

An Open Discussion, not a Policy Document

I went to town for some grocery bits and pieces on Christmas Eve. On the 'bus trip back home I sat near a young girl, maybe aged 16. She was very pretty, but she didn't take her eyes off her mobile (cell) phone. Like so many her age her fingers blurred as they hit the keys to send messages, find her Facebook page, and generally send texts containing useless information. I thought "What a waste of a life". In a very real sense her outward beauty made no difference to her future life. If she does not belong to God then she is already 'programmed' by her peers to act in particular ways. And that is very sad.

In 2013, I was not going to say anything about Christmas to our readers, but the thought of her young but already conditioned-to-sin-and-uselessness life caused me to relent. The poor girl will enter the usual treadmill of godless living, unless she is chosen by God to salvation, but she has no idea just how wasted her life will be without God. Yet, I see this same waste in so many believers' lives, too.

Every year, like so many in my kind of ministry, I am often compelled to prove my orthodoxy! Indeed, it is an activity that forces us to almost pre-defend ourselves against the anger of some. I must do it by declaring the straight facts of Jesus' birth, showing that He was not born on December 25th, and that Christmas is a Romanist holiday. And strident Christians demand this every year!

But, ardent anti-Christmas folks want more blood than that... we must also show the pagan roots of Christmas peripherals, like trees, lights, and so on. If we don't follow this routine EVERY year, we risk being downgraded and even thought of as being on a 'slippery slope'! I have lost count of the 'Christians' who come off our mailing list because we dare to oppose (or not talk about) their favoured 'beliefs'. The same happens if we do not use exactly the same words and condemnation as they do.

So, every year, we must make our declarations, or risk the 'righteous tut-tut'. Except for this year, 2013! I've had enough of this Christmas slaughter, when genuine believers who have still not sorted out what Christmas 'really' is are blackballed and tossed into oblivion by Christians who can become extremely vengeful against those who will not toe *their* line, which they mistakenly think is also

God's

line. Thankfully, God is far more understanding and longsuffering than our own angry retorts!

'The Christmas Thing'

Written by K B Napier

Thursday, 22 January 2015 16:32

That young girl on the bus has no idea this is happening around the world. Maybe she is best out of it.

I look at the same facts that are ALWAYS sent to me, whether I ask for them or not. My friends, I KNOW all the relevant facts and have known them for many years. But, I refuse to become a raging banshee if so many of the brethren continue to observe Christmas. This is because, until the Holy Spirit speaks to them and they are convinced by Someone Greater than myself, they will not take much notice anyway. If I remorselessly push a dagger to their throat until they relent won't change that, all I am doing is making an enemy for no reason.... and in my ministry I know a lot about enemies!

That young girl on the bus doesn't know of this underlying internecine war between fellow believers, and she probably would not care if she did know, so long as it didn't stop her lightning fingerwork on her key-pad...

Unravelling the Real Issues

There are very simple facts to observe in all this. True, Christ was not born on December 25th. True, 'Christmas' is a Roman holiday, not a Christian one. But, after this, things start to unravel, and the zealots don't seem to want to think about it.

For example, in our lives we continually enjoin 'pagan' roots without bothering to raise the alarm... like using the days of the week! And just try to speak to others without referring to 'Christmas'. Go on, try it. If you are in contact with potentially thousands, as we are in this ministry, or if you have to meet people in normal ways, they will speak of Christmas and its related days (Boxing Day) and so on. Try speaking of the days of the week without using the names known to all. There are MANY similar 'pagan roots' we use. But, little of it holds any relevance and almost no-one uses these terms in a pagan way. To them they are just words without spiritual force. And try to persuade your employer you want to work on 'Christmas Day', when almost the entire world shuts its operations!

Why? Because though names of days have 'pagan roots' no-one today follows them as pagan! (Do my zealot friends use these day-names and yet condemn the use of the word 'Christmas' as if a Christian who uses it is an heretic?).

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Let us say, for example, that the colour black has a pagan root in witchcraft (which it hasn't)... when this root was first observed and used, the paganism was perpetuated by using the colour and those who used it showed their allegiance to the paganism. But, over the centuries, its pagan root is lost and it just becomes a colour. If someone then uses the colour centuries later, is he being 'pagan'? Would Christians have the right to condemn him for it, if he did not observe the colour as something pagan? The same question can be applied to so many things called 'pagan', at Christmas – trees, lights, and so on.

