

Question: *Your ministry preaches against celebrating Christmas, but did not Ellen White celebrate the holidays as well as command that it should be celebrated? Did she not also condone the tree, gifts, and all the things associated with this holiday?*

Our Answer: To make this easier reading, we will split this into sections. The first will be our overall answer in short. Then we will go through the objections typically raised one by one.

Our Answer in Short

Objection 1- Not to ignore Christmas

Objection 2- Whites quote on the Tree

Objection 3- On celebrations for the poor

Closing Remarks

OUR ANSWER IN SHORT

To begin, we challenge the holiday keepers- "If you profess to prove your doctrines from the Bible, prove clearly from the Bible, without using Ellen White, that celebrating Christmas is a command of God."

There are many Christians that are realizing the pagan origins of Christmas, and have quit keeping the holiday. If a Sabbath-keeper comes to them and tells them that Saturday is the Sabbath and Sunday is a pagan day, they will laugh at the Sabbath-keeper if he retains the celebration of Christmas. It is not difficult to prove from the Bible that Christmas is pagan, but when this is taught, the immediate response is "But Sister White said..."

So to the Christmas keepers we first raise the objection, "Sister White also said not to read her writings until you can believe the Bible."

"How can the Lord bless those who manifest a spirit of "I don't care," a spirit which leads them to walk contrary to the light which the Lord has given them? But I do not ask you to take my words. Lay Sister White to one side. Do not quote my words again as long as you live until you can obey the Bible.

When you make the Bible your food, your meat, and your drink, when you make its principles the elements of your character, you will know better how to receive counsel from God. I exalt the precious Word before you today. Do not repeat what I have said, saying, "Sister White said this," and "Sister White said that." Find out what the Lord God of Israel says, and then do what He commands."-- Manuscript 43, 1901. (From an address to church leaders the night before the opening of the General Conference session of 19

Secondly we say, "Light does progress" as evidenced by these verses.

Pro_4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

At one point in Ellen White's life she rebuked a man for teaching not to eat pork. When doing this she said "she saw" which means she was shown in vision, it was not just her opinion. Later on she received another vision on this subject, and began to preach against eating pork.

"I saw that your views concerning swine's flesh would prove no injury if you have them to yourselves; but in your judgment and opinion you have made this question a test, and your actions have plainly shown your faith in this matter. If God requires His people to abstain from swine's flesh, He will convict them on the matter. He is just as willing to show His honest children their duty, as to show their duty to individuals upon whom He has not laid the burden of His work. If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine's flesh, God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His church their duty."
{1T 206, 207}

Later on she said;

*"If you are a Bible doer as well as a Bible reader, you must understand from the Scriptures that swine's **flesh was prohibited by Jesus Christ enshrouded in the billowy cloud**. This is not a test question. Directions have been given to families that such articles as butter and the eating largely of flesh meats is not the best for physical and mental health. Fruits and grains and vegetables would, if cooked properly and eaten in moderate quantities, be proper articles of diet."* {16MR 173.1}

In other words, at one point she told a man, not to preach it, but later she preached it herself. It becomes obvious why this is done sometimes. Jesus told his disciples,

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. John 16:12

If you allow her writings to interpret themselves, this one comes into play here.

*"There are many at the present day thus clinging to the customs and traditions of their fathers. When the Lord sends them additional light, they refuse to accept it, because, not having been granted to their fathers, it was not received by them. We are not placed where our fathers were; consequently our duties and responsibilities are not the same as theirs. We shall not be approved of God in looking to the example of our fathers to determine our duty instead of searching the Word of truth for ourselves. **Our responsibility is greater than was that of our ancestors**. We are accountable for the light which they received, and which was handed down as an inheritance for us, and **we are accountable also for the additional light which is now shining upon us from the Word of God.**"* {GC88 164.2}

Most Christians today wouldn't even consider going back to a time when polygamy was allowed, and yet at one time God allowed that even in his people. This did not mean it was never to cease.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"
Acts 17:30

However we would challenge, that those that say we should celebrate Christmas do not themselves even follow all of Ellen White's writings on the subject. Here are some of her negative quotes about Christmas and the holidays. She states that they are "idolatry, a sacrifice on idol altars", "the worship of heathen deities" and "Satan's special harvest seasons".

