local Library through their exchange with other NC State Libraries.

It is worth the effort if successful.

When doing the research, one must understand that everything called a 'Christmas Tree' may not necessarily be such! In 1952-53, I was stationed in Germany near Nurnberg. Alma came over, and we lived off the base on the German economy. Across the road near the little village near our base, craftsmen built a large multi-apartment building. When they completed it, we witnessed the 'Tree' decoration and ritual from ancient paganism. The

workers put an "evergreen tree" on the highest point of the building; and put one up on the front yard. All the trash was piled around the evergreen tree in the yard. Then the Catholic priest and towns-folk came out. The priest sprinkled the holy water on the trash, and the people rounded out a long distance and began chanting something in German, and they got louder and louder, drawing the ring tighter until all the devils were driven into the evergreen tree. The priest again did his ritual, and they fired the trash and tree, while the townsfolk sounded and acted much like Pentecostals at a Friday night Revival meeting. Alma and I asked our land-lady what that was all about. She replied it was a custom from ancient times to drive evil spirits out of the village before spring. Over here, that Evergreen Tree would be called a 'Christmas Tree,' and Hessian soldiers at Germantown most likely followed that custom over here during the War for Independence. Germans did, eventually in the 1600's add the Catholic Priest to the mix, but it was not then called a 'Christmas Tree.'

Today, few school history books will relate the causes of the Puritan and Separates' migration from England to Massachusetts Bay colony. It plays a part in this discussion. Under Oliver Cornwall and the Fifth Monarchy men, the Parliamentarians ousted the Catholic King of England, and ruled England by a dictatorship for twelve years. The "Puritans" wanted to legislate a Reform of the Catholic/Anglican Church of England - to "purify" it. The 'Separates' and 'Anabaptists' said it was Anti-Christ, and the Gospel commanded believers to 'Come out from among them, and BE YE SEPARATE, saith the Lord.' Hence, they were called "Separates." BOTH of these settlers in New England ardently opposed Easter and Christmas, and Colonial New England would not observe these pagan festivals. The credit for introducing them into American life and culture is given to Charles Dickens and his 'Christmas Story.'

That is quite enough on its history in America. The fact that the Catholic Church holds a mass for Christ (Christ-mass) makes it taboo to all

knowledgeable Christians. Its origin predating the Christian Era, condemned by the Jews (Jeremiah 10:2-5) and other idolatries should cause shivers to run up the spine of believers. The outright lies perpetuated under the name of our blessed Lord ought to be sufficient to turn a true believer away from it all. The fact that it is a false religion dressed up in 'sheep clothing,' or better, 'transparent linen-cloth,' is yet another. And anyone that has lived through very many wintry seasons in our hemisphere ought to know that shepherds and farmers do not graze their flocks or herds in the open fields in December in Palestine! Finally, if the Lord would have His birthday celebrated surely He would have left it on record! There are only TWO birthdays recorded in the Bible: The butler lost his head by Pharaoh in Joseph's time; and John the Baptist lost his head to Herod in Jesus' time.

Birthdays are dangerous to celebrate!

No, there is no Santa Claus, no one climbs down chimneys, Caribou do not fly; and Jesus was not born in December!

On a lighter side: I worked closely with a Jewish Doctor of Ed. in the Central Office, who was married to a Methodist. The Methodist wife worked with a Doctor of Education, also in the Central Office. Once, just before the winter break, the Jew's Methodist wife visited the Methodist doctor to discuss their Christmas party. While talking, the Methodist doctor realized the Jewish doctor was standing there. He apologized, and the Jew replied: 'That's alright. We observe Christmas too.' The Methodist said: "I didn't know that, Jim! How do you celebrate it?" The Jew said, "On Christmas Eve night when we lock up our businesses, we all join hands and dance around the cash register, singing, 'Oh, How I love Jesus.'

Yours,  
Stan"