Peripherals

For virtually everyone, these items are just pretty things put up as part of a holiday period. Even Christians do it. This is because they do NOT believe in the pagan roots, but put up trees and lights because they are pretty. Does this make them pagan? Does it mean they have capitulated to paganism? I argue not. Sending cards is just a pleasant remembrance of folks we rarely see. Presents are a delightful way for some to show special love to others... and to call fellow believers sinful for doing it is, to me, harsh and useless.

When I was in the world of design, I was often amazed by how many in the world had the same ideas as me! At times the resemblance to my own work was uncanny, sufficiently the same to cause me to think (at first) that my ideas had been 'robbed'. But, over time, I came to understand that this phenomenon is worldwide, and several people can have exactly the same idea at the same time.

Looking the Same Does not Mean it *is* the Same

My point is this: just because something looks the same, it does not mean it IS the same. For example, if a man has a twin brother, and he mercilessly murders another fellow, does it mean that the lawful twin is also a murderer, or a potential killer? No. One is a killer and the other is lawful.

In the same way, just because certain aspects of Christmas have 'pagan roots', does not necessarily mean that some who use those aspects (e.g. tree, lights, etc) look upon them as being 'pagan'. Rather, they see a tree as a naturally growing product that looks nice with lights. Is a tree not a tree? If we cut it down and choose to put lights in it, are we thus 'pagan'? I do not think so. Unless the person sees the tree as pagan and uses it to promote paganism, it is just a tree. Same goes for the lights. And in some countries putting lights in trees is done for decoration, with no allusion at all to anything pagan. Public parks, too, often light up trees for effect.

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But, argue zealots, by using the tree and lights as did pagans, we become as they are, and push a pagan agenda. Is this correct? I would argue against that premise on grounds of logic and Christian sense. Do we become pagan by using the days of the week? I do not think so.

The Facts

I have spoken with many believers over the years. They know I do not celebrate Christmas and they already know the original background - paganism. BUT... they do not follow the pagan beliefs. They tell me that the tree and baubles are just pretty things! I have also spoken to people who know nothing of the paganism, and have a similar reason to put up a tree or lights, etc. As believers we are not given freedom to guess the motives of those who do what they do. We can only go by what they say and do.

So, if a Christian puts up a tree etc., can we legitimately accuse him of paganism or godlessness, if they have no truck with paganism and do not put the lights etc., up for pagan reasons? Can we do things for different reasons? Does it mean people are pagan or godless if they do what others link to paganism?

Many Christians attend Christmas Eve meetings. Some use candles. Most sing carols. Are these, too, pagan or godless? Or, are they just thoughtless? If they genuinely see what they do as without paganism, and with a godly aim... what right do we have to castigate them? We may point out that these things were devised by Rome... so it is up to individual conscience.

Christ Said It!

And what of the teaching of Christ Himself, Who said we may hold certain days as holy, if our spirits are genuine? Does this mean a Christian cannot celebrate 'Christmas', in the sense of celebrating the birth of Christ? Think carefully!

It is unfortunate that Christmas is Roman Catholic in concept, or that certain peripherals have pagan origins. But, this does not necessarily mean that all who observe these things are themselves Romanist or pagan, any more than using the days of the week makes Christians pagan! If you look hard enough, today we use or do many things that were once pagan, so why pick on Christmas only?

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Read Luke 7:31-35, and see how people called Jesus names for doing things that were considered sinful! *Whatever* we do, *someone* will come down hard on us. This is why Paul says this (Romans 14:13-23):

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

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Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Do you understand what I am saying? If you think I am condoning the keeping of Christmas, then think again. If you see me as pagan because of what I have said about trees and so on, then think again. If this is what you think, then your anger is greater than your wisdom!

If I know someone is a believer, then he is my brother. And if this is so, I can only present scripture to him. If he does not immediately understand or comply with scripture is it my business to cast him off? Can I do so if his annual practices have nothing to do with denying Christ or the true Gospel, but are just errors of judgment? Then think again. I might not accept their Christmas ideas (which are usually as far from Rome and paganism as one can get) but this does not give me the audacity to decry them forcefully. Perhaps I have known too many shunnings and hatred towards me in my own life.

