

Christmas as a Holiday

by Ellen G. White

“Christmas is coming,” is the note that is sounded throughout our world from east to west and from north to south. With youth, those of mature age, and even the aged, it is a period of general rejoicing, of great gladness. But what is Christmas, that it should demand so much attention? ...

The twenty-fifth of December is supposed to be the day of the birth of Jesus Christ, and its observance has become customary and popular. But yet there is no certainty that we are keeping the veritable day of our Saviour's birth. History gives us no certain assurance of this. The Bible does not give us the precise time. Had the Lord deemed this knowledge essential to our salvation, He would have spoken through His prophets and apostles, that we might know all about the matter. But the silence of the Scriptures upon this point evidences to us that it is hidden from us for the wisest purposes.

In His wisdom the Lord concealed the place where He buried Moses. God buried him, and God resurrected him and took him to heaven. This secrecy was to prevent idolatry. He against whom they rebelled while he was in active service, whom they provoked almost beyond human endurance, was almost worshiped as God after his separation from them by death. For the very same purpose He has concealed the precise day of Christ's birth, that the day [itself] should not receive the honor that should be given to Christ as the Redeemer of the world—one to be received, to be trusted, to be relied on as He who could save to the uttermost all who come unto Him. The soul's adoration should be given to Jesus as the Son of the infinite God.

The Day Not to Be Ignored—As the twenty-fifth of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose.

The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and His cause and the salvation of souls.

The desire for amusement, instead of being quenched and arbitrarily ruled down, should be controlled and directed by painstaking effort upon the part of the parents. Their desire to make gifts may be turned into pure and holy channels and made to result in good to our fellow men by supplying the treasury in the great, grand work for which Christ came into our world. Self-denial and self-sacrifice marked His course of action. Let it mark ours who profess to love Jesus because in Him is centered our hope of eternal life.

The Interchange of Gifts as Tokens of Affection—The holiday season is fast approaching with its interchange of gifts, and old and young are intently studying what they can bestow upon their friends as a token of affectionate remembrance. It is pleasant to receive a gift, however small, from those we love. It is an assurance that we are not forgotten, and seems to bind us to them a little closer....

It is right to bestow upon one another tokens of love and remembrance if we do not in this forget

God, our best friend. We should make our gifts such as will prove a real benefit to the receiver. I would recommend such books as will be an aid in understanding the word of God or that will increase our love for its precepts. Provide something to be read during these long winter evenings.

Books for Children Are Recommended—There are many who have not books and publications upon present truth. Here is a large field where money can be safely invested. There are large numbers of little ones who should be supplied with reading. *The Sunshine Series*, *Golden Grains Series*, *Poems*, *Sabbath Readings*, [Note: Reference is made in this article to noncurrent publications. As the principles set forth in this connection are applicable today, these specific references are left in the article.] etc., are all precious books and may be introduced safely into every family. The many trifles usually spent on candies and useless toys may be treasured up with which to buy these volumes....

Let those who wish to make valuable presents to their children, grandchildren, nephews, and nieces procure for them the children's books mentioned above. For young people the *Life of Joseph Bates* is a treasure; also the three volumes of *The Spirit of Prophecy*. [Note: Early E. G. White books preceding the present "Conflict Of The Ages Series."] These volumes should be placed in every family in the land. God is giving light from heaven, and not a family should be without it. Let the presents you shall make be of that order which will shed beams of light upon the pathway to heaven.

Jesus Not to Be Forgotten—Brethren and sisters, while you are devising gifts for one another, I would remind you of our heavenly Friend, lest you should be unmindful of His claims. Will He not be pleased if we show that we have not forgotten Him? Jesus, the Prince of life, gave all to bring salvation within our reach.... He suffered even unto death, that He might give us eternal life.

It is through Christ that we receive every blessing.... Shall not our heavenly Benefactor share in the tokens of our gratitude and love? Come, brethren and sisters, come with your children, even the babes in your arms, and bring your offerings to God according to your ability. Make melody to Him in your hearts, and let His praise be upon your lips.

Christmas—a Time to Honor God—By the world the holidays are spent in frivolity and extravagance, gluttony and display.... Thousands of dollars will be worse than thrown away upon the coming Christmas and New Year's in needless indulgences. But it is our privilege to depart from the customs and practices of this degenerate age; and instead of expending means merely for the gratification of the appetite or for needless ornaments or articles of clothing, we may make the coming holidays an occasion in which to honor and glorify God.

Christ should be the supreme object; but as Christmas has been observed, the glory is turned from Him to mortal man, whose sinful, defective character made it necessary for Him to come to our world.

Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, the royal King of heaven, laid aside His royalty, left His throne of glory, His high command, and came into our world to bring to fallen man, weakened in moral power and corrupted by sin, aid divine....

Parents should keep these things before their children and instruct them, line upon line, precept upon precept, in their obligation to God—not their obligation to each other, to honor and glorify one another by gifts and offerings.

Turn Thoughts of the Children Into a New Channel—There are many things which can be devised with taste and cost far less than the unnecessary presents that are so frequently bestowed upon our children and relatives, and thus courtesy can be shown and happiness brought into the home.

You can teach your children a lesson while you explain to them the reason why you have made a change in the value of their presents, telling them that you are convinced that you have hitherto considered their pleasure more than the glory of God. Tell them that you have thought more of your own pleasure and of their gratification and of keeping in harmony with the customs and traditions of the world, in making presents to those who did not need them, than you have of advancing the cause of God. Like the wise men of old, you may offer to God your best gifts and show by your offerings to Him that you appreciate His Gift to a sinful world. Set your children's thoughts running in a new, unselfish channel by inciting them to present offerings to God for the gift of His only-begotten Son.

“Shall We Have a Christmas Tree?”—God would be well pleased if on Christmas each church would have a Christmas tree on which shall be hung offerings, great and small, for these houses of worship. [Note: Reference is made in this article to current building projects. As the principles set forth in this connection are applicable today, these specific references are left in the article.] Letters of inquiry have come to us asking, Shall we have a Christmas tree? Will it not be like the world? We answer, You can make it like the world if you have a disposition to do so, or you can make it as unlike the world as possible. There is no particular sin in selecting a fragrant evergreen and placing it in our churches, but the sin lies in the motive which prompts to action and the use which is made of the gifts placed upon the tree.

The tree may be as tall and its branches as wide as shall best suit the occasion; but let its boughs be laden with the golden and silver fruit of your beneficence, and present this to Him as your Christmas gift. Let your donations be sanctified by prayer.

Christmas and New Year celebrations can and should be held in behalf of those who are helpless. God is glorified when we give to help those who have large families to support.

A Tree Laden With Offerings Is Not Sinful—Let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath school scholars is a sin, for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many gatherings that demoralize.

Provide Innocent Enjoyment for the Day—Will you not arise, my Christian brethren and sisters, and gird yourselves for duty in the fear of God, so arranging this matter that it shall not be dry and uninteresting, but full of innocent enjoyment that shall bear the signet of Heaven? I know the poorer class will respond to these suggestions. The most wealthy should also show an interest and bestow their gifts and offerings proportionate to the means with which God has entrusted them. Let there be recorded in the heavenly books such a Christmas as has never yet been seen because of the donations which shall be given for the sustaining of the work of God and the upbuilding of His kingdom.

Elen G. White, *Adventist Home*, p477-483