"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. ...For the very same purpose He has concealed the precise day of Christ's birth, that the day 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.**" {AH 477.3}*

I have said to my family and my friends, I desire that no one shall make me a birthday or Christmas gift, unless it be with permission to pass it on into the Lord's treasury, to be appropriated in the establishment of missions. 213 {CCh 159.6}

Our birthday anniversaries, and Christmas and Thanksgiving festivals, are too often devoted to selfish gratification, when the mind should be directed to the mercy and loving-kindness of God. God is displeased that His goodness, His constant care, His unceasing love, are not brought to mind on these anniversary occasions.--Review and Herald, Dec. 23, 1890

The customs and practices in the cities unfit the minds of the youth for the entrance of truth. The liquor-drinking, the smoking and gambling, the horse racing, the theater going, **the great importance placed upon holidays,-- are all a species of idolatry, a sacrifice upon idol altars.** If people conscientiously attend to their lawful business upon the holidays, they are regarded as mean-spirited and unpatriotic. The Lord cannot be served in this way. Those who multiply the days for pleasure and amusement are really giving patronage to liquor-sellers, and are taking from the poor the very means that should purchase food and clothing for their children, the very means that, used economically, would soon provide a dwelling place for their families. These evils we can only touch upon. {FE 312.1}

But from their youth up they have been educated to the popular idea that the appointed holidays must be treated with respect and be observed. **From the light that the Lord has given me, these days have no more influence for good than would the worship of heathen deities; for this is really nothing less.** **These days are Satan's special harvest seasons.** The money drawn from men and women is expended for that which is not bread. The youth are educated to love those things which are demoralizing, things which the word of God condemns. The influence is evil and only evil continually. {FE 320.3}

OBJECTION 1- NOT TO IGNORE CHRISTMAS

“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. “ {AH 478.1}

We agree that December 25 will be hard to pass over. For this reason we suggest some replacements, especially for children at the end of our video **HOLIDAYS EXPOSED**.

OBJECTION 2- SISTER WHITE’S QUOTE ON THE TREE

“We are now nearing the close of another year, and shall we not make these festal days opportunities in which to bring to God our offerings? I cannot say sacrifices, for we shall only be rendering to God that which is his already, and which he has only intrusted to us till he shall call for it. 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. 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, and let the fruit upon this consecrated tree be applied toward removing the debts from our houses of worship at Battle Creek, Mich., and Oakland, Cal.” {RH, December 11, 1879 par. 15, 16}

Many use this quote and say “See, she said that it all depends on the motive behind the tree. She says, God would be well pleased if churches had Christmas trees.”

However look at this quote. Does she condone putting lights or any other decorations on the tree? No! She does not! No one that I am aware of places a tree in their home or church and *only* puts offerings to God on it.

“In every church, however small, special efforts should be made to show our gratitude to God by bringing our offerings for his cause. Let those who desire a Christmas tree make its boughs fruitful with gifts for the needy, and offerings for the treasury of God. And let the children learn the blessedness of giving by bringing their little gifts to add to the offerings of their parents.” {RH, December 26, 1882 par. 15}

“Every tree in Satan's garden hangs laden with the fruits of vanity, pride, self-importance, evil desire, extravagance,--all poisoned fruit, but very gratifying to the carnal heart. Let the several churches present to God Christmas trees in every church; and then let them hang thereon the fruits of beneficence and gratitude,--offerings coming from willing hearts and hands, fruits that God will

accept as an expression of our faith and our great love to him for the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. Let the evergreen be laden with fruit, rich, and pure, and holy, acceptable to God. Shall we not have such a Christmas as Heaven can approve? Thousands of dollars are needlessly spent every year in gifts to each other. That is means lost to God, lost to his cause. ... {RH, December 9, 1884 par. 10}

Ellen White had no objection to placing a tree in the church and hanging offerings on it. But notice that this does not even have to be a Christmas tree. It does not have to be specific to the season.

*"I see no objection to placing even in our churches a Christmas or **New Year** tree bearing fruit in gifts and offerings for the cause of God. We may thus take advantage of the occasion to turn the customary gifts of the season into the right channel. And such a holiday celebration is a useful lesson to our children, teaching them to bestow their gifts in a manner to honor their Redeemer. But when we devote our means and labor to feasting ourselves, we fail to render to God that honor which is his due."* {ST, January 4, 1883 par. 7}

If you are going to have a tree you need to do it exactly like what Ellen White specified, nothing more. She said you can put offerings on it to God, so you can have a tree with a bunch of envelopes of money on it. But even as innocent as a tree with only envelopes of money may be, it still may be a stumbling-block to others. This is why we do not recommend even a plain tree in today's society.

I once spoke with a lady concerning the holidays. At her church, which professed belief in Ellen White, they put up a tree yearly. One December, some people who were not members of the denomination, but who had been studying its truths came to church. However, when they came in December and saw the tree, believing it to be paganism, they left and never again entered the church. Despite many other truths that church taught, some potential members were lost because of a Christmas tree.

We are told to *Abstain from all appearance of evil.* 1Thessalonians 5:22

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. Rom. 14:21

After meeting people who considered Christmas to be pagan, we first tried eliminating everything pagan (Santa, stockings, reindeer etc.) We soon learned that it is almost impossible to separate the two. If you tell people you celebrate the holiday, these things are a prominent part of modern celebrations and it is hard to explain the difference to all your friends. Even supposedly Christian celebrations regularly feature Santa Claus or the Grinch, Yuletide songs, etc. We also began to realize that we could not invite other conservative Christians over during this time of year or to church because they considered our tree to be pagan. When having a tree stands between you and those you need to witness to, is it not an idol?

Read 1 Corinthians 8. If having a tree is a stumbling -block to new converts and weaker brothers and sisters, the Bible is clear that, on this premise alone, we should cease that which is a stumbling block.

1Co 8:9 *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

Numerous former occultists and pagans that come out of occult religions recognize the tree as a vestige of their former pagan beliefs and practices. I even know of at least one former witch that was converted to the gospel, but started his own church because all the other Christian churches contained pagan practices and one he specifically mentioned was the occult holidays.

Think of what would happen if a former occultist visits your home or church and sees the tree. What will they say? Would they class you as a Christian or a pagan?

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 2 Cor. 6:17

OBJECTION 3- ON CELEBRATIONS FOR THE POOR

“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.” {AH 482.3}

Reading some of the surrounding context of the Manuscript from which this was taken clarifies it perfectly.

*"Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" [Matthew 10:32]. Do you confess Christ in your expenditure of His entrusted means? **Is He confessed when most of your income is spent on self, when the Lord's tenth is withheld, and when gifts and offerings are used for your own pleasure and benefit?** It would not be out of place for you to head a column in your domestic account book "Charity." Had you done this, and had you put down all that you have spent for self, and all that you have used for charity, the list of that spent for self would make a large amount; but how would your column set apart for charity come out? Again I urge you to ask yourself, Do I confess Christ in my expenditure? Heading a column of your account book "Charity" would make a revelation to you. No other human eye may see that book but yourself, but the Lord Jesus Christ sees it, and your reward in the day of reckoning will be in accordance with your works. ...*

***If Christ had that which is His own in tithes and offerings, so much would not be left for selfish outlay on nicknacks and display. Less would be spent for dress, for pleasure excursions, for entertainments, or for display in table fare.** We may confess Christ by making no elaborate preparations for visitors; we may deny Him by making more than ordinary preparations, which takes time that rightly belongs to the Lord. Not only do you rob your family of the attention they need, in order to prepare an elaborate entertainment, but the practice is followed by others whom you have influenced by your example. The Lord does not judge us according to the highness and elevation of our various spheres, but according to the faithfulness with which we fill them. Before you enter into amusement for the gratification of self, ask yourself the question, Is not this God's time and money that I am expending needlessly? Open your account book and see how your account stands with God, with your household, and with the world. ...*

***The religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of practical godliness, and while the grace of God abides in the heart, the Christian will produce the fruit of industry, frugality, economy; he will not waste, but will gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost.** In the lives of those who have Christ abiding in the heart will be seen no avarice, no dishonesty in trade, no overreaching, for all covetousness is pronounced*

idolatry, but every species of dishonesty will be put away from the character. Unkindness of disposition will be overcome; for they are made new men in Christ Jesus, and sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies. Everyone who has thus been renewed will manifest kindness, forbearance, and generosity, in this confessing that Christ, the hope of glory, is formed within.

The cause of God should be kept in a healthful condition; the treasury should be supplied with means for carrying forward the work of God. Institutions which are established to help orphans, those who are dependent and destitute, the infirm and the aged, should be aided. Those who have the blessing of health should cooperate with Christ by helping the weak. The blessing of God rests upon those who represent Christ by doing this work. *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...We must ever bear in mind that we are in copartnership with God. His work and His cause demand the first consideration. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" [Matthew 6:33].--Ms 13, 1896. {12 MR 227-231.1}*

From the context, you can easily see that this statement is merely a rerouting of money usually spent frivolously, to a more worthy cause. It is not a command to celebrate the holiday.

In closing, we believe you must bring all Sister White's statements together to form a conclusion. Here are the points we learned by doing this.

Point 1- Whatever we do it must honor God and not be a form of idolatry honoring self and Satan. The usual observance of the holidays is pagan.

Point 2 - It is not enough just to cease to do evil. We must learn to do well. Innocent replacements may be needed especially for children during the holidays. Missionary efforts do not need to cease during this time of year.

Point 3 – Gifts at any time of year should be of a practical nature (food or clothes for the poor) or of a spiritual nature (religious books and materials). It is robbery of God to expend money in a frivolous fashion. The money usually spent in festivities should be rerouted to the cause of God for his honor and glory.

Each person should ask themselves, If Ellen White were here today, would she approve of how I am following her instructions? And even more importantly, If Jesus came to your house during the holidays would he be the honored guest? Or is he being forgotten and ignored at this time of year? Am I offering the sacrifice of Abel exactly as directed by God, or the sacrifice of Cain—thinking my way is better than God's? Is how I spend my time and money during the holiday season really heaven approved?

There are no better words to close with than the words of Joshua, And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15