Mistaken Judgment, not Deliberate Error

From what I see they unfortunately hold their celebrations under the Romish banner... but they do not thereby deny the Lord. Rather, they have made a mistake of judgment. When they put up trees and lights, etc. because they are pretty, they are not outwardly following pagan practices.

Indeed, many of these peripheral activities have OTHER roots, not connected to paganism. And, they will hold to their activities until the Holy Spirit Himself speaks to them. So, a fellow believer acting harshly against them does not help, nor is it necessary... because there are no doctrinal errors. We are called to teach truth, not to decapitate fellow believers who will not do what WE tell them to do! Forget the anger! It is up to the Lord to persuade, even if some think this (or this short article) is not good enough. Jesus is more patient than we are!

This is a discussion document, not a final teaching article. Therefore, read and ponder on some of my points. Consider whether or not you are being loyal to the Lord – or just belligerent

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towards your fellow believers. Are you trying to gently lead them along a path of truth – or are you just 'venting your spleen'? Even if what you say is right, do not let it cause your heart to be filled with vengeful anger. The same should apply to every topic you care to look at, of course. There are times when we must stand firm and be outright... but, for me, this is not one of those times. We can provide the truth... but, let the Lord convince others.

(P.S. though I have said this is only a discussion document, I know that some, so hot under the collar with their own thoughts, will see error in what I say! So be it... I cannot please everybody all the time. Funnily enough, nor could Jesus. So, will this short piece lead to even more shunning of myself and my ministry? Oh well...).

Reminder

Celebrating the birth of Christ is not forbidden. Jesus said that if a man truly believes he must hold a certain day holy, then he is free to do so.

Roman Catholicism settled on December 25th as Christ's birthday, so that it could replace a pagan holiday. The name itself refers to three masses held for the holy birthday. Thus, it is the date that is a problem.

Though a man might repeat this celebration on the same day, it does not make him an heretic. It just means that he has chosen an unfortunate date and may not even be aware of its meaning.

Putting up a tree, in itself, is neither pagan nor Roman. And it does not alter, deny or add to scripture and doctrine. Though its origin may have been pagan, most people view it as Queen Victoria did – as a pretty spectacle.

Putting lights and garlands up in a room draws the same conclusion. Same as for Queen Victoria! If they are put up as mere lights and garlands, there is no offence.

Giving presents. This was originally done by the one now called 'Saint' Nicholas, when he secretly gave out presents to the poor at Christmas. Thus, the actual date this was done was

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just before the Roman festival. But, the giving of the presents was done as an altruistic gesture. In itself it has nothing to do with Romanism or paganism, but with a kind heart.

Sending cards. This began as a Victorian way of making money! Today, they are sent as a gesture of goodwill between friends and family. This is not pagan nor Romanist.

Too commercialised? This is a red herring, because modern Christmas *is* a commercial venture! The error is in linking this purely commercial period with the churches. The period can be commercial because that is what it is designed to be, quite separate from anything believed by Christians.

Candlelight services and carols. These are a mixture of Roman and Anglican traditions, without real merit. Thus, they ought not be attended.

Overall, then, we should be careful what we say and do, and be especially careful not to brand our fellow believers as 'heretics' when we have not yet come to biblical conclusions. In other words – are what some are condemning against scripture? Do they oppose or alter doctrine? Are they opposed to God or His word? If they really do, then approach your fellows with caution and care; do not just explode in their faces over something that is complex... check whether something really is 'pagan' or 'Roman', and then check that the fellow believer acts them out for pagan or Roman reasons. If not, then you must, as a mark of respect and love, do far more research!

Discuss all these things and come to proper conclusions, not as an opportunity to lord it over fellow believers, or to 'vent your spleen'. Personally, I have had too much of this in many fields of work and study, and I will not tolerate such vengeful attitudes towards the brethren... even if some of their beliefs or practices are not what they should be. Rebuke if there is doctrinal error; but be more helpful and caring if there is not. And pray for those who have not yet been led by God to have a different view. Can you really discuss this matter without getting hot under the collar? I hope so.

(Note: Do not assume too much from this short paper! And do not assume that anything I have said is necessarily my own view. The paper is meant to stir up moot points, so that we treat our fellow believers properly)

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