

THE OBSERVANCE OF CHRISTMAS.

WITH many the associations of Christmas are suggestive of childhood's joys and of tender reminiscence of scenes of delight in the home circle. In this spirit it is perhaps still observed socially in the family, for the children's sake, by some who are aware that the day itself, in its religious claim and character, has no foundation in Scripture. The question that presents itself therefore is: Can the day be observed innocently in this social way, apart from its false religious character?

It is said that the day celebrated as Christmas, was once the day of a wicked heathen feast called *Saturnalia*; and the season suggests the winter solstice as the occasion of the feast—the period of daylight being about to increase. The day being handed down as a Christian festival, and its name, “Christ - Mass,” tells the rest. A corrupt church, a corrupt ritualistic sentiment, introducing a novelty among many other novelties, to please—not God, but men. This consideration, of course, is a very serious one, and calls to mind a fertile source of shame and sorrow to the Church: self-will at work—human choice in place of obedience; as among the Galatians, giving occasion for the rebuke, “Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.”

Let us consider the serious nature of this departure from simplicity. It is that setting aside God's word which, as an evil principle at work, has wrought confusion and corruption far and wide in the Church's history, as of old it wrought the ruin of Israel.

This, then, is the meaning of the day—the establishment of a religious custom, of a sacred day without any command from God. If we do this, where shall we stop? There is no stopping place; and the evil result we have referred to in the previous paragraph.

What, then, is the obligation of the faithful Christian? Should he not consider the observance of the day as a dishonor to the Lord, being disobedience, and therefore opening the door to further departures and dangers, as we have seen? And as to observing it socially with the children in the home circle, ignoring its origin and ecclesiastical claims, can this be done if we have at heart the things that are Christ's? Can we do it without giving up our character as warriors—leaving to others more faithful than ourselves to fight the Lord's battles and defend the truth? Would it not be a compromise as to the truth, a provision for self indulgence, and a dangerous allowance of the enemy within our borders? The very notice that may be taken of a refusal to observe the day becomes a testimony to the truth, both to people without and to the children at home. And the absence of such testimony tends to perpetuate indifference to an evil which the day represents.

The day is enjoyed with zest by the world in common with the Church, and this is a sufficient warning to us. It is one of the wiles of the devil, against which we need to take to ourselves the "whole armor of God." It is a victory of Satan if he can get our hearts attached to a thing that is unscriptural and worldly in its origin and character. Such an attachment must enfeeble us in the conflict for the enjoyment of our Canaan possessions, and mar the clearness of testimony in the family that should direct the children in the way of reverence for God's word and uncompromising obedience.

"The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. x. 22).

E. S